Swim Across America®

"We're sustaining and growing our charity swim program with a lean staff, so we're looking at how best to optimize the resources that we have. The [Blackbaud] integration with Facebook® Fundraisers helped us better engage our participants and tell our story through their influence without over-extending resources."

—Amy Krakauer, Director of Programs

Swim Across America puts on charity swims—18 and growing—across the United States to support cancer research and clinical trials. An early adopter of Blackbaud's peer-to-peer fundraising integration with Facebook Fundraisers, Swim Across America made strides in participant satisfaction and engagement, marketing visibility, and bottom-line fundraising numbers.

Swim Across America streamlines peer-to-peer fundraising as early adopter of new Facebook-Blackbaud integration.

Swim Across America's team has significant responsibilities:

- Hosting 18 charity swims at locations around the country

- Selecting promising cancer research projects and clinical trials to receive grant funding raised from those events

- Maintaining charity compliance in each state

- And, of course, engaging with thousands of fundraisers and their extended communities to renew their excitement each year

Swim Across America is powered by Blackbaud solutions for:

✓ Peer-to-peer fundraising

That's why the determined team of seven people welcomed a chance to drive further impact. As an early adopter of Blackbaud's peer-to-peer fundraising integration with Facebook Fundraisers, Charlotte-based Swim Across America saw an opportunity to both overcome back-office challenges and keep its wider community better connected.

"We're sustaining and growing our charity swim program with a lean staff, so we're looking at how best to optimize the resources that we have," said Director of Programs Amy Krakauer. "The [Blackbaud] integration with Facebook Fundraisers helped us better engage our participants and tell our story through their influence without over-extending resources."

The integration allows gifts made through Facebook to process through Blackbaud's peer-to-peer solution, not only simplifying accounting for Swim Across America but giving participants the reward of watching their fundraising thermometers rise in almost real time through the power of social media. While implementing the integration, Swim Across America also rolled out two new charity swims—and, thanks to those combined successes, experienced double-digit revenue growth for the season.

The integration saved staff time. Swim Across America didn't need web developer support, didn't field as many questions from fundraisers, and didn't face financial management hurdles leading up to and after events. Previously, any gifts made through Facebook arrived in a single payment to Swim Across America, forcing organizers to deconstruct the total amount and appropriately attribute gifts to specific swimmers.

"The integration helped increase our fundraising revenue," said Director of Marketing Ryan Baucom. "It's as easy as clicking a button and making sure you're logged into Facebook. You can set it and forget it and every now and then share with everyone in your network, so they see your message again. For less aggressive fundraisers, it made it easier to reach a network they wouldn't have by loading individual contacts."

And reach they did. Swimmers received gifts from neighbors, grade-school teachers, former colleagues—people who might never have engaged by email but who saw their Facebook posts, according to Krakauer.

CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER TAKES TO OPEN WATER.

When I moved to Seattle, I took an unorthodox approach to developing a relationship with my customer Swim Across America. I decided I was going to learn to open-water swim.

As part of Blackbaud's customer success team, my job is ensuring that our customers get maximum impact from their Blackbaud solutions. I told my contacts at Swim Across America, "I'm your customer success manager, but I'm also going to fundraise for you." I hadn't participated in organized swimming since I was 8 years old, but I joined Team Orca Bait, signed up for a master class, and started practicing.

Three years later, I'm captain of Team Orca Bait, and I've seen life-changing results because of Swim Across America. All money supports local research and clinical trials, and I have met people who benefit directly from organizations that Swim Across America supports.

One friend and colleague diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma underwent a clinical trial that received funding

"We hear from people who say, 'I'm a swimmer, not a fundraiser,'" she added. "It made it easier for people who are nervous...to make that fundraising ask. You can post your fundraiser on Facebook without feeling like you're making a direct appeal of someone."

The Blackbaud-Facebook Fundraisers integration also added a new element to Swim Across America's marketing. "It brought great visibility to our cause and organization that we weren't getting through social media," Baucom said. "Some days I would see so many people posting about one of our charity swims that it felt like a Swim Across America takeover of Facebook."

Moving forward, Swim Across America intends to add two new swims each year. The team will rely on tools that provide more engagement without requiring more resources, including the Blackbaud-Facebook Fundraisers integration. "Because of the ease," Krakauer said, "it's a good way for new participants to get started."

Learn how Blackbaud peer-to-peer fundraising engages and empowers supporters to raise funds and grow awareness.

Find out more

from Swim Across America. The money I raised had a tiny bit to do with his drug being approved, and as a result, he is still part of my life today.

After the Blackbaud-Facebook Fundraisers integration, I connected my Swim Across America fundraiser to my Facebook page and raised almost my entire goal of $1,000 by my birthday. My personal fundraising doubled to $2,000 this year as a result.

Swimmers often write on their backs in marker the names of people they honor through their swims. My father died from cancer five years ago, so I write his name on my back—along with the name of my friend, who is a survivor—but every year I could fill my back with a growing list of names. That's why I keep swimming.

—Jen Peters, Blackbaud Senior Customer Success Manager

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—Ryan Baucom, Director of Marketing

About Blackbaud
Leading uniquely at the intersection point of technology and social good, Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, expertise, and data intelligence. We serve the entire social good community, which includes nonprofits, foundations, companies, education institutions, healthcare organizations, and the individual change agents who support them.