



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

VDS Business Solutions

Red Falcon Provides Solid Growth and Profit Platform for Office Supply Dealer

If you've ever wondered what a true small business entrepreneur looks like, you might just want to take a trip to Ball Ground, GA, about an hour's drive north of Atlanta, and spend some time with Joey Blackwell at VDS Business Solutions.

Since starting his business in 1997 with a single product line and just two employees (Joey and his wife, Terrice) Joey has transformed VDS into a genuine growth dynamo. VDS Business Solutions boasts year-over-year double-digit sales gains and serves multiple markets across the South with a product mix that positions the company as a true one-stop resource for its customers.

Red Falcon helps to facilitate a partnership with VDS customers

All of that makes for a terrific small business success story by any measure and, Joey says, a key element of that story is his growing partnership with ECI after bringing in the Red Falcon ERP with ecommerce software solution to manage the company.

That word "partnership" is another critical component of the VDS story. "We see ourselves very much as partners for our customers, rather than just another outfit that's trying to sell them something," Joey explains. "If you don't have that kind of relationship with your customers, you quickly end up getting into price wars. And even if you win, it gets very difficult to stay profitable."



OVERVIEW

VDS Business Solutions
<https://callvds.com>
Ball Ground, GA

BUSINESS CHALLENGES:

- The business wanted to provide value to customers, rather than be drawn into ultimately unprofitable price wars.
- With a lean operation, VDS needed a technology partner that could keep up with dealers' changing technology needs.
- The company serves multiple markets and needs to offer a customized solution with a versatile product mix.

BENEFITS OF SWITCHING:

- By being able to offer what its customers need, from office supplies to personal protective equipment, on a superior platform, VDS is seen as a partner to its loyal customers.
- Red Falcon and ECI are committed to making the evolutionary infrastructure improvements to match the industry's best retailers in technical performance and customer experience.



The software enables VDS to sell what customers need, and evolve with their needs

At the heart of Blackwell's partnership philosophy is a fierce commitment to letting the customer drive pretty much everything VDS does. Case in point: the company's product mix.

When Blackwell opened for business nearly 25 years ago, office products were the last thing on his mind. Back then, VDS stood for Vehicle Data Systems. Its sole product line consisted of onboard fleet monitoring devices, a precursor of today's GPS systems that detected vehicle speed, mileage, and idle time for corporate and local government accounts.

One day on a sales call, a customer mentioned that they were also heavy buyers of office products and would be happy to add VDS to its suppliers in that category. The rest, as they say, is history!

Today, VDS stands for Versatile Distribution Services. Instead of fleet monitoring devices, its product mix comprises office supplies, furniture, technology products, and in response to new customer demand driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, a rapidly growing assortment of personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies.

VDS's ability to provide competitive prices and world-class service on such a broad product mix—particularly when competitors struggled to source PPE items in the early months of the pandemic—represents the foundation of the dealership's partnership-building capabilities.

But for Joey Blackwell, partnerships run in multiple directions and the ones he has

developed within the industry are just as important to his company's growth. And he happily reports that one of VDS's most critical industry partnerships today is with ECI and Red Falcon.

Industry-leading e-commerce infrastructure competes with the largest retailers

"A solid technology base is so important for any dealer," Blackwell contends. "Without it, you're setting yourself up to be gobbled up or run over. Many of our customers use their phones or tablets to search for items and place orders. We need to be able to offer something that matches what they're accustomed to seeing elsewhere online and we can do all of that and more with Red Falcon."

Red Falcon's marketing muscle, along with its user-friendliness and easy customization capabilities are among the key reasons why 2020 sales at VDS were up by more than 35%, says Blackwell. "With Red Falcon, we have an online resource that's just as good, if not better, than anything that Staples, Office Depot, or even Amazon can offer," he maintains. "Our people love it, but even more important, so do our customers!"

Excellent technical and conversion support enable an easy transition

Bringing in new software can be a high-stress undertaking for any organization but, says Blackwell, Red Falcon kept things smooth and trouble-free. "The conversion went great," he recalls. "The Red Falcon technical support team was truly amazing. They were very accessible and happy to work within our schedule and it was a great experience for us."



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Blackwell also gives Red Falcon kudos for recognizing that maintaining technology excellence requires tracking a constantly moving target. "One thing we really like about Red Falcon is the way they keep on top of dealers' changing technology needs and are committed to making the adjustments and improvements to keep us competitive," he says.



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"We look on our partnership with Red Falcon as a mission-critical investment in the business," Blackwell adds. "The return we have gained from our investment in Red Falcon has already exceeded expectations and it's only going to get bigger and better going forward!"

Contact us today to learn more.

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