Always Networks

How Always Networks Helped Blackthorn Repair Management to Streamline Its Processes and Take on New Clients

CASE STUDY

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"Outsourcing our IT has helped me to retain clients and bring new clients on board, which is gold. And because automation frees up resources, our headcount stays the same."

John Beecher
Managing Director,
Blackthorn Repair Management

Blackthorn Repair Management

Blackthorn Repair Management is a leading national vehicle repair service. It provides accident and claims management services for insurers, hire companies and fleet operators. It also has the largest network of accident repair centres in the UK.

Highlights

Challenges

- IT support was provided by the managing director
- Claims updates were manual and time-intensive
- Poor experiences working with IT companies

Solution

- Outsourced IT expertise with a personal touch
- Automating manual processes to free up resources
- Using IT as a business partner rather than a supplier

Results

- 125 hours saved every month on claims updates
- More time for the managing director to work with clients
- New clients onboarded without extra headcount

Challenges

IT bottleneck and manual processes

Blackthorn Repair Management prides itself on dealing with complex repair cases for insurers, hire companies and fleet operators.

For Managing Director, John Beecher, this is where Blackthorn Repair Management differs from others in the industry.

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"We use systems and processes, but every case is dealt with differently. And that makes it resource-heavy because with the complex claims you need to speak to the clients more often," he explains.

"We also manage our supply chain on a personal basis. We manage our body shops on a personal basis and the clients get that personal touch as well."

Alongside running the business, John was also supporting IT across the organisation. But as time went on, John realised he was spending more time in the business troubleshooting issues and less time working on his business to grow it.

He needed to focus on his existing clients and build new relationships with potential clients.

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"The business had got to a size where I felt I'd reached my capacity of doing a good job. It was holding our business back because I was the bottleneck," he says.

> **"It was time to bring somebody in. Why was I playing at managing my IT when my own business is about convincing people to outsource to the expert?"**

But John's initial experience with IT companies was less than helpful.

> *"Too often IT companies are binary. They don't understand the commercial impact of downtime and how we make decisions"*, he says.
>
> *"IT is there to facilitate what I do as a business, not the other way around. So I never wanted to be in a position again where the IT company is telling me what I can do as a business."*

Blackthorn Repair Management needed IT support that John could trust to take the weight off his shoulders and understand how the business worked.

- Fully managed IT service
- 24/7 IT support
- Cyber security
- Process automation
- Strategic technology advice
- IT procurement

Solution

An IT partner with technical expertise and a human touch

When Blackthorn Repair Management began working with Always Networks, John experienced a different type of IT company.

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"Nick is actually the first person and company I've dealt with, who can provide the infrastructure, provide the support we need and who you can have a human conversation with," he says.

"And he understands the mechanics of a business, not just the IT."

John values the personal touch, as well as the technical expertise, that he gets working with Always Networks.

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"If we're having issues, even if it's perceived issues, Nick's not afraid to take a phone call and he's not afraid to turn up on site," he says. *"That's a big thing because perception is reality."*

Over the last 18 months, John has relied on Always Networks more and more. As well as a fully managed IT service, Blackthorn Repair Management has also outsourced IT procurement, 24/7 IT support and cyber security.

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"I saw a massive impact on a day-to-day basis of how much time that freed up for me to then grow my business more," he says.

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As well as freeing up John's time, working with the IT partner has made a dramatic difference in how the business processes claims updates. Before working with Always Networks, each claim form had to be typed into a CRM system before sending emails and text messages with updates to the client and the policyholder.

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> *"Nick has helped us to automate all that. And that's saved us hours and hours of time," he says.*
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> *"Each claim form would take up to five minutes for us to manually update and all of a sudden that's gone from five minutes to zero."*

The system now sends automatic updates through an API to update the clients' systems or send emails and text messages. Clients can track the whole repair from start to finish, which is essential for organisations like hire companies.

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> *"It's critical for hire companies to have an audit trail of dates at every stage of the repair. Because they need that to recover money from the third party insurer."*

Results

More clients and fewer manual processes

Since working with Always Networks, Blackthorn Repair Management has transformed its productivity.

The business handled 1,500 claims a month and it used to take 5 minutes to manually process each claim form. But when this was automated, the business saved over 125 hours every month, which has led to wider benefits.

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"The biggest impact of working with Always Networks has been the ability for us to grow without additional resources," he says. "Because automation frees up resources, so our headcount stays the same."

That's not all. John can now use his time to focus on business development and building client relationships.

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"Outsourcing our IT has helped me to retain clients and bring new clients on board, which is gold," he says.

"There are lots of things that I can give other people, but managing the relationships with the company and bringing new business in, that's my role."

Looking ahead, John is working with Always Networks to make further improvements to how the IT systems support his business.

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"Nick and I feel that the CRM system has reached its capacity. We're looking at whether we should secure another system for the business or build a bespoke one. That's an 18-month, two years project between us. So what we've got is a long-term relationship."

Over the last 18 months, John's trust in Nick and Always Networks has grown stronger and so he has full confidence in Nick's recommendations and actions.

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"Always Networks is a partner, not just an IT supplier," he says.

"I know Nick's protecting my wallet when he makes a decision and he'll make a decision based on what we need as a business."

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Want an IT partner that solves business and technical problems?

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