



With BlackBerry Workspaces, This International Teaching Organization Ensures Its Lessons Are One Of A Kind

At a Glance



Industry Education
Employees 300
Location Toronto, Canada
Products BlackBerry®
Workspaces
www.spiritofmath.com/

Headquartered in Toronto, Spirit of Math® offers an after-school mathematics program designed for high-performing students, those with a B+ or higher overall average in their regular day school. It has recently undergone a period of rapid global expansion, and its leadership has been looking for a more efficient way to share and protect their curriculum books, lesson plans, and reading materials. For this, they turned to BlackBerry® Workspaces.



The Organization

Spirit of Math® is a supplemental education program that teaches advanced mathematics to high-performing students in a classroom setting following its proprietary curriculum. Founded on the teaching methodologies and ideas of veteran teacher Charles Ledger, the company has been helping students from grades 1 through 11 excel for nearly thirty years. Headquartered in the Greater Toronto Area, it operates nearly 40 campuses across Canada, the US, and in Pakistan.

"Spirit of Math is a 39-week program with homework, tests, and final exams, run by grade level," explains Darrin Langen, Spirit of Math's President. "Everything is based on, and extended from, the teaching methodology of Charles Ledger, who developed a non-spiral approach to teaching while running the Grade 7-9 gifted math program at Zion Heights Junior High School in Toronto, during the 1980s and early 1990s, until his retirement."

Spirit of Math has grown extensively over the past several years. Having already established itself in both Canada and the United States, it shifted its focus to the global stage, seeking to help more students around the world. To that end, the company recently opened four new locations in Lahore, Pakistan.

The Challenge

As Spirit of Math continues to grow, CEO and Co-Founder Kim Langen and her leadership team sought a better way to distribute their curriculum books. Traditional printing was costly and cumbersome, with books that were up to four inches thick. Digital distribution was a far more effective route – however, there was a security problem.

Spirit of Math's methodology and curriculum is both unique and proprietary. It is the core of their business and the basis of their success. And there are many individuals who might seek to gain from that success.

With traditional printed materials, it would be far too easy for someone unscrupulous to make off with their intellectual property. That's doubly true with digital files, which are difficult to monitor and control with traditional file-sharing tools. These two security threats, says Darrin, were their chief concern.

"BlackBerry Workspaces provided everything we needed: Great security, excellent usability, and the ability to edit protected documents while they're on the server. It also lets us know exactly where a document is being accessed at any given time – that logging and reporting functionality is something no one else does."

Darrin Langen
President,
Spirit of Math Schools, Inc.

"Not everybody in the world has the same sense that copyright laws should be respected," Darrin explains. "There are a lot of people looking to profit off the ideas of others, and there's certainly money to be made in copying our curriculum books. If we were to let even one book out of our sight, it could easily wind up in the hands of different competitors – and that would be disastrous to our business."

Spirit of Math needed a platform that would allow it to update its curriculum both frequently and efficiently. However, it also needed to ensure its curriculum was protected against theft or accidental leakage. Its IT department needed to always be in control of shared files, and always aware of who had access to a lesson plan and who didn't.

After some evaluation, the organization decided on BlackBerry Workspaces solution.

The Solution

Spirit of Math has rolled out BlackBerry Workspaces to its facilities in Pakistan, and to its Grade 10 and Kindergarten classes in Toronto. Teachers can now quickly and securely access their lessons from any device. The files, distributed as PDFs, can also be freely distributed and re-distributed as frequently as necessary.

More importantly, even if a teacher's device is stolen, the data remains protected – IT can simply rescind access to the files.

"We're on the Workspaces Cloud app," explains Marcus Chong, Spirit of Math's IT administrator. "Currently, we have a Workspace for Pakistan, and one for our Grade 10 and Kindergarten teachers here in Toronto. Those two Workspaces are kept separate from one another."

According to Marcus, teachers are assigned a user group that gives them view and download permissions. They're unable to print or edit their curriculum books, nor can they share them without authorization. Each teacher is further arranged based on which grade and course they teach – a Grade 10 teacher, for instance, does not have access to the same folder as a Grade 5 teacher.



"Installation and setup were fairly turnkey," continues Marcus. "I believe we had a couple of training sessions through BlackBerry, but from there it was fairly straightforward. It mostly just involved walking us through the different levels of security available to us as an organization."

The Results

Since enabling BlackBerry Workspaces for select staff, Spirit of Math has seen several benefits.

Simpler Curriculum Updates: Workspaces allows users to edit files without having to download them. In the case of course-books, there's no need to print off several thousand pages every time a minor change needs to be made. They can simply edit and share digitally, saving both time and money.

"We're constantly updating our curriculum," says Darrin. "With Workspaces, that isn't a problem – we don't have to keep printing curriculum books repeatedly for different locations. Instead, we can just update online and push the materials out to whoever needs them."

Complete Control Over Intellectual Property: Thanks to Workspaces, Spirit of Math no longer needs to worry as much about the theft of their intellectual property. Marcus and his team can easily lock down course-books so they cannot be plagiarized. If someone does manage to make off with a file, the organization will be aware of it, and can mitigate the theft.

"We decided that Workspaces was the most secure possible way of doing things," says Darrin. "It allows us more control than any other platform we evaluated. Its logging and reporting functionality offers unmatched visibility, too – if, for example, one of our documents ends up in Shanghai or Beijing, I'll know about it right away. You don't really see that sort of thing with some other platforms."



Simpler External Sharing: On some occasions, due either to personal preference or organizational restraints, the individuals Spirit of Math works with may be unable to access or use Workspaces. In such situations, Workspaces makes it easy to share documents with these third parties.

"If we need to print a few copies of a curriculum book, we can send the file to a print shop with download and print only permissions applied to it," says Marcus. "It lets us keep our files safe even when it isn't being directly used."

Future Plans: Currently, Spirit of Math is considering enablement of Workspaces functionality across the entire organization.

"We're using Workspaces for Kindergarten classes in Canada, and we're also re-engineering our grade 10 class," explains Darrin. "We'd be using it for the same purpose when we deploy to other countries, and to reinvent our other courses for our domestic facilities. Basically, we're considering what it would cost to bring the solution to our entire system."

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.

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