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Why BlackBerry Workspaces Was the Perfect Investment For This Global **Financial** Services Firm

At a Glance

GLOBAL DIVERSIFIED ALTERNATIVES QIC

Industry Financial Services
Employees 800
Location Brisbane, Australia
Products BlackBerry®
Workspaces
www.qic.com

QIC routinely works with highly sensitive data, and keeping this data secure is critical. An expanding global presence represented a significant challenge for the organization in this regard — a challenge it met through BlackBerry® Workspaces.

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The Organization

QIC is a global diversified alternative investment firm offering infrastructure, real estate, private capital, liquid strategies and multi-asset investments. It is one of the largest institutional investment managers in Australia serving governments, pension plans, sovereign wealth funds and insurers, across Australia, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the US. Headquartered in Brisbane, Australia, QIC has offices in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cleveland, London, Sydney and Melbourne. "Originally, we were very much an Australian-based business," explains Grant Slender, Information Technology, Security, and Risk Leader at QIC. "Today, however, the organization operates in an environment that is truly global."

The Challenge

Faced with the security concerns of the financial services industry, global expansion can be difficult. IT systems and security tactics that work for a local firm become insufficient as a company expands into new markets. This was the problem facing QIC as it grew into new regions like the US.

"We quickly realized that we needed IT delivery that reflected our growing global presence," says Slender. "So, two years ago, a transformation strategy was put on the table. We planned to proceed down a cloud path, migrating all of our technology services into three regions globally while taking advantage of contemporary services like Microsoft® Office 365®."

File sharing was at the core of this transition. Many of QIC's employees work flexibly and travel frequently, meeting with clients, potential investors and third parties. An increasingly mobile workforce and greater client and stakeholder engagement often requires close collaboration between multiple individuals, and the frequent exchange of files, some of which contain highly sensitive information.

The breadth and scope of this collaboration meant that highly sensitive data might potentially be shared through insecure channels. QIC sought to address this issue whilst also providing its employees with a better, more secure means of collaboration. In so doing, it sought a solution that worked seamlessly with existing cloud investments like Office 365, OneDrive, and SharePoint.

Enter BlackBerry Workspaces.

The Solution

Workspaces proved to be exactly what QIC was looking for. Easy to use for employees, it provided the firm's IT department with complete control over all its files – and total visibility into how, where, and when those files were accessed or modified. Its close integration with Microsoft's cloud platform also aligned perfectly with the firm's strategy.

"Workspaces provides us with an independent and auditable way to manage the collaboration of documents and information with third parties, whether they be internal or external," explains Slender. "It also met our cloud objectives – the spirit of being able to flexibly collaborate with others. We found we couldn't get to the level of sophistication we required with other cloud products."

After deciding to use the BlackBerry Workspaces solution, Slender and his team spent some time working with BlackBerry to define specific needs and use cases. By talking with some of BlackBerry's key product management teams, QIC ensured it received exactly the functionality it required. The process, says Slender, was both quick and seamless.

"It was important to communicate and bring together the resources we needed to get the message out about BlackBerry Workspaces to our employees," he explains. "We really invested our focus and time on providing information about Workspaces. Shaping understanding around a new concept – how to use it, how to manage data, and so on."

The Results

With BlackBerry Workspaces in place, QIC can support not just file sharing, but several advanced collaboration use cases, such as a digital 'deal room' for investment negotiations. It has a secure sharing platform that operates seamlessly with Office 365, one which helped prevent data leakage during the firm's transition to Windows 10. More importantly, it has a secure cloud platform that's easy to use for both the end user and IT.

Since deploying Workspaces, QIC has enjoyed many benefits.

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Centralized Collaboration, Improved Control: Before QIC started using BlackBerry Workspaces, its workers routinely shared data across multiple platforms and through multiple mediums — smartphones, laptops, tablets, and thumb drives, to name a few. In addition to making collaboration far more complicated than it needed to be, this also made it difficult for QIC to keep track of its data.

"We realized that there were people collaborating with sensitive information in some very insecure ways," says Slender. "Sharing files on Drobox, copying them to multiple devices, sharing them through USB keys, and so on. It was impossible to know where everything was — and far too easy for sensitive information to potentially go missing."

With Workspaces, all of QIC's data is stored in a central location, accessible from any authorized device, and IT has total control over what can be done with QIC's data. QIC can securely distribute, edit, and track privileged information with both internal end external stakeholders.

Regulatory Compliance: Because Workspaces features comprehensive logging and reporting functionality, it's allowed QIC more visibility into how its data is being accessed and used — and by whom. At a moment's notice, Slender and his team can determine where any file is located, who has access to it, and how it's been modified. And that, says Slender, is invaluable from a compliance perspective.

"When you have a breach, the first thing you need to do is decide whether it's reportable," says Slender. "If you don't have auditing capabilities or an understanding of where your data resides, under regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) you have to assume everything was compromised. You're not given the option of simply saying you don't know."

"The clock starts ticking the moment you become aware of a cyber incident — you have days to decide whether to report it to regulators, and you need time to define and document what happened," he continues. "Being able to quickly identify what is and isn't breached is extremely important in this scenario — as is being able to track the flow of your business's data."

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Widespread Acceptance from Clients and Partners: Because of the ease of sharing through Workspaces, clients and partners have been warm and supportive of the platform as well.

"We've had a few cases where we had to work very closely with technology teams, but most third parties have been willing participants in using BlackBerry Workspaces," says Slender. "We have had some engaged conversations with IT security teams or management. Even then, they've been supportive of the fact that we're raising the bar, and delivering a solution that improves everything for everyone."

Improved Trust: Trust is one of the most important commodities in investment management, difficult to gain and easy to lose. Workspaces ensures that QIC has clear, demonstrable file security in place. More importantly, it also has built-in business continuity – protection against both hardware failure and cyber attacks like ransomware.

Both are extremely important to its clients.

"We take the protection of client data very seriously," says Slender. "We want to demonstrate and be able to uphold a very strong focus on managing risks – because if we're breached, the reputational damage could lose us millions. Not just one client, but several."

Grant Slender,
Information Technology,
Security and Risk Leader at QIC

Future Plans: Moving forward, QIC ultimately wants to retire its traditional security tools in favor of an approach entirely geared towards mobility. Traditional, perimeter-focused IT security is no longer enough in such an environment. The industry has changed, however – and Slender sees QIC changing with it.

"We've transitioned to a world where information is now disseminated broadly, and there is no definable perimeter," says Slender. "I see QIC evolving to embed information security decisions within the data itself – and BlackBerry Workspaces is helping us on that journey. Ultimately, we'll remove a lot of the perimeter-based controls further, and embed the control capacity within files and applications."

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"Historically for QIC, information security resided around a protect the perimeter type approach, where we applied all our controls on the edge of our environment and managed information within it," explains Slender. "We have strong and strict control over the types of devices our employees use in the workplace, and we ultimately want to loosen that control – to be less device-focused, and more focused on applications and data."

In addition to transitioning to perimeter-less security, QIC also wants to make its security as seamless as possible. The end goal is to integrate Workspaces with OneDrive, Office 365, and SharePoint Online to such an extent that the firm's workers don't even realize the product is there.

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About BlackBerry Limited

BlackBerry Limited is an enterprise software and services company focused on securing and managing IoT endpoints. The company does this with BlackBerry® Secure™, an end-to-end Enterprise of Things platform, comprised of its enterprise communication and collaboration software and safety-certified embedded solutions.

Based in Waterloo, Ontario, BlackBerry Limited was founded in 1984 and operates in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa. The Company trades under the ticker symbol "BB" on the Toronto Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange. For more information visit BlackBerry.com, and follow the company on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.