



CUSTOMER STORY: Save The Bay

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— Rebekah Zabinski
Community Development Manager
Save The Bay

Save The Bay was founded in 1970 with the initial objective of stopping the proposed development of energy facilities along Providence, Rhode Island’s Narragansett Bay. After the organization’s success with that project, it has since been working to restore the Bay, which was once a dumping ground for raw sewage and industrial toxins. It has also expanded its mission of protection to include restoration projects and exploration programs.

Challenge

In 2006, with the 30th anniversary of its swim event just months away, Save The Bay wanted to have a record year for fundraising and participation. “The Save The Bay Swim is near and dear to people’s hearts,” said Rebekah Zabinski, Save The Bay’s community development manager. “Swimmers raise a lot of money, and it has become a tangible event that shows the community that they can use the Bay.”

Save The Bay wanted to enhance swimmers’ experiences and further build the profile of its signature event. The organization initially used a commercial web designer to build its website but sacrificed nonprofit-specific functionality that was key to the success of its advocacy, marketing, and fundraising efforts. Without the ability to accept donations online and do viral marketing and online registration, it would be difficult for the organization to meet its aggressive fundraising goals.

Save The Bay is powered by:

- ▶ Financial Edge™
- ▶ Raiser’s Edge™
- ▶ Blackbaud NetCommunity™

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In previous years, the organization's fundraising and registration were offline efforts, resulting in a large amount of paper processing. "We would get backlogged about three months in processing gifts and registrations," said Ms. Zabinski. "Swimmers would be tracking their gifts themselves and submitting paperwork with addresses and gift amounts written in, so we would have to decipher handwriting and double-check amounts."

All of the transactions were entered into the organization's **Raiser's Edge™** donor database, but without an integrated financial system, the process of synching information was difficult, time consuming, and often led to inaccuracies.

Save The Bay needed an integrated system that would help enhance online functionality, streamline processes, and save time and resources.

Solution

Save The Bay used the team fundraising capabilities of **Blackbaud NetCommunity™** to create a better experience for swim participants and provide them with tools to help them achieve their fundraising goals.

Swimmers were able to create personal fundraising pages and send emails to their friends and families to rally support. Visitors could donate online or register to become a swimmer. Once registered, they could track their fundraising progress with real-time fundraising thermometers. Transactions were automatically stored in Raiser's Edge.



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Additionally, Blackbaud NetCommunity will enable Save The Bay to build online communities, develop a flexible event calendar, further its online advocacy efforts with NetAdvocacy™ powered by Capwiz, and provide targeted content.

"Blackbaud NetCommunity is jump-starting our efforts online. We are really customizing the site; it is all about the end-user experience," said Ms. Zabinski. "Anyone who logs in and creates a page will have quick links to informational pages, events, volunteer opportunities, advocacy news, and educational opportunities that are personalized to them."

"If you're a board member with Save The Bay, you're going to have a totally different experience than a volunteer — it will be customized to what your interests are."

To ensure data integrity, eliminate manual input, reduce errors, and improve efficiency, it was critical for the organization to purchase a new financial system.

"We decided to go with **Financial Edge™**, because all of our transactions were already getting entered into Raiser's Edge, so why not get a system that spoke with our key database?" said Ms. Zabinski. "We didn't have to take the extra time building out software to benefit from the ease of integration."



Results

Blackbaud NetCommunity™ enabled the organization to organize its largest Swim ever and exceed its fundraising goals. “About 10 people participated in the very first swim event in 1976. After the 30th anniversary swim, event organizers almost had to cut off registration,” Ms. Zabinski said. “It was huge; it became our largest swim ever.”

A record-shattering 421 swimmers participated in the Swim. In prior years, the event raised between \$100,000 to \$150,000. With the help of Blackbaud NetCommunity, the organization beat its average by 67 percent, raising more than \$209,000. “We had donations coming in from all over the country. People could just go online, find their swimmer, and make their contribution very easily,” said Ms. Zabinski. “It worked well for us, and we raised more money than we ever had before.”

Staff will now also be able to easily achieve a holistic view of supporters. “Even though we are an environmental organization, we are a community organization — and an integrated database is all about knowing who is in your community and what they’re doing,” Ms. Zabinski said. “We use the information to help us know who our donors are and where they’ve come from so we can determine how to go forward. It also helps us track what our staff is doing through their notes and actions; it helps us keep the team a team.”

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