

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Bennington College

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

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—Dan Snyder, Director of Advancement Services, Bennington College

While he had never written a line of code before, Dan Snyder became the unofficial “citizen developer” for Bennington College’s fundraising team by harnessing low-code tools to build game-changing automations. Now the college’s director of advancement services, he continues to extend the rich, configurable capabilities of Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge NXT to customize solutions that meet Bennington’s specific needs by leveraging Microsoft Power Automate to solve complex fundraising challenges and eliminate manual tasks, freeing staff for more strategic endeavors.

Apps open doors to creative transformation of workflows—no IT experience required

At Bennington College in Vermont, students define the direction of their learning, working closely with faculty to design the content, structure, and sequence of their study. “They are answering a question or solving a problem that matters to them, and their education supports them to take that wherever it leads,” Director of Advancement Services Dan Snyder explained.

With that same spirit of discovery, Snyder is improving how his division works as he automates processes and realizes new possibilities with the flexibility

Bennington College is powered by:

Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge NXT®

of Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT—the leading solution for fundraising and relationship management—and Certified Connectors to the Microsoft Power Platform.

An ecosystem of apps that includes Power Automate, Microsoft Power Platform supports “citizen developers” such as Snyder, who creates the Office of Institutional Advancement’s fundraising reports and keeps them updated. “Power Automate and the Raiser’s Edge NXT connectors have transformed my work and allowed me to completely automate our reporting process,” he explained.

Snyder has found these tools empower citizen developers, who may lack formal computer science training but have an aptitude for thinking through processes logically and using low-code tools to automate them. “We’ve all probably started in the same place of, ‘Hey, what is this automation stuff?’” he said. “It’s a great learning experience, and it’s such a benefit from the time savings alone. Once you get going, you can keep building on it.”



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300+
**annual work
hours saved**

through Microsoft Power Automate with Raiser’s Edge NXT connectors

Realizing Time-Saving Efficiencies

The first opportunity that piqued Snyder’s interest was the chance to improve the way Bennington recorded online gift notifications. “We were saving them manually as PDFs, and that takes a lot of time.”

Working with Power Automate, Snyder created a new process in which the email notification of an online gift automatically triggers the creation of a PDF record that is stored for the division on Google Drive and tied to the donor’s database information.

Around 60% of gifts to Bennington College are made online—more than 3,300 a year. Not having to manually save and store a PDF copy of the email notification for each gift translates into time savings of 55 work hours a year, based on Snyder’s estimates. That’s time the division’s small staff can devote to other more strategic tasks and improvements.

Snyder also boosted efficiency when he automated a manual export-import process that credited donors in the college’s records for gifts, including those that arrive through more complicated paths, such as donor-advised funds. As a result, a process that previously took 2 ½ hours of work a week only takes ½ hour and can be easily completed, even when Snyder is out of the office: another 100 or so annual work hours saved.

Overall, Snyder estimated Bennington saves at least 300 hours per year thanks to the efficiencies achieved with the no-code and low-code tools of Microsoft Power Automate and the connectors to Raiser’s Edge NXT. “The extensibility of being able to add those attributes that I need for reporting and being able to refresh that data without having to touch it has really been a game-changer.”



In addition to streamlining already existing workflows, Snyder uses the tools to create opportunities that might not have been possible before, such as a system to support the college president in sending personal birthday notes to key donors with the benefit of input from gift officers. “That happens without anybody really having to manage it,” Snyder said.

As Snyder started to make headway with his automation projects, Bennington College achieved some of its best fundraising years, in part due to large single gifts. “Some of what we were starting to do and track with automations helped us to keep on top of those important relationships and know where we were with fundraising and where we needed to go.”

Joining Others on a Journey of Discovery

Although he has no technical training as a developer, Snyder has not been entirely self-taught either. He has had a whole community to help teach him the ropes and Blackbaud Accelerator courses to speed his learning about the Microsoft Power Platform.

Those courses are available to any Blackbaud customer through on-demand videos in Blackbaud’s free [Microsoft Power Platform resources](#) library, which includes time-saving templates created by the Blackbaud team as well as Blackbaud customers, including Snyder, who won the first ever Community Award at Blackbaud Developers’ Conference for his contributions helping in community and inspiring others.

EXTEND CAPABILITIES WITH THE SUPPORT YOU WANT

Blackbaud Raiser’s Edge NXT is the leading cloud-based solution for fundraising and relationship management. Raiser’s Edge NXT provides a comprehensive set of CRM capabilities and is purpose-built for further extensibility and customization. Organizations that use Raiser’s Edge NXT with Certified Connectors to the Microsoft Power Platform can easily adopt and design valuable automations that meet their special needs.

There are three categories for using Microsoft Power Platform with Blackbaud solutions:

Do it yourself (DIY)—You leverage the rich resources available in the Blackbaud Community, Microsoft learning paths, web search, YouTube, user groups, and your peers to pick up the skills needed to build.

Supported—You partner with a Blackbaud expert, Blackbaud Partner, or independent consultant to build alongside you so you learn the skills.

Outsourced—You contract with a Blackbaud expert, official partner, or independent consultant on an ongoing basis or on a single project to build your application from end to end.

Blackbaud also provides several learning opportunities a year through its bbdevdays events, which provide enablement and best practices training to both developers and customers who don't have a technical developer background. "We're committed to ensuring our solutions are flexible for everyone, and we're especially excited about equipping non-developers to extend and enhance their Blackbaud solutions through automation," explained Heather McLean, Blackbaud developer and partner success manager, who leads customer trainings at the events.

Snyder is also an active member of the peer-driven Blackbaud Community, which connects Blackbaud's customers to one another and to best practices, enabling them to learn together about their Blackbaud solutions and tools for flexibility, like Microsoft Power Platform. "So many people are willing to share their knowledge, expertise, and time in the Blackbaud Community," Snyder said. "It really is a great benefit."

And he's happy to pay it forward. "I've had a lot of people throughout my career—and specifically with Power Automate—who have really been generous in sharing their time with me, and I try to do the same for other folks where I can."

Innovate with Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT and the Microsoft Power Platform.

[Learn more](#)



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About Blackbaud

Blackbaud (NASDAQ: BLKB) is the world's leading cloud software company powering social good. Serving the entire social good community—nonprofits, higher education institutions, K-12 schools, healthcare organizations, faith communities, arts and cultural organizations, foundations, companies, and individual change agents—Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, data intelligence, and expertise. Learn more at www.blackbaud.com.