



BlackBerry Customer Success Story

LAURIER
Wilfrid Laurier University

University Helps Prepare MBA Students for Business World with BlackBerry Smartphones

THE CHALLENGE

Wilfrid Laurier University (Laurier) was looking to revolutionize the way the school's Master of Business Administration (MBA) program approaches learning, both in and out of the classroom. Educators wanted to prepare MBA students for the business world they would soon enter by providing the latest mobile learning applications, extending access to a multimedia-rich education beyond the walls of the classroom and providing tools for collaboration between classmates.

"We want to challenge the boundaries of the traditional learning environment," said Ginny Dybenko, Laurier's Executive, Strategic Initiatives. "We're committed to maintaining a leadership position in e-learning through new and innovative approaches to education."

Educators wanted to find a way for full-time MBA students to communicate, collaborate, bond and network more extensively and effectively as part of the school's "Classmates for a Year, Colleagues for Life" campaign - which is part of a longer-term strategy for mobile learning at the university. Their planned approach would allow mobile access to course materials and would enable students to review and edit assignments almost anywhere, anytime. And the mobile learning style would better prepare them for the workplace by familiarizing them with the latest advancements in mobile technology.

THE SOLUTION

Laurier engaged 106 full-time MBA students in an innovative one-year mobile e-learning pilot, working with Research In Motion® (RIM®) and Rogers. "The BlackBerry® smartphone is well entrenched in the global business community so it makes sense to introduce it to students," said Peter Yang, Project Manager of Laurier's 2010 program and an MBA student in the 2009 pilot.

Students and faculty used Chalk™ Pushcast™ Software, a mobile learning and communications tool for BlackBerry smartphones that is designed to create, distribute and track rich-media content to mobile users to facilitate anytime, anywhere learning and studying.

Professors from Laurier's strategy and marketing courses "push" course material, such as assignments and class presentations, to the students' BlackBerry smartphones. Students are also able to provide course feedback and complete learning surveys at the end of each Chalk Pushcast communication sent out by various professors and researchers.

Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the Laurier School of Business & Economics, within Wilfrid Laurier University, is one of Canada's leading business schools, with more than 4,500 students. The school promotes entrepreneurial and innovative thinking and action through research, teaching and the application of knowledge. The school also fosters mutually beneficial alliances with local, national and international business leaders through co-op placements.

Industry: Education

Region: North America

Company Size:
Small Study - Over 100 Students

Email Platform:
Novell® Groupwise®

Solution:

- BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™)
- Chalk™ Pushcast™ Software from Chalk Media Corp.

“Our BlackBerry smartphone pilot program has revolutionized the way MBA students approach learning, both in and out of the classroom. It has allowed us to take mobile learning – and the future of education – to the next level.”

Ginny Dybenko
Executive - Strategic Initiatives
Wilfrid Laurier University

KEY BENEFITS

- Fast and easy mobile access to learning materials
 - Ability for all students to participate in courses through Chalk Pushcast Software
 - Improved student networking and bonding through BBM
 - Helped MBA students develop workplace-ready technology skills
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Each MBA course requires students to work on projects in groups, and BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™) provided a way for students to communicate and collaborate without being in the same physical location. “For all my 20 courses, my group members and I created specific BBM groups,” said Yang. “We could ask each other questions over BBM, which was faster than email and texting. We even shared pictures of the notes and diagrams that we wrote on whiteboards.”

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY’S BENEFITS

At the end of the one-year pilot, Laurier felt that the BlackBerry solution illustrated the value of smartphones for collaborative learning, something that is especially important in professional programs structured around integrated assignments and working teams. The BlackBerry solution enabled educational content to be shared and provided easier access to learning materials so students could be more productive with their time. The success of the program has led Laurier to incorporate the technology into its current full-time MBA program.

“Participation is a significant portion of learning and course grades in MBA classes, but limited class times mean not everyone gets a chance to speak and contribute in class,” said Yang. “With the use of Chalk Pushcast Software on the BlackBerry smartphone, every student had more of a chance to participate as it supported private communications between the professors and students.”

With BBM, students gained an alternate way to communicate beyond the school’s email system. They could communicate with anyone in their class without having to give out their phone number or other personal information; the solution helped provide a level of security and privacy, and allowed students to keep a history of their BBM conversations. “This collaboration has helped improve student networking and bonding within the Laurier MBA community,” said Yang. “We have students in their early 20’s and students in their 40’s and 60’s, and we have a diverse group with different backgrounds and technology skills – BBM has brought us closer together.” In fact, BBM became the preferred method of communication among students since it can be less intrusive than answering a phone call and is more convenient than texting.

The pilot program provided familiarization with new smartphone technologies for novices, and allowed MBA students who were already familiar with BlackBerry smartphone technology to learn more about available options and features. At their first co-op work assignments, some MBA co-op students were provided with a company BlackBerry smartphone, and they knew how to use it immediately – making the transition to the business world much faster and smoother.

Laurier plans to use the program as a template for other departments within the university, so all business students – and eventually all students – will have an option to use mobile devices for learning.

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