Babson College Goes to the Head of the Class with Blue® 360 Software

> "Blue 360 software, a flexible, user-friendly 360 degree feedback system designed for easy integration with current systems and rapid deployment"
>
> Matthew McGuire,
> Senior E-learning Developer / Platform Manager

CLIENT:
Babson College

CHALLENGE:
To save college faculty and administrators time, reduce costs, and gain more control of 360 degree reviews for business students.

SOLUTION:
Blue 360 software, a flexible, user-friendly 360 degree feedback system designed for easy integration with current systems and rapid deployment.

BENEFITS

- Four years of reliable operations, as more and more classes adopt the system

- Quick integration with current in-housesystems, including Active Directory

- Faster and more detailed feedback, such as daily and weekly status reports on completion rates

- Excellent support from software vendor, with responses in less than an hour

"Innovation is our tradition" is the motto at Babson College, one of the top business colleges in the U.S. and a world leader in teaching entrepreneurship.

Babson College is consistently well-ranked by major publications. For example, the school recently earned the top spot for entrepreneur-ship from both The Princeton Review and Entrepreneur magazines.

"No school does a better job than Babson in teaching how to start businesses," says Newsweek, which called it the "Hottest School for Business" in 2008.

DEDICATED GROUP FOR IT INNOVATION

Innovation is also a guiding principle at CITG (the Curriculum Innovation and Technology Group), an internal group providing IT consulting and services to the school.

"We're a consulting group within the college that assists faculty with innovative practices and technologies," says Matthew McGuire, Senior E-learning Developer/Platform Manager for CITG.

"We're always looking out for what's new, and how those things can best be used in the classroom."

But the group doesn't just pick up technology for technology's sake.

"We're here to make sure that we're serving pedagogical needs and not just the 'gee, that's cool' needs," says Matthew.

One of the first projects he was asked to take on when he came on board four years ago was the automation of 360 degree feedback surveys for the school's world-renowned Fast Track MBA program.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE WITH 360 REVIEWS

Fast Track MBA students undergo a 360 review in the Managerial Assessment and Development course.

Course instructors then review the results with students in face-to-face sessions held on campus.

In the past, Babson outsourced its 360 reviews, but to help manage costs and better control the user experience, CITG and faculty started exploring other solutions.

"We really wanted to bring down the cost of administering these surveys," says Matthew.

He and his team considered several options; among these were doing in-house development, using open source offerings, or trying another off-the-shelf application such as Halogen Software's e360.

In the end, they decided on Blue by eXplorance, a system designed specifically for the automation of 360 degree feedback reviews.

BLUE 360 MAKES THE GRADE

"We didn't want to take on the cost burden of an in-house or open-source solution. That's a lot of extra work on something that isn't our focus," says Matthew.

"We were impressed by eXplorance's responsiveness when they showed us Blue 360."

The Blue platform features an integration layer that makes it easy for schools to plug it into any systems they are currently using.

"We had no problems connecting Blue to our in-house systems," says Matthew.

"It was critical to us to connect easily to our Active Directory, not just for security but also so we didn't have to manually enter each survey recipient every time we ran a survey."

GOOD NEWS SPREADS FAST, HELPING LOWER PER-USER COST

As news of this innovative technology spreads across campus, the return on investment is increasing rapidly.

"We started using Blue in the Fast Track MBA program, then the Foundations of Management and Entrepreneurship courses, then Executive Education, and finally the Management Consulting Field Experience program started using it last year."

The automated solution takes away a lot of the tedious administrative aspects of 360 feedback surveys, freeing up time for survey administrators.

"One Executive Education instructor recently told me he was manually crunching numbers on a spreadsheet for his 360 surveys!" says Matthew.

That's not what he wants to hear.

"Blue helps us ensure that faculty members aren't wasting valuable time with manual work, so they can put their focus where it should be: on research and teaching."

Matthew and his team enjoy the greater control over the 360 processes, not just for bringing down costs, but for the customer service they can provide to their internal clients.

"We can now monitor usage statistics, and provide instructors with daily and weekly status reports on completion rates. That makes troubleshooting much easier, since we can deal with any problem early on, before it becomes serious."

His team is really pleased by the support they've received from eXplorance, which has been quick to respond when anyone from the college calls or makes a request.

"eXplorance is always open to feedback; they are an incredibly receptive company," says Matthew.

"As to support, I've never had to wait longer than an hour to get a call back. I don't see that from a lot of other vendors."

PROVIDING MORE SERVICES TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

After four years with the system, Babson is showing once again that it's ahead of the technology curve, continually seeking ways to improve its processes.

"We've been assessing the new version available for Blue, and we're very excited about the flexibility it provides," says Matthew.

"We're thinking about how we can harness that flexibility and realize new ideas that we haven't done before."

When it comes to innovation, it sounds like this group teaches by example.