

CASE STUDY

St. John's School

One challenge every SMB team faces is finding ways to leverage their budgets to achieve innovative solutions. For Michael LeBlanc, Director of Information Technology of the St. John's School, sorting through that challenge with his team was going to be a requirement if they wanted to create the dynamic environment that a top tier school demands.

Michael and his team view St. John's needs as similar to a corporate IT setting; just as an SMB's IT infrastructure supports the business, the technology environment they facilitate has a direct impact on teaching and learning in the school. They have an interestingly diverse group of stakeholders to support - teachers and students that range in age from 4 to 18. In a corporate setting, a quick visit to the help desk can be accommodated. However, in a classroom environment, a teacher needing to turn her back to a class full of first graders for even a minute to reboot a machine can lead to sticky situations.



With 570 enrolled students in grades K-12, the motto for St. John's School is "to the future with hope." Their vision is to inspire academic excellence in their students who will graduate as confident learners and pursue their goals with passion, integrity and respect for others within the global community.



Taking Inventory of the Legacy System

When Michael joined the St. John's team almost two years ago, the existing infrastructure was functional. However, they had significant resources on-prem and believed they could get leverage from a cloud strategy. As they began to audit the existing infrastructure, they identified the three benefits they wanted from any change:

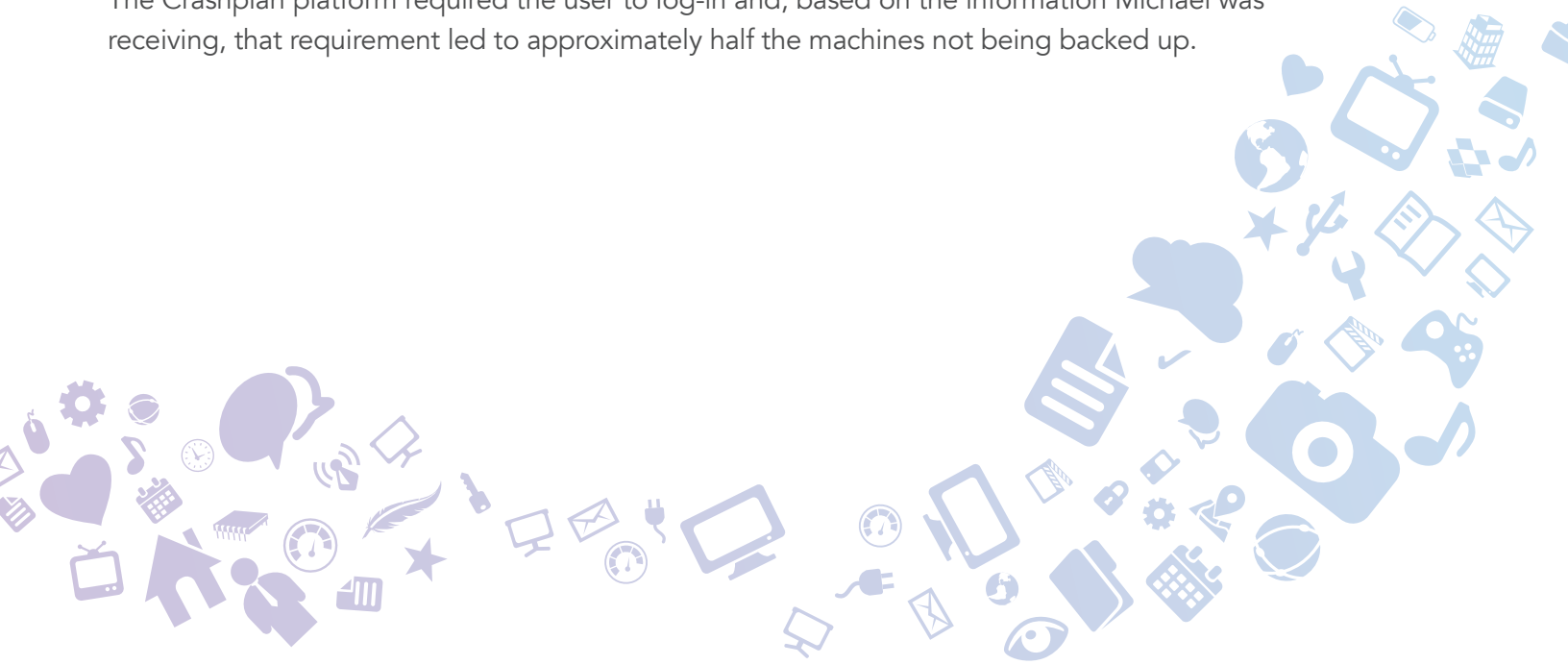
- Similar or better performance over the existing solution
- Cost savings
- Risk Management - does moving to the cloud make his overall infrastructure more reliable / durable?

The Benefits of Cloud Backup

One of the early areas they wanted to explore was the backup solution. The legacy system was backing up to an on-prem Dell storage array using the Crashplan platform. The need to buy and maintain an onsite storage solution was very expensive. In addition, it had the fundamental problem of keeping the backups onsite. The whole point of backups was to be able to recover if something extraordinary happened. If there was a natural disaster that affected the school, then it had a decent chance of damaging the onsite storage.



They wanted a system where they could get the teachers back to the business of education as quickly as possible no matter what happened. The IT team has a member of faculty, Geoff Jones, as the Education Technology Coordinator. Geoff gave the rest of the team valuable insights on how the teachers actually operate. Geoff's feedback raised concerns with the existing technology. The Crashplan platform required the user to log-in and, based on the information Michael was receiving, that requirement led to approximately half the machines not being backed up.



First, Michael wanted to address his team's desire for a 'shared drive'. He saw clear benefits by adopting the cloud syncing service, Google Drive for Education. By having a shared cloud drive, teachers would be able to access files from anywhere - on campus, on vacation, or on the couch. By moving the solution to Google's servers, Michael would free himself up from his on-prem maintenance.

The team at St. John's did consider stopping there - relying on data syncing to Google with no further backup solution. However, as they looked at the actual user experience, they realized that was not a good enough solution. **While the cloud drive did accomplish the goal of getting data offsite, it still didn't satisfy the need for backup.**



There's a choice to say 'IT only supports files that are put into the shared drive'. But if you imagine yourself saying that to a teacher who comes to you for help after losing all the files on his desktop, you quickly understand relying on the shared drive is not a viable backup strategy.

- Michael LeBlanc, Director of Information Technology



As they examined the market for backup solutions, the Backblaze for Business platform emerged to the forefront. Having used the Personal Backup service at home, Michael knew that Backblaze's Computer Backup capabilities were automatic and unintrusive. His teachers wouldn't have to do anything to have everything backed up.

In addition, by partnering with a scaled provider like Backblaze, they would get security and reliability benefits that St. John's couldn't afford on its own.



The reality is that I'm never going to have an on-prem 'data center' that is SOC 2 compliant or any of the other best practices in security.

By trusting Backblaze, I'm able to get the benefits of 'enterprise' security while staying within my SMB budget.

- Michael LeBlanc, Director of Information Technology

Pushing into the proof of concept phase, Michael was pleased by how easy it was to deploy Backblaze through his RMM tool, JAMF. Since the initial deployment, St. John's has changed RMM tools from JAMF to Meraki, but the experience of deploying Backblaze has remained easy.



I went to the Backblaze site, pulled down the provided scripts, and was off and running in minutes.

- Michael LeBlanc, Director of Information Technology

The Future

With the move from on-prem backup to cloud backup complete, Michael now has the time and budget to focus on other essential projects. **Backblaze's solution not only gives him the confidence that their computer backup needs are being met, but the predictable, affordable pricing means he realizes savings as his data needs grow.**

From the beginning, the Head of School, Blayne Addley, was willing to support change if it meant the team could scale their service levels and save money. With the school benefitting from the simplicity of the Backblaze solution, Blayne is encouraging the team to push further.

Currently, St. John's computing is on-prem. The team has already started looking at cloud computing options that can provide the kind of leverage that cloud storage has. Just as having backups offsite keeps them safe from unexpected disasters, Michael and team want a solution where they could take their Veeam backups and recover from the cloud. Even if campus is damaged, the team wants the teachers back teaching as quickly as possible. Michael is currently examining a number of options, including the partnership between Backblaze B2 and Packet.

By leveraging cloud solutions, the IT team at St. John's School is confident they can do their part in providing the school with the future everyone is hoping for.

About Backblaze for Business

With over 700 PB of customer data from customers across 150+ countries, Backblaze has earned its reputation as the industry leading computer backup solution. Backblaze for Business provides unlimited, automatic data backup \$50/year/computer. With flexible deployment options, payment methods, and enterprise grade security, IT professionals partner with Backblaze when seeking a robust, elegant backup platform.

www.backblaze.com/business