

Customer Success Story

Washington University in St. Louis: Olin Business School

United States | Higher Education | Blackthorn Events

Part One

About Olin Business School

The Olin Business School is one of seven academic schools at Washington University in St. Louis, MO. The school was founded in 1917 and renamed after entrepreneur John M. Olin in 1988.

Every institution is unique, but one of the common problems they face is getting more prospects and students to attend admissions and important campus events.

Washington University at St. Louis's (WashU) Olin Business School took its event management success to another level with Blackthorn Events. We've broken down how they achieve record-breaking registrations, manage a unified CRM system across their departments, and maximize the return on their marketing budget. Ready for the play-by-play?

Part Two

The Landscape

Salesforce is used by most departments within Olin, including

- Alumni
- Graduate Recruitment and Admissions
- Research Centers
- Weston Career Center
- Corporate Relations
- Non-degree Executive Education

Scope

- 120 Standard Users
- 30 Platform Users
- 8.5K Community Users



Events System Components

- Original: Data stored in multiple platforms and Excel files
- Optimized: Salesforce, Marketing Cloud, Blackthorn Events, Zoom

Olin's Events

Events are crucial for Olin. They can be very large with noteworthy speakers, designed to strengthen ties between Olin and their constituents, or they can be focused events like Graduate Admissions Recruiting Events, Info Sessions, Coffee Chats, or Application Tips.

Department	Type of Events	Target Audience	Purpose
Marketing & Communications	Olin community events	Varies by topic	Strengthen ties to Olin / community
	Global/Leadership perspectives	Olin internal and external community	Develop partnerships
Graduate Admissions	Recruiting (Students)	Prospective students	Share our value prop
	Yield	Admitted students	Minimize melt
Career Center	Career seminars	Olin alumni	Provide career services to alumni
	Recruiting (Employers)	Prospective employers	Connect employers with students
Alumni	Lifelong learning	Olin alumni	Strengthen ties to Olin / community
Research Centers	Topical events based on research / strategy / industry	Varies by topic	Showcase research

Part Three

What Drew Olin to Blackthorn Events

With so many departments, they needed an app that was flexible enough to work for several different sizes and types of events, and was easy to use. Blackthorn Events is built within the

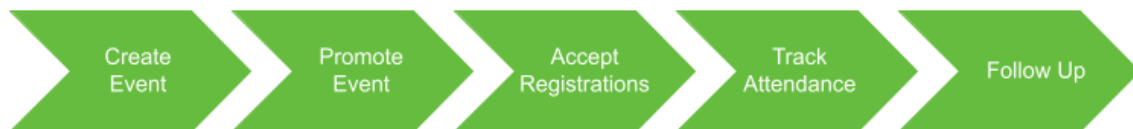
Salesforce platform, saving wasted time from manual work, long data transfers, and frustrating integration processes.

They were most attracted to:

- The Zoom integration and attendance tracking
- Ease of implementation
- Responsiveness of Support staff
- Ability to quickly develop new functionality, such as UTM tracking
- Contact matching on ALL emails
- Vanity domain; Favicon
- Not a per-user license cost
- Highest-rated events app on the AppExchange

Part Four

Finding Success



Create Event

Ensuring a consistent look-and-feel was a priority for Olin. Using Blackthorn Events, they could specify parameters that applied to all events regardless of their department, such as brand colors, font, Favicon URL, and more. Since their departments tend to host similar events repeatedly, they start with a “deep clone” of an existing event. Deep cloning is a Blackthorn Events feature that includes cloning the event child records, such as ticket types.

Once the event is created, the event manager updates the event details, image(s), and custom forms. The event is then linked to a campaign for marketing purposes. They always ask custom questions during registration and love the many options Blackthorn Events offers, including dependent questions. Once the event is ready to be promoted, it's submitted for approval.



Promote Event

Now that the event is created and approved (yay!), it's time to promote it. Olin uses Salesforce Marketing Cloud to send email invitations to their target audience, which has been added to the related campaign. If the target audience includes contacts not in Salesforce, they utilize "staging tables" to upload the contacts. The uploaded records are checked against existing leads/contacts, and duplicates from the upload are removed. Related records are created as they've specified. For events, at the very least, they would include the contact and the related campaign. In addition to sending invitations, Olin promotes via paid and earned social media, advertising, newsletters, and publishes on the master events calendar on their website.

Accept Registrations

There are several ways that Olin maximizes the time and money spent on events:

Where are they coming from?

[UTM tracking](#) information from their marketing efforts is captured as people register, including campaign, medium, and source. This UTM data is crucial for Olin since it helps them understand the impact of their advertising spend. Their implementation partner, [Huron Consulting Group](#), was instrumental in helping them set it up, and it was an area that they needed Blackthorn to develop (which we did, of course!)

Who are they?

Blackthorn Events checks for existing contacts and if there isn't one, creates the contact. Blackthorn matches registrants using all email addresses for contacts to prevent duplicates. Still, duplicates are impossible to avoid altogether. If Olin finds duplicates, they use Object Merge to easily combine them.

Now what?

After the interested party registers, Olin sends a registration confirmation email (which is logged as an activity) that contains a personalized link ([AttendeeLink](#)) to join the event.

Identifying opportunities

Depending on the event, they also canvas for interest in their graduate programs and/or non-degree education. Where there's interest, they create opportunities and drop prospects into Marketing Cloud journeys for additional messaging.



Which department gets which contacts?

All of Olin's contacts are public and they don't have record ownership. Instead, they track and highlight which Olin departments have an affiliation to each contact. This is determined automatically based on actions taken by the contact, not the internal user (no fighting over contacts needed). In the case of events, all registrants are affiliated to the department hosting the event. If the registrant expressed interest in one of their offerings, the contact is associated with that department as well.

How do you know who registered?

Last but not least, since the event is linked to the campaign, campaign members are automatically added (or updated) to "registered."

Track Attendance

On the day of the event, attendance is captured in real-time and updated in Salesforce as registrants log in (virtual events) or check-in (in-person events) using their personalized [AttendeeLink](#) or QR code. Olin has found the AttendeeLink feature to be particularly helpful since people often try to mask their personal information. Attendee records are automatically set to "Attended," which is critical for sending the appropriate post-event survey or follow-up email.

Olin also creates custom engagement records for attendees. This, combined with other areas of engagement throughout the school, helps them understand the level of engagement from their constituents and the companies they work for.

Follow Up (Using Metrics & Trends)

The event process is completed by tracking results and metrics, then following up as appropriate. At Olin, they track a few areas related to events:

1. **Gather basic information on events and registrants.** Both began trending upward with Olin's online events since they could extend their geographical reach. Not to mention that people are more likely to sign up for a virtual event, even if they know they cannot attend, so they can get the recording afterward. That still captures the interested party's details so Olin can begin a conversation.

Track: # of events, # of registrants, # of attendees, % of attended/registered, # of new contacts

2. **Analyze efficiencies for event management.** While Olin doesn't evaluate hard metrics against the time it takes to manage event data in Salesforce, they're continuously looking for ways to be more efficient. They found that with Blackthorn Events, their event managers spent less time creating events and tracking attendance.

Track: Efficiencies related to creating a registration page, tracking attendance, overall self-sufficiency

3. **Looking at the KPIs around ROI.** That's quite a mouthful! Let's break it down. Olin's most critical KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are around the ROI (Return on Investment) on event promotions. Since they capture UTM data during the registration process and look for interest in their offerings, Olin's marketing team can track new opportunities that are sourced from advertising and see what percentage enroll, providing justification for their advertising budget.

Track: Effectiveness of promotions, lead generation, lead conversion

4. **Evaluating individual email results.** Olin looks at who is receiving their emails, opening them, and clicking on links. Since they have a unified CRM system, it's important that there aren't too many hands in the cookie jar. Olin's event managers have the ability to view email results across all departments and monitor for over-saturation. After all, the intention is to enroll and attend, not annoy.

Track: Open rates, clickthrough rates, and saturation