



Case Study

## Credit risk management firm finds a true partner in Equifax

By strategically expanding its use of the Equifax Ignite<sup>®</sup> analytics ecosystem, the company slingshots ahead of its industry and its customers' expectations



GDS LINK



### **GDS Link customers are happy customers.**

That's because the banks, credit unions, auto lenders, specialty finance, and other lending organizations that use its solutions — things like credit risk management software, analytics, and consulting services — are seeing big improvements. They're getting models to market 50 percent faster. They're automating complex decisioning algorithms. They're reducing operational costs while beefing up their analytic capabilities.

Yet, behind the scenes at GDS Link is another type of happy relationship. A true partnership. One that's genuinely collaborative and steadily expanding to meet and exceed its customers' expectations. One that powers much of the data-driven innovation and big-picture insights that GDS Link customers rely on to move their business forward during good times, bad times, and, well, uncertain times. Here we explore how the partnership between GDS Link and Equifax went "next-level" after the company began harnessing the immense power of the Equifax Ignite® analytics ecosystem.

### **The challenge: Getting customers to market, faster.**

For nearly two decades, GDS Link has been helping its customers — a diverse mix of banks, credit unions, and alternative finance lending organizations of all sizes, from around the world — grow and better protect their business. It does this in a lot of ways. By providing in-depth, differentiated data about consumers and businesses to support more informed and inclusive decision-making strategies. By developing and deploying tailored credit risk models, in a fraction of the time normally required. By keenly understanding lending and financial markets, consumer and business behaviors and preferences, and important trends related to risk and fraud.

The analytic processes it was using — data preparation, integration, and management, for example — were on par with the industry. Still, a fair amount of manual involvement and oversight was required to move from one step to the next. Its data and analytic team would manually pull in data sets for customers from different sources and analytic environments. They would then create a database and manually map the data.

### **In short, it took a lot of time and resources to deliver solutions.**

But technology — and customer expectations — quickly evolved and GDS Link saw an opportunity to stand out in the market. With the right approach to data and analytics, it could strengthen, simplify, and streamline its solutions and help its customers get where they want to be, in terms of competitive differentiation, portfolio growth, and risk mitigation, faster.

At the time, GDS Link was already working with Equifax. However, the two companies recognized an opportunity to double down and create a next-generation data and analytic strategy that would directly benefit GDS Link, its customers, and its customers' customers.



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## The solution: Move from disjointed processes to a single analytic environment.

The Equifax Ignite analytics ecosystem was the winning solution, capable of slingshotting GDS Link forward, ahead of its industry and its customers' expectations.

Equifax Ignite is a cloud-based data and analytics solution that gives GDS Link one-stop access to multisource Equifax and third-party data, powerful analytics tools, a secure sandbox environment for experimentation, and a machine-learning feedback loop that aids in optimization. Basically, it's everything the company needs to research, build, and deploy its data and analytics projects in one convenient spot, which is a massive time-saver and efficiency booster.

As part of the Equifax Ignite solution, GDS Link gets direct access to vast, market-exclusive Equifax data sets (with more data being continuously added over time) that help its customers better understand their target audiences from every angle, such as:

- **Traditional credit data** spanning credit accounts, public records, collections, and more.
- **Alternative data** to help organizations better understand and confidently score consumers who lack traditional credit. This includes account payment data for cable, utility, and cell phone bills, which can be highly predictive of future payment performance, plus other types of alternative data.
- **Open banking data**, which is known to increase model performance by introducing numerous affordability metrics such as cash flow insights, NSF trends, and repeating borrowing patterns.
- **Wealth and lifestyle insights** on employment, income, assets, consumer preferences, and more.



So today, instead of wrangling disjointed networks of data sources, scoring systems, and reporting facilities, the GDS Link team works within a single, unified environment. Mass amounts of data can be securely managed and executed better within a scalable environment that's remarkably easy to consume and implement. **Put simply, it's been a game changer.**

## How it helps: Everything is streamlined and simplified.

Currently, GDS Link uses Equifax Ignite to support its model validation processes and consultative customer research and recommendations. Here are just a few ways it's helping the company today.

### No more data headaches and delays.

Since Equifax data is pre-loaded into Equifax Ignite, it's easy for the GDS Link team to tinker with different depersonalized data sets to find a just-right balance or the highest possible performance lift for its customers. Teams can quickly pull in a national sample of the Equifax credit file, and tack on additional insights regarding wealth, affluence, bankruptcy, and more. They can even run code or perform light modeling within the system.

Before Equifax Ignite, the data prep alone would've taken days or even weeks, and now in minutes, they can immediately assess the value of the data for their analytic projects and seamlessly move forward with model validation and building tailored high-performing solutions. There are no process bottlenecks. No delays.

Other notable data differentiators include easy, one-click upload and download of customer data and automated keying and linking technology within Equifax Ignite that uses a unique identifier to help GDS Link protect sensitive customer data (all data with Equifax Ignite is anonymized and stripped of personally identifying information). That way, GDS Link customers can download files (post analysis) and match the unique identifier against their existing files, provided that the data always remains anonymous, to build a deeper understanding of customers. Likewise, the data can be seamlessly exported to other market-leading platforms and software services being used by GDS Link customers. In short, everything is streamlined and simplified.

**Business users with no technical training are getting customers to market faster.** Equifax Ignite is so accessible and user-friendly that its internal analysts and other business users understand the system and use it daily. Think of it this way: if you know how to use a spreadsheet, you can work within the Equifax Ignite point-and-click environment.

This helps GDS Link optimize its internal resources while putting its business users — **who know its customers, their goals, and challenges, best — in the driver's seat. There's no "middleman," meaning, no tedious back-and-forth explanations between data scientists and subject matter experts. Those who understand the business are the ones using the solution.**

Because of this, GDS Link is working smarter and more efficiently, and helping financial and lending organizations get to market faster with advanced solutions that boost revenue and reduce risk.

**Tailored solutions spanning the customer lifecycle are more easily and quickly built.** No matter what a client needs, GDS Link can tap Equifax Ignite to quickly build a solution. Sometimes they're looking for a market analysis to identify gaps in their prospecting strategy. Other times they want treatment strategies to help identify and protect existing accounts that are at risk of delinquency. Often, customers want to target their top accounts for cross-sell and upsell campaigns. The company might even get requests to help streamline a customer's collections process.

GDS Link can now do all these things faster and easier within Equifax Ignite. That's because Equifax Ignite includes pre-built data sets, attributes, scores, and models, all thoughtfully crafted and proven to perform well in specific use cases across the customer lifecycle.

So, instead of sourcing different types of data and then working with that data to build new attributes and scores, the GDS Link team can simply point and click on the right pre-built data asset within Equifax Ignite to address specific use cases for prospecting, account management, risk mitigation, and more.

**A true partnership that sparks continuous innovation and market leadership.** The full potential of the Equifax Ignite analytic ecosystem has yet to be discovered by GDS Link, but there's an old adage that fits here. "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."

With the complexities of data and analytics, it can be overwhelming to know where to start or the best path forward. Yet that's where the value of this partnership unfolds.



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Equifax data analytic experts work shoulder-to-shoulder on a weekly, often daily, basis with the GDS Link team, constantly exploring new Equifax Ignite data sets, capabilities, and use cases from a practical mindset, as well as for more visionary thought leadership.

The partnership is collaborative, accessible, and proactive. Both companies are forward-thinking, fully focused on delivering the best next experience for GDS Link customers, and always communicating new ideas and “what if” scenarios. Where is this risk model performing well, and where is it underperforming, and why? Can we increase the take rate if we bring in this newly available data set and use it against your existing data analysis?

Today, Equifax views itself as an extension of GDS Link and vice versa, since GDS Link ultimately represents Equifax to its customers. Both value each other. Both contribute to the greater good of the business. And both are firmly committed to building a better future for GDS Link, its customers, and the broader universe of consumers and businesses they serve. It’s the definition of a true partnership.

### Looking Ahead

In a word, the future of the GDS Link and Equifax partnership is exciting. There are so many untapped capabilities remaining within Equifax Ignite. With Equifax consultative experts working in lockstep with GDS Link, the company is positioned to unlock next-level business agility and an analytic proficiency and mastery that can potentially skyrocket its transactional ROI.

What does that look like? That could mean building a generic industry model and running it against a customer’s footprint to uncover new (and shifting) risks and opportunities. Then refining that model to maximize lift while holding risk steady, and folding in sales metrics to prove its value.

Here’s what that sounds like. “This custom model may cost you thousands, but according to our data-backed analysis, it can potentially earn you millions.”

But that’s just the start of what’s possible through this dynamic partnership. **Now, that’s exciting.**

[equifax.com/ignite](https://equifax.com/ignite)

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