Customer Success Story

University of Colorado Boulder Leeds School of Business

United States ǀ Higher Education ǀ Blackthorn Events

About Leeds School of Business

The University of Colorado Boulder's Leeds School of Business is a leader in academic excellence and student engagement. Salesforce serves as their system of record for tracking academic progress, outreach activities, internship placements, and more for their elite students.

Leeds needed a dynamic and flexible event management solution that could integrate effortlessly with their existing ecosystem. In 2021, the Leeds School of Business successfully accomplished its goal by switching to Blackthorn.

The Challenge

Leeds previously used another event management system but found it lacking flexibility and scalability. Their growing needs required a more adaptable tool that could support various stakeholders and audiences for different event types. The school needed an event management solution that:

- Improved event setup for staff organizers
- Allowed for nimble adaptation to different event needs
- Directly integrated with Salesforce
- Provided detailed tracking and reporting capabilities

Why CU Boulder Chose Blackthorn Events

One of the biggest selling points of Blackthorn Events was its **native integration with Salesforce**, which Leeds considers the backbone of their operations.

With Blackthorn Events, Leeds addressed all their challenges, including their most pressing need—giving staff the ability to set up and manage events effectively, ensuring well-organized planning and execution. Additionally, they were able to:

- Enhance reporting for event tracking and performance evaluation
- Track new and existing contacts directly within Salesforce
- Easily capture payments for paid events

"Adopting Blackthorn.io made sense from a global perspective to best fit our event management and data tracking needs," said Elicia Suren, Assistant Director of CRM, Leeds School of Business, CU Boulder.

Use Cases: How Leeds Leverages Blackthorn Events

1. Blackthorn Messenger for Automated Communications

Leeds relies on Blackthorn Messenger to send automated event communications using templates, ensuring efficient outreach to attendees.

"The Messenger service improves event reminder communications, and the attendee check-in data is now flowing into our reports to track who attended the events," Suren said.

2. Integration with Salesforce Marketing Cloud

For high-profile events, Leeds leverages Marketing Cloud's Journey Builder to manage the full event communication lifecycle, from invitations to reminders.

3. Attendance Tracking and Salesforce Dashboards

Blackthorn Events is integral to managing workshops and learning experiences required for Leeds' Executive Education Program. Leeds uses Blackthorn to:

- Track required and optional events for students
- Manage event attendance records directly in Salesforce
- Leverage Salesforce dashboards to measure engagement
- Capture attendee data for long-term program insights

4. Attendance Check-in with the Mobile App

Leeds leverages Blackthorn's Check-in feature in the mobile app for real-time attendance tracking.

Creative Use Cases: Expanding Beyond Traditional Events

Blackthorn Events has allowed Leeds to scale its event management beyond standard workshops and lectures, supporting other areas such as:

- Academic advising
- Entrepreneurship events, such as "Startups and Sandwiches"
- Career services
- Business sports events
- Faculty and staff training programs

Event engagement data is now also being used to analyze internship and job placement success.

These creative implementations have driven increased engagement, attendance, and impact across multiple departments within Leeds.

Large-Scale Event Success: Colorado Business Economic Outlook Forum

One of the most significant events Leeds hosts is the Colorado Business Economic Outlook Forum, where thousands of business leaders gather for insights on the economic forecast.

With Blackthorn Events, Leeds can:

- Manage thousands of registrations with ease
- Integrate attendee data directly into their Salesforce CRM and marketing platforms
- Optimize check-ins and event communications

"Blackthorn.io's flexibility and diverse set of features are especially helpful with our large events," said Ollie Peterson, Digital Communications Specialist, Leeds School of Business, CU Boulder. "It's been invaluable to have all attendee registration data in one place, integrated directly with both our CRM and marketing platform."

Blackthorn

The Impact: Transforming Event Management at Leeds

Since adopting Blackthorn Events, the CU Boulder Leeds School of Business has seen impressive results:

- Helped over 29,000+ attendees register for Leeds-hosted events
- Grew its user base from 2 staff members to 50
- Standardized event setups for various departments while supporting unique event requirements

"Through using Blackthorn, our center has been able to scale up our executive education offerings, driving increased revenue to support our mission," said Julie Waggoner, Director of Operations, Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility, Leeds School of Business, CU Boulder.

By choosing Blackthorn Events, CU Boulder Leeds School of Business has built a solid foundation for efficient, data-driven event management. As their needs continue to evolve, Blackthorn.io remains a trusted partner in ensuring successful events that drive student engagement, operational efficiency, and program growth.

"As we continue to grow, Blackthorn will remain a solid foundation for our ongoing event needs for students, staff, and faculty here at Leeds," Suren said.