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University of Auckland

"Blackbaud SKY API has given us a solution that will last long into the future."

—John Bird
Director of Business Intelligence, University of Auckland

The Journey to Bring to Life Blackbaud SKY API™ at the University of Auckland

As the Director of Business Intelligence at the University of Auckland, John Bird's key charter is to improve data capture alongside exploring the information held within that data. This is by no means an easy task and involves searching for new sources of data and capturing better data to help enable tasks such as more sophisticated predictive modelling.

John is a firm believer that the analysis of donor behaviour will be a key element to the continued future fundraising success of the University of Auckland, New Zealand's largest university.

"You definitely need to have your house in order before deep diving into the analytical aspects of data and strategy."

"It's really important that we collect data in the right way and have access to more attributes and more sources relating to our alumni," emphasised John.

University of Auckland is powered by
Blackbaud SKY API™

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Key challenges faced by the University of Auckland

So how does Blackbaud SKY API come to life for Auckland University?

If we start at the beginning, Auckland University was already extensively using the old Raiser's Edge 7 integration. There were two main systems that integrated - the university's People Records system (known as their EPR Enterprise Person Registry), and Peoplesoft's CS 9 which holds academic and employment history.

The existing integration into the Raiser's Edge system was working well and doing the job.

However, as John points out, the university wanted to get more out of the integration and its overall effectiveness.

"The aim was to build more integrations on a new platform using the latest API."

—John Bird
Director of Business Intelligence, University of Auckland

Prior to John coming on board, University of Auckland undertook an extensive review to see whether the new Blackbaud SKY API was 'fit for purpose' and whether they could replicate all the old functionality they had with the new version.

Many significant steps were made to move the university closer to implementing Blackbaud SKY API and in July 2017 this culminated in the decision that the university was ready and the API was 'fit for purpose'.

"The necessary constituent end points were present, so it was useable, and we were ready," noted John.

Behind the Scenes with the University of Auckland's In house Developers

The University of Auckland boasts a strong team of in house developers. As part of the initial process, a Solution Architect conducted an assessment of their current systems. This involved establishing which end points were available, as well as identifying if the security model from Blackbaud would satisfy the university's own security protocol.

In addition, the team had the task of scoping out how many calls per day they would use to integrate with the Blackbaud SKY API as this would be a cost factor consideration. In parallel to this, the university was changing its own API and replacing it with modern technology.

Establishing Best Practice Standards Along the Blackbaud SKY API Journey

From a best practice perspective, John Bird continues to add fundamental insight and sound advice for those looking to implement Blackbaud SKY API.

"It's important to get a good understanding of the authorisation model as this caused some challenges for us in the initial stages," he said.

"The journey to Blackbaud SKY API provided is very well documented and easy to navigate," said John.

"As Blackbaud SKY API matures, it's important to have a good support model in place," he insisted.

As John looks back at the journey for Blackbaud SKY API and when asked if he would do anything differently his response comes as no surprise.

"The journey was at times challenging, but that is why it's important to manage your resources effectively," John responded.

"I would definitely go on the journey again. But of course, I recommend taking precautionary measures and digging into more detail earlier on. You need to set realistic, but firm timeframes with your developers and other stakeholders," he said.

The Future with Blackbaud SKY API

Is Blackbaud SKY API going to make a huge difference to the university moving forward?

John confidently responded: "Definitely, it means an important part of our user process is now well documented and using the latest and best of breed technology."

> *"Blackbaud SKY API opens the door to consider integration with other cloud integration platforms such as Zapier or Workato."*
>
> —John Bird
> Director of Business Intelligence, University of Auckland

In fact, over time it's the capabilities available in these types of platform – including integration with email service providers and event registration platforms, that could provide the University of Auckland their next integration opportunity with Raiser's Edge NXT.

Finally, when asked what the solution would bring to the table for University of Auckland over time, there were several key nuggets highlighted by John.

"Blackbaud SKY API has given us a solution that will last long into the future."

The availability of the Blackbaud SKY API within other integration platforms makes robust integration accessible to business users not just developers.