

Balise Auto Group Expands with IT Improvements from Helion



BALISE

Summary

Balise Auto Group, which operates 23 stores in New England, was tired of computer problems holding them back. So they hired Helion to take care of their many IT needs, like setting up new networks, improving Wi-Fi, troubleshooting phone systems, and bolstering cybersecurity.

Since working with Helion, Balise Auto Group has experienced tremendous growth, and has been able to pursue an expansion strategy that included the acquisition of four dealerships and moving ten of its stores to new facilities.

The Problem

"Prior to working with Helion, we recognized that technology was changing faster than our ability to keep up with it, and being able to manage the computer system was becoming increasingly important in terms of how we run our business," says Jeb Balise, CEO of Balise Auto Group.

Many of Balise Auto Group's stores were having issues with productivity caused by Internet outages, system downtime, and general slowness of PCs and software.

"For every problem we had we would come up with a solution," says Balise. "But the solutions kept getting more expensive and complicated our business model even more, until the point where we were focusing way too much time on computer issues."

Balise asked consultants and colleagues at other auto groups for recommendations, and the name Helion kept coming up. After considering all the options, Balise decided to transition from keeping an IT staff in-house to a 100% outsourced solution provided by Helion.

Internet: Accelerated

Helion's certified IT technicians began by reviewing Internet connectivity to see if the stores had enough bandwidth. Helion ended up upgrading the majority of Balise's stores to fiber optics, and ensured resiliency by contracting more than one carrier. This dramatically increased overall Internet speeds and eliminated outages.

A significant increase in Wi-Fi capacity also allowed Balise Auto Group to implement customer-focused processes in service and sales.

In the service lanes, additional access points and outdoor antennas allow service advisors to greet customers and perform transactions with mobile tablets. Wireless antennas also expand Wi-Fi access to the lots, where salespeople can interact with customers using mobile devices.

"Most of our customers use mobile devices out on the lot, so from our standpoint the sales associates have to be doing the same thing," says Balise. "If a customer calls and asks about a car while the salesperson is out on the lot, that salesperson can instantly pull up the information on their mobile device, instead of having to tell the customer they'll call back after they get back to their desk and look up the information."

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Phones: Fixed

Prior to working with Helion, Balise Auto Group experienced problems with its phone system. Wait times were inconsistent, customers were occasionally routed to the wrong places, and many calls were dropped.

Helion established a new call flow and made some technical fixes that solved the issues.

"We receive a huge volume of calls and not having the ability to handle those properly was a big problem," says Balise.

"Helion engineered fixes so our call centers are much more efficient, and nearly eliminated misdirected or dropped calls."

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Data: Secured

Balise also credits Helion with providing peace of mind associated with increased security. Helion's security services include maintaining and monitoring firewalls, performing software patches and upgrades, and implementing email security.

"It's nice to be able to sleep at night knowing that the best people are taking care of things," says Balise.

The Results

"By eliminating bottlenecks, the result is we have a much faster and more responsive system," says Jeb Balise. "This allowed us to finally focus on developing new processes, such as digital contracting and digital archiving. Before Helion, it was impossible to do this, because we didn't have the system performance to take advantage of these features in our DMS."

While Balise Auto Group's management and employees focus on improving processes, Jeb Balise focuses on growth and expansion. Since working with Helion, Balise has acquired four dealerships and moved 10 of its stores into new facilities. Helion was tasked with setting up all the IT in the new facilities and integrating the networks of the acquired dealerships with Balise Auto Group's existing IT network.

"A real benefit to having Helion is the scalability of their services. They were able to swarm every new project with additional staff," says Balise. "With a fixed IT staff we could not have opened as many new stores or facilities. Our IT staff was kept so busy responding to tickets and keeping the status quo running, it was nearly impossible for them to be proactive."

Jeb Balise sums up the relationship with Helion this way:

"Since bringing Helion on board we spend a lot less time thinking about computer problems and a lot more time focusing on our core business."

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