



BlackBerry Customer Success Story



Founded in 2005, Miss O & Friends is a family-friendly website based on a series of characters, aimed at girls age eight to 14 who, according to the company spokesperson, have “outgrown Barbie but aren’t ready for Britney.” The website features discussion boards, games, contests, articles and advice for tween girls, and has a fan base around the world, including India, China and Russia. The company has also published six books featuring original stories by tween girls.

Industry: Other

Region: Global

Company Size:
Small Enterprise - 20 employees

Email Platform:
Microsoft® Exchange

Solution:
BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™)

Website for Tweens Climbs Ladder of Success with BlackBerry Smartphones

THE CHALLENGE

Several years ago, when then-teenaged Juliette Brindak sketched a few characters, she had no idea they would evolve into a multimillion-dollar website. Now the 21-year-old senior at Washington University in St. Louis is the CEO of Miss O & Friends, a website that has attracted high-end advertisers and a global fan base.

“We’re an interactive website and we want girls to feel like they’re a part of the process of Miss O,” said Juliette. “We hear from them all the time about what they like and don’t like, which we really take to heart.” This means she needs to be available around the clock to make changes and additions to the website, to respond to advertisers and sponsors, and to conduct media interviews – regardless of the time zone.

The company’s workforce is distributed throughout North America, so they rely on technology to stay in touch. The Miss O & Friends team was previously using another brand of smartphone for communications, but the devices were not as reliable as they would have liked and the battery life wasn’t sufficient to last throughout the day.

THE SOLUTION

Juliette and her sister Olivia – who is the namesake for Miss O – decided to make the switch to BlackBerry® smartphones, and started using BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™) to communicate while Juliette was away at university. This was the impetus for the other core members of Miss O – including management and technical staff – to make the switch and start using BBM as their primary means of communications, which they found to be faster and more efficient than phone calls or text messaging.

Juliette also uses Google Maps™ mapping service on her BlackBerry smartphone when she travels, and Facebook® for BlackBerry. If she sees something that inspires an idea, she takes a photo with the camera on her BlackBerry smartphone and emails it to the team. Or, if they run an event – such as when seven girls won a contest to spend a morning with the two head designers at the clothing store, Banana Republic – they can take photos and upload them directly to their Facebook fan page, further promoting their business.

“There are so many potential problems when you run a virtual business, particularly with a website as complex as ours,” said Paul Brindak, Managing Partner of Miss O, and Juliette’s father. “We literally have to be available 24 hours a day, so when I say we’re always on the job, that our BlackBerry smartphones are at our side to help us do it, that’s not an exaggeration.”

MISS O'S BENEFITS

Juliette credits the BlackBerry smartphone with making the company more efficient, with faster turnaround times. For example, the Russian government invited her to participate in the Youth International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg, which was intended to help build an entrepreneurial spirit in Russia. In the final hours, she found out her travel visa hadn't been taken care of and she couldn't go on the trip.

Juliette rushed to the Russian Consulate in New York City and, standing outside on the street, she used her BlackBerry smartphone to email the invitation sent by the Russian government and all correspondence to the appropriate government personnel inside. "I got my visa the same day - and that rarely happens," she said. "If it wasn't for my BlackBerry smartphone, I wouldn't have been able to go to Russia." And if Juliette hadn't gone to Russia, Paul says they would have lost millions of dollars in revenue for the company.

Whether Juliette is in Russia, at university, or traveling across North America to meet with sponsors or attend events, she's able to keep in touch with the team using BBM - without having to spend money on long-distance phone charges. Not only has this improved inter-team communications, but they can also respond to requests from their most important contacts, and make additions or changes to the website, in near real-time. For example, the solution has allowed them to quickly respond to communications from the company's largest investor and advertising sponsor.

The company also relies on the security built into the BlackBerry smartphone. "I don't worry about losing my BlackBerry smartphone, because it's password-protected," said Juliette. "The ability to sync my BlackBerry smartphone with my computer at home is really important, since I have so many business contacts. If I ever did lose it, I would have all my email and contacts backed up on my computer."

"The BlackBerry smartphone has made our company way more efficient. I can respond to advertisers or make changes to the website right away, when minutes matter - because you can miss out on opportunities if you don't respond fast enough. I can't imagine running the business without it."

Juliette Brindak
CEO
Miss O & Friends

KEY BENEFITS

- Ability for mobile employees to communicate better
 - Faster turnaround times for clients, media and fans
 - Ability to protect data and sync contacts
 - Significant cost savings and reduction of overhead
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www.blackberry.com/go/success

 **BlackBerry**

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