



Blue Bird Corporation

When Blue Bird's national network of school bus dealers need help, they rely on comprehensive and efficient assistance from representatives in the company's customer service department. Armed with a case-tracking tool developed in Filemaker Pro and extended with the 360Works Email plug-in, these reps deliver consistent service for every call by tracking every email sent and received in a single central system. Since integrating the 360Works Email plug-in, Blue Bird has been able to reduce the number of open cases, anticipate parts supply issues, track performance more effectively and radically improve their service.

Business Challenge



As the Director of Technical Communications, James Talmage is responsible for giving service reps the tools they need to communicate efficiently with Blue Bird's network of dealers. To facilitate excellent service, James worked with the service staff and other executive stakeholders to create a Filemaker solution to help Blue Bird's service reps track all communications related to dealer parts issues. Every piece of correspondence is tracked in the system, whether by email, phone or fax. With over 80 cases per day for each service rep, the amount of data to be tracked is considerable!

At first, James took advantage of Filemaker's built-in capacity to integrate with Outlook and other email clients. Emails to dealers from service reps were created and sent directly from the Filemaker solution. After only a few months, however, it became clear that Filemaker's built-in functionality wouldn't be enough. Emails sent out lived in each user's Outlook Sent Messages folder, and were not saved in any central location. Email replies received from dealers had to be copied and pasted into the tracking tool by the already busy service reps. He needed to extend Filemaker's email functionality. That's where 360Works and the Email plug-in came in.

Successful Solution

James evaluated the landscape of email plug-ins, and found 360Works. He called and spoke to developer Sterling Rouse. James recalls, "I was immediately impressed by the seriousness of what they were about at 360Works. I hired Sterling on the spot to do the implementation."

Sterling travelled to Blue Bird's offices the following week and assisted with the installation of the plugin and configured the interface and scripts to do what was required. Sterling even worked with the IT staff to reassure them about what was required technically and to get all of the server-side email accounts configured correctly.

James recalls, "Sterling was ready to go the minute he got through the door. He looked at our files ahead of time, talked to me about my needs, and walked in ready to rock and roll." After one day of coding, the plug-in was configured. Now, the entire history of email communication for each case is stored in the system. Reps are able to send requests for assistance to other parts of the company to coordinate an efficient resolution to every problem and receive replies from dealers and the rest of the company directly through the system. Emails no longer get lost in a crowded "Sent Messages" folder, and the complete log of correspondence allows for continuity of care and easy status-tracking. The plug-in, James reports, "works like a charm!"

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Customer Benefits

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The results of James' decision to take advantage of the power of the 360Works Email plug-in have been dramatic. Since the entire history of communication for a given case is in one place, the service department delivers quicker resolutions for each issue. Managers are able to check progress on each case by referring to the log of communications in the system. Reporting on cases resolution is complete and accurate thanks to all of the data being in one place. James says, "we've even seen a reduction in the overall number of cases! Since we're able to detect trends and note systemic issues, we can better anticipate our dealers' needs."

The email plug-in has also allowed Blue Bird to make life easier for everybody in the chain of responsibility. Since the Filemaker solution can both send and receive email, team-members in other divisions of the company are able to file status reports and assist in issue resolution via email instead of having to learn a new software tool to track their responses.

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James reports, “Thanks to the 360Works email plugin, we don’t have to make our application visible to all action owners—the action owners reply to emails and those emails go in and come out of the customer service system automatically. We don’t need to burden those staff with another application to learn.”

James is ready to push this powerful functionality even further. 360Works helped him to configure instant web publishing, so reps in the field can see the current status of any dealer’s case from anywhere where there’s a web browser. By extending Filemaker’s built-in capabilities with a 360Works plug-in, James has made significant improvements in his customers’ satisfaction and his department’s performance.

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