

CASE STUDY

# Blain's Farm & Fleet Improves Time-to-Insights & Customer Relationships



## BACKGROUND

Blain's Farm & Fleet is a family-owned business and The Modern General Store™, deeply rooted in the traditions and culture of the Midwest.

A multi-channel retailer with a website and regional chain of 44 retail stores across four states, including Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Michigan, Blain's offers quality products at fair prices for more than 150,000 items across every category imaginable. To meet their customer's diverse lifestyles and needs, Blain's prides itself in continuing to adapt and expand to their already large product and service offerings.

Like many organizations, Blain's relies on timely analysis of customer data to effectively develop targeted, personalized campaigns and increase customer satisfaction.

Yet with the previous matching process, analyzing the effectiveness of such campaigns would be delayed for weeks at a time. Customer records had to be batched together into a single file and sent out to a matching

“

The matchit solution...is extremely flexible. Rather than being a “black box” architecture, every feature of the matching algorithm can be configured to support a particular business decision about the type of matching that we want the system to perform.

Shaun Niemeyer  
Data Engineer,  
Business Insights & Analytics  
Blain's Farm & Fleet

”

provider on a semi-monthly basis before transactions could be matched to actual customers.

“This delay impacted our ability to directly respond to the campaign and follow up with those customers who shopped with us,” explains Shaun Niemeyer, Data Engineer for the Business Insights and Analytics department at Blain's.

## OBJECTIVE

Looking to improve upon their existing matching process and decrease their time-to-insights, Niemeyer and the team at Blain's sought to bring their entire matching process in-house.

Due to the variety and volume of Blain's customer data, they needed a matching solution capable of handling a multitude of complex matching scenarios, such as matching customers with partial names or addresses to full personal names or even trade area, known as "proximity" matching.

The solution also had to allow the team to easily calibrate the level of fuzziness to use in each matching scenario, without requiring a steep learning curve.

---

## SOLUTION

The Customer Success team at 360Science worked with Niemeyer and his team to integrate matchit® for Microsoft SQL Server. 360Science's sophisticated matching engine, matchit is specifically designed for the complexities and errors commonly found in customer data. The seamless integration and flexible architecture made it easy for Niemeyer and his team to be up and running within the hour.

"Working with the Customer Success team to get the initial product setup and running was surprisingly easy," recalls Niemeyer. "We were able to install the software and implement a prototype of our matching solution within an hour."

Featuring steep configuration settings capable of high levels of customization, matchit for SQL is perfect for the wide range of analysis needed. What's more, matchit is incredibly intuitive and processes data fast - so accurate insights are available in minutes, not weeks.

---

## RESULTS

With 360Science's matchit solution for Microsoft SQL Server, Niemeyer's team now has faster, more accurate access to the customer information they need, when they need it.

"One of the key metrics of interest to our company is the proportion of customers who are new shoppers," explains Niemeyer. "With more accurate and more



With more accurate and more timely matching, we are better able to identify those customers who are truly new to Blain's, and to then immediately target those customers with offers that can lead to return visits.

Shaun Niemeyer  
Data Engineer,  
Business Insights & Analytics  
Blain's Farm & Fleet



timely matching, we are better able to identify those customers who are truly new to Blains, and to then immediately target those customers with offers that can lead to return visits."

The ability to quickly evaluate the effectiveness of targeted promotions on particular segments, has allowed Niemeyer and his team to be more responsive to custom behavior, thereby increasing customer loyalty overtime.

---

## FUTURE

Having decreased time-to-insights and improved their ability to identify new and prospective customers, Niemeyer expects to see improvements in key performance indicators such as customer churn, visits per customer, and even annual spend.

"The ability to contact new customers the day after they have made a purchase will certainly help the business increase loyalty and expand our customer base," he says.

And 360Science will be there every step of the way. As Niemeyer puts it, "The technical support and responsiveness provided by the 360Science team has been exceptional. We usually receive a response to technical questions within an hour, and the support staff goes out of their way to suggest many possible solutions to our questions."