# blackout

## TECHNOLOGIES
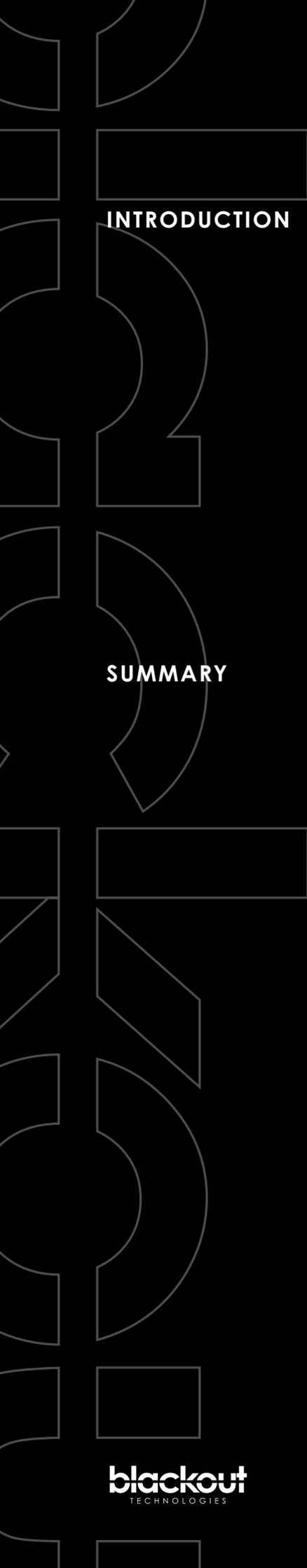
TRANSFORMING PRODUCTIVITY
BY REMOVING DISTRACTIONS

"Our introduction to Blackout could not have been better
timed. GDPR was in full swing and our clients wanted to
know what additional measures we were taking to ensure
their data was safe. Our clients were very impressed with
the software, securing our contracts. Alongside uplift in
performance, a remarkable improvement was seen and
noted in the quality of our agents' calls, this can only be
down to the agents having fewer distractions at work."

**Managing Director of a
London-based call centre**

**The Drum.
DADI Awards**
Winner 2018

DADI Award 2018 for
Technical Innovation

## INTRODUCTION

Blackout is a technology company that has developed an innovative system to regulate the use of smart devices in the workplace.

Our technology protects sensitive corporate information by restricting unauthorised functionality on smart devices, including encrypted messaging and social media, replicating existing controls on other workplace devices, such as computer terminals. We help companies meet their regulatory obligations, limiting unrecordable communications in the workplace, ensuring greater use of existing authorised channels. By limiting smart device functionality in the workplace, our technology also helps to minimise distractions at work and enables employees to improve their productivity.

## SUMMARY

In early 2018, Blackout met the management team of a call centre business who wanted to address the challenges posed to their operations by the ubiquitous ownership and use of smart devices in the workplace. Whilst their initial concerns focused on ways in which we could help them keep their customer financial data secure, in compliance with new regulations on data privacy and protection, it soon became clear that limiting distractions created by smart devices could have significant productivity benefits. Having set-up the system and created the areas on the company's premises where smart devices needed to be restricted, we conducted an efficacy test focusing on a control group of employees working for the company in 2017 and 2018.

The results have been startling. Users of our technology improved their monthly productivity by 35.1% at the end of the test. We also found that comparing monthly performances year-on-year, users achieved increased productivity without the distraction created by their smart device. In this paper we detail the set-up process, testing environment and explain how our technology works. We'd love to discuss how our system could provide a solution for your business.

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# THE SOLUTION

DEACTIVATE DISTRACTIONS



**UNREGULATED**

**REGULATED**

## THE CLIENT & TESTING GROUP

As a call centre business, our client serves companies operating in the finance, utilities, media and telecoms industries. It works to help its clients to improve their customer acquisition, retention and overall service levels.

Success in this business requires teams to operate within defined parameters with focus and dedication to achieve positive results for their clients, whilst ensuring excellent customer service. The company's people are an extension of its clients' brands and businesses, meaning that they are often their client's principal face, (or in this case voice).

Good customer sales service in this environment requires operatives to knowledgably and quickly deal with incoming enquiries, sales calls and more general customer management activities. The company's highly-trained customer acquisition teams implement sales campaigns, with a focus on attention to detail and meeting sales targets.

To set-up a restricted space for smart devices in the client's workspaces, we use a combination of non-invasive technologies. After a period of testing and calibration, we established the client's administration platform to manage the smart devices within its workplace and ensure effective operation of the system.

## THE TEST GROUP

A simple sample of 20 employees was chosen to test the technology. All had been working for the business between July and September 2017 and were working for the business during those months in 2018, enabling year-on-year comparisons to be made.
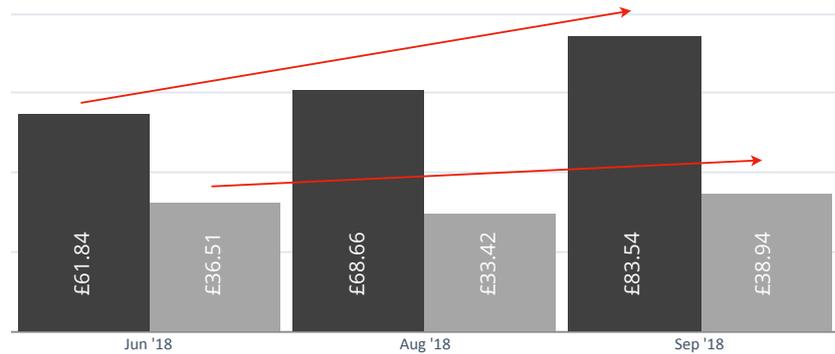
The test group was given two choices, either: place their smart device(s) in a secured box during the working shift with no access during that time, (creating a control group); or install the blackout app and be permitted to have their smart device(s) inside the restricted space, with reduced functionality. A total of 10 chose to use Blackout, with the balance opting for removal and secure storage. The duration of the test totalled 5,209 working hours over August and September 2018.

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## THE RESULTS

### AVERAGE HOURLY REVENUES RISE

In normal working conditions, June's average hourly revenues for each group set the benchmark against which future months would be measured. Those using Blackout had increased their average hourly revenue generation by 35.1% at the end of September, whilst those who chose to have their devices removed only grew average revenues per hour by 6.7%.
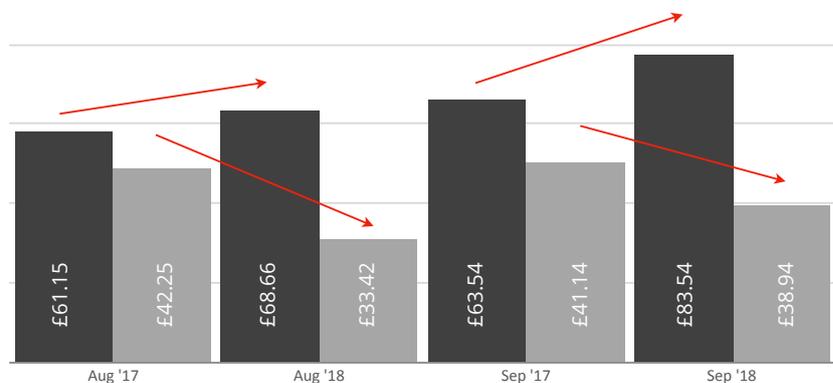
**■ Blackout**
**■ Removal**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| £61.84 | £36.51 | |
| Jun '18 | | |
| £68.66 | £33.42 | |
| | Aug '18 | |
| £83.54 | £38.94 | |
| | | Sep '18 |

### IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY

Comparing average hourly revenues per agent between 2017 and 2018 shows marked divergences in productivity between the two groups. August '18 performances improved for Blackout users by 12.3% on the previous year; but dropped 20.9% for those agents opting for removal of their devices. Productivity momentum grew for Blackout users in September '18 by 31.5% on the previous year; but fell 5.3% for those agents opting for removal. These

**■ Blackout**
**■ Removal**

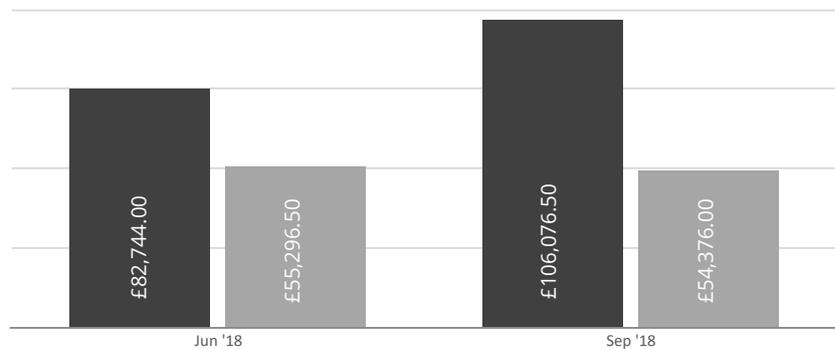| £61.15 | £42.25 | £68.66 | £33.42 | £63.54 | £41.14 | £83.54 | £38.94 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aug '17 | | Aug '18 | | Sep '17 | | Sep '18 | |

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comparisons under nominal working conditions bear out anecdotal evidence from the test group that the absence of their smart devices was as much a distraction as if they were there with full functionality. Blackout users, however, felt that knowing their phone was safe, nearby and not causing a distraction enabled them to maintain concentration and work more productively.

This is a useful facet of the technology for employers, helping them to balance the needs of their businesses against the potentially detrimental impact some new technologies can have in the workplace.

## REVENUE PERFORMANCE CONTINUES TO INCREASE

■ **Blackout**
■ **Removal**



| £82,744.00 | £55,296.50 | £106,076.50 | £54,376.00 |
| Jun '18 | | Sep '18 | |

Turning to the teams as a whole, comparing June '18, (when all employees were free to use their smart devices at work) and September '18, after two months of the new smart device policy, the uplift in revenue performance between the Blackout and Removal groups is marked. Blackout users achieved a 28.2% uplift in revenues whilst the team that chose removal saw revenues fall 1.7%.

Team Blackout also worked 5.1% fewer hours in September '18 versus June '18 and made £23,332.50 more between the two months. Those that chose removal undershot June '18's revenues by £920.50, although they also worked 7.8% fewer hours to effectively stand still.

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**NOMOPHOBIA**  noun

no·mo·pho·bia

Fear or worry at the idea of being without your mobile phone or unable to use it.

Employees with high nomophobia feel more disturbed and exhausted and their work is often interrupted. ... Organisations should find a balance between managerial control and employee autonomy.

> *Guan Wang and Ayoung Suh, 2016 conference paper.*
> *Disorder or Driver?: The Effects of Nomophobia on Work-*
> *Related Outcomes in Organisations*

75% of people admit that digital notifications lead to procrastination and decreased focus, and that individuals waste nearly an entire eight-hour work days' worth of time checking notifications every week.

> *The Branded Research Inc. survey of 1,068 U.S. adults was*
> *conducted from October 18 to October 22 and has an*
> *overall margin of error of +/- 2.9 percentage points*

A high interruption rate can significantly hinder productivity.

> *Tony Gillie and Donald Broadbent, 1989. What makes*
> *interruptions disruptive? A study of length,similarity, and*
> *complexity. Psychological Research 50, 4, 243-250.*

Interrupted individuals make more mistakes and are less efficient.

> *Laura Marulanda-Carter and Thomas W Jackson, 2012.*
> *Effects of e-mail addiction and interruptions on employees.*
> *Journal of Systems and Information Technology 14, 1, 82-94*

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# CREATING A
# DESIGNATED AREA

**BETTER SECURITY –
MONITORING & ENFORCEMENT**

Upon crossing the designated
area's threshold, registered devices
go 'cold'– losing unauthorised
functionality.

**GREATER CERTAINTY –
ENHANCED COMPLIANCE**

Personnel within the designated
area are limited to regulated
and monitored channels of
communication.

**IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY**

Removing unwarranted distractions
in workplaces helps employees to
focus on tasks and enables them to
be more productive

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Blackout was founded by Mark Hadley and Charles Watson. In their earlier careers both had seen how the saturation of smart devices in everyday working life created security and regulatory challenges for employers and impacted productivity. Unauthorised encrypted messaging in the workplace has aided market abuse and the negative impacts of excessive smart device use on mental health are well documented. It was for these reasons that Mark and Charles set about building Blackout.

The system works by using a non-invasive combination of cutting-edge proprietary technologies that provide mobile device and app management software to define restricted areas of the workplace and regulate the smart devices within them. Blackout's system locates and identifies smart devices in defined areas, ensuring they are compliant with the employer's security and compliance policies. It does not have access to personal or private data within users' smart devices and is only active when users enter workspaces regulated by Blackout Technologies.

## CONTACT

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