

CASE STUDY: **AFFINITY BLUE**

Helping new partners grow with flexible fulfilment and financing

Despite being a relatively new entrant to the market, Affinity Blue has already managed to build up an enviable portfolio of customers across sectors ranging from government and non-profits to FMCG retail and distribution. The Affinity Blue team prides itself on customer-centricity, investing heavily in identifying the technology that best fits each customer's underlying needs and delivering the right results with full accountability.

Challenges:

- Inventory shortages that could jeopardise major customer implementations
- Inadequate credit to finance high-volume customer requirements
- Insufficient time to stay fully updated on new offers and technologies

Solutions:

- Flexible product resourcing and financing from Dicker Data
- Behind-the-scenes support for product awareness and vendor admin

Benefits:

- Greater ability to provision and finance high-value, high-volume deals
- Deeper awareness of emerging technologies for future customer needs
- Confidence to maintain Affinity Blue's growth at speed



Challenges:

Meeting high-volume orders with minimal resources

Affinity Blue's high standards of customer success, coupled with its founders' deep technical experience in Aruba and other wireless technologies, were bringing in retail and government clients far bigger than firms of its size would typically take on. That rapid upscaling, however, comes with its own set of operational challenges – like meeting enterprise-level demand with a team of only five people and relatively lean finances.

“Being a start-up, we often lack the credit terms needed to finance gear for bigger orders, and broader logistical challenges have made it harder to acquire the sheer volumes of hardware that our customers increasingly need – sometimes with little notice due to just how quickly conditions for them can change,” says Simon Hayward, Managing Director of Affinity Blue. “When you're a small fish in the ocean, it's often hard to go against the tide and deliver at scale compared to other larger firms – which can sometimes prove immensely frustrating for us and our customers.”

As Affinity Blue's order book has grown, its people also find themselves with less time to stay up to date with the latest product updates and relationships with new vendors. “There's a certain amount of time you need to devote to simply reading up on promotions and settling contracts with vendors,” Hayward admits. “And if we're not careful, that can fall by the wayside.”

Solution:

Flexible logistics and frictionless support

Dicker Data's flexibility with resourcing and financing have proven vital to how Affinity Blue serves its largest customers, particularly when faced with urgent requirements for inventory or deal closure.

“The Dicker team not only hold substantial buffers on inventory, they're also quick to equip us with loan gear or substitute products in when a specific access point or switch isn't available,” says Hayward. “And they've been incredibly flexible in negotiating easier payment terms that allow us to bring in high volumes of hardware, even though we don't have the credit of more established firms – something which a lot of distributors have refused to offer us.”

“We share the same values as the team at Affinity Blue: focus on what's best for the customer, and what we need to do to make it happen,” says Darko Raic, Solutions Architect at Dicker Data. “We want to enable our partners wherever we can: it's a win for them, their customers, and us.”

That flexibility has allowed Affinity Blue to pursue and deliver on much larger deals with confidence, further fuelling the firm's reputation for customer excellence. Dicker Data also keeps the Affinity Blue team up to date with the latest promotions and enhancements to Aruba solutions, which currently make up as much as 95% of the firm's business; as well as managing the administrative and compliance load of onboarding Affinity Blue as a partner with a broader range of vendors.

“We've built up a wealth of experience working with Aruba – there are simply no other vendors out there who have their one-stop functionality across such a diverse range of products,” Hayward says. “But staying up to date with the latest changes, as well as broadening our technical knowledge to answer our customers' diverse needs – that takes time that we often struggle to find. The Dicker team have taken out almost all the friction from that process: nowadays when we're onboarding with a new vendor, all we have to do is ask the Dicker Data team and they will source and make the appropriate recommendations.”

Benefits:

Future-proofed customer infrastructure and business growth

Dicker Data's support has given Affinity Blue the flexibility and knowledge to not only meet customers' current requirements, but better anticipate their future needs. "Whether it's the Internet of Things and autonomous packing in our distribution customers' warehouses, or more immersive digital experiences in our healthcare and public sector customers' institutions, wireless connectivity is going to play a huge role," Hayward predicts. "We have to remember that we're deploying infrastructure and networks to support technologies that often don't exist yet."

And keeping up with those technologies – as well as the complementary vendors who'll provide them – becomes much easier with the help of trusted partners with a strong track record. "Dicker has been instrumental in advising us on where new technologies or products might meet

emerging customer needs, even as their vendors like Aruba have been constantly upgrading their capabilities," says Hayward. "And as a result, they often bring an alternate point of view that covers things we've missed or ways to do even better. We can always read the battlecards for new products, but getting that hands-on knowledge is what really matters."

Dicker Data's flexible financing and willingness to partner on big deals has given the Affinity Blue team the confidence to continue playing to their strengths. "If we land a multimillion-dollar deal, I don't have to be thinking 'how will I pay for this?' because I know we've got the support," Hayward says. "It helps a lot to know that we're well-equipped to weather the ups and downs of growth with Dicker's commitment to its partners."

"This sort of two-way relationship really makes a huge difference for firms just starting out. Without Dicker's support, I don't think we'd be doing half the business we are today."

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