

## CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

## Two Ten Footwear Foundation



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As factories move overseas and brick-and-mortar stores shutter, Two Ten Footwear Foundation remains agile to help shoe industry workers. With the right grantmaking solution, Two Ten can ensure swift responses in times of disaster and thoughtful analysis of how to allocate resources in the most meaningful way.

### Two Ten Footwear Foundation adapts to changing times to reach more shoe industry workers in need.

Two Ten Footwear Foundation began in Boston’s leather district during the Great Depression with a simple mission: to help struggling people in the shoe industry.

In the 80 years since the foundation’s humble beginnings, Two Ten has grown into a multimillion-dollar support network dedicated to serving the 300,000 people working in footwear in the United States today. In 2018 alone, the foundation allocated \$2.4 million to prevent evictions or foreclosures, provide disaster relief, and grow professional networks—plus an additional \$1 million in scholarship support.

Two Ten Footwear Foundation is powered by Blackbaud solutions for:

- ✓ Grantmaking
- ✓ Fundraising and relationship management
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Analytics
- ✓ Services

“At the core, we’re not only trying to provide financial assistance to people in the footwear industry but to improve their quality of life through scholarships and career development,” explained CRM Manager Lisa Tacker. Despite its extensive outreach, Two Ten faces considerable challenges to its operations, as factories move overseas and retail stores shutter.

In early 2019, discount shoe retailer Payless Shoes announced that it would close 2,500 stores in the U.S. and Canada, impacting an estimated 16,000 employees in the process. “We find that people are contacting us who have worked for Payless for 15 to 25 years,” Tacker said. “They’re using the online platform, so we’re using technology to connect people who work in footwear to let them know we’re here.”

Two Ten’s success in engaging people online illustrates the need for agility in how the foundation reaches both supporters and beneficiaries. Years ago, new employees started their jobs at shoe factories and retail stores with an invitation to make donations to the foundation; they learned that generosity from across the industry could help them in times of need. Today, so many footwear employees work for large, internet-based retailers in which footwear comprises one small portion of the total business—and Two Ten never factors into the onboarding process.

“We have to stay on top of trends,” Tacker said. “Our messaging has to be concise, and it has to be fast. If we want to engage with the younger generation, we are going to have to make sure we are on top of technology at all times and communicating with them in a way that they want to communicate back.”



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## Accessing Information Instantly

Two Ten partners with Blackbaud for grantmaking, marketing, and fundraising to ensure that the foundation reaches the most people in the most appropriate way. In addition to arranging town hall meetings for those footwear industry employees that work in warehouses and factories, Two Ten also revamped its website and is exploring text-to-join options to connect with younger workers.

The result: A more efficient process. Now 90% of relief requests originate online, according to Tacker, and response times fell by 60%.

Not only do footwear workers get assistance faster, but Two Ten’s own committee can make more strategic, forward-looking decisions based on demographic and geographic information. Its members know, at a glance, the number of people helped and the number still waiting.

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With this data so accessible, Two Ten noticed a standout trend: Salaries haven’t kept pace with cost of living. “As the price of goods and services go up but payment doesn’t, it becomes more expensive to live,” Tacker said. “We’re seeing the trend of people needing things like groceries more and more.”

## Evolving with an Industry

As Two Ten analyzes trends, the foundation will continue to explore the most impactful ways to respond with Blackbaud as its partner. “Brick-and-mortar stores are going out of business,” Tacker said. “Our role is not only to alleviate financial pressure, because stores are closing, but to make sure we’re there for counseling—career, financial, and mental health when needed.”

In 2018 alone, Two Ten kept nearly 800 families in their homes and provided heat and water for more than 550 additional families, while assisting another nearly 800 workers in natural disaster recovery. Looking ahead, Tacker said she and her colleagues hope to cultivate support in new ways, potentially through events such as a marathon.

Currently, Two Ten relies on a gala for 80% of its annual revenue. “Our goal is to build a fundraising model outside of the gala,” Tacker said. “We can’t depend on it being the only source of revenue.”

Despite a rapidly evolving industry and an equally agile foundation, one constant drives Two Ten forward: a generous community of people within the shoe industry.

We have all these corporations that are their own brands—Nike, Timberland, Vans, Converse,” Tacker said. “They’re huge conglomerates and rivals vying for the same consumer dollar. But they come together and are our board members. Those executives work together to help people as a whole. There’s a lot of love within the industry.”

Ensure strategic giving programs with grants management software.



90%

of relief requests originate online



Ability to analyze trends and make decisions accordingly—and quickly.

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