

TOUR OPERATOR USES BLACKBERRY SMARTPHONES TO HELP DRIVE SALES, IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND BUILD COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Industry

- Travel and Tourism

Region

- North America

Company Size

- Small Organization – 30+ employees plus more than 200 seasonal employees

Solution

- BlackBerry® Enterprise Server
- BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™)
- Twitter® for BlackBerry® smartphones
- Facebook® for BlackBerry® smartphones
- foursquare®

Breakaway Tours is a student-focused leisure tour operator. Every year, it takes more than 22,000 high-school and university students to destinations around the world. Founded in 1984, the company, which is based in Toronto, Canada, employs about 30 full-time staff and more than 200 tour leaders/seasonal representatives.

The Challenge

Leading students on trips across the country and around the world can be a logistical challenge. For Breakaway Tours, it's essential that reps stay on top of communications and manage operations no matter where travel is taking place so that trips are conducted efficiently and safely.

Since the company relies primarily on word-of-mouth advertising to develop new business, sales reps need to be in constant contact with potential customers.

"Our mandate is to sell fun – we're all about changing life with travel," said Brad MacLellan, Operations Manager for Breakaway Tours. "We mainly deal with high-school students, and we've found they're not usually available during regular business hours. Many young people want to communicate later at night, so it's crucial to have our sales reps available when our customers want to reach us."

Breakaway Tours relied on office phones and older model cell phones to conduct business, but found it wasn't working. "People would call the office and if the phone lines were too busy to answer their call, we wouldn't connect," said MacLellan. "We needed a more efficient way to stay on top of our ever-changing, younger, target market."

The Solution

Breakaway Tours recognized the opportunity to use the convenience of mobile technology to improve communication with their clients and deployed 23 BlackBerry smartphones to their sales staff.

The sales team use email, text and social networking apps on their BlackBerry smartphones to build and maintain relationships with student organizers – a vast improvement over the previous approach of making time-consuming phone calls. BBM has also proven an effective way to talk with students after hours, who also have BlackBerry smartphones and regularly use BBM to reach their friends.

The company relies on Twitter, Facebook and foursquare to encourage excitement about upcoming trips, to send mass messages to thousands of followers and to connect with people who are curious about the company and want to know more.

To connect its local travel specialists with office staff and student recruits, Breakaway Tours stocks 60 additional BlackBerry smartphones. The devices are given to ground representatives who coordinate the trips at the vacation destination – an approach that has dramatically improved communication and efficiency since coordinating tours requires the precise exchange of information.



"Our BlackBerry smartphones are our lifelines. Thanks to the BlackBerry solution, we have improved our ability to communicate around the clock and we've built a stronger connection with our target market."

Brad MacLellan
Operations Manager
Breakaway Tours



Breakaway Tours' Benefits

"Our BlackBerry smartphones are our lifelines," said MacLellan. "When I came in six years ago, our staff spent each day making more than 120 calls. Now the sales force is making less than half that number of calls because they are using Facebook, text and BBM. It's not really a talk era anymore – we even use our BlackBerry smartphones for writing notes, if we were still showing up with pads of paper and pens, the students wouldn't take us seriously."

The BlackBerry solution helps Breakaway Tours to appeal to a younger market and it's also helped staff know what's happening at all times. Since trip leaders at vacation locations now have BlackBerry smartphones, they can be in touch with head office more regularly and manage any issues that come up related to travel, safety or health.

"Every issue you can imagine might crop up – from schedule and room changes to client issues," said MacLellan. "There's peace of mind that everyone knows we're running on a 24-hour schedule. I'll go to bed with my BlackBerry smartphone and take a call or email at 4 am if needed."

Breakaway Tours also relies on knowing their important data is protected by the BlackBerry Enterprise Server, which regularly backs up the data stored on the company's devices and synchs the team's contacts, calendars and messages.

"We end up entering a lot of contact details on the road," said MacLellan. "If something were to go wrong, then those numbers could be lost, meaning potential lost business. With the BlackBerry Enterprise Server, you know it'll all be there."

According to MacLellan, the past two years have been some of Breakaway Tour's most profitable, and he attributes that sales growth largely to improved communication abilities.

"With BBM, I can now juggle four to five issues in four or five different cities – before I would have to spend 5-10 minutes per issue on the phone, tying up a line," said MacLellan. "And because our sales reps have more time, they're better able to sell the product and promote the company. That means growth to our bottom line."

Key Benefits

- Improved communication with people around the world
- Greater efficiency in driving sales
- Protected data so information isn't lost
- Ability to connect with target markets using latest technology

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