

In an Industry Where Privacy Is the Most Valuable Commodity, BlackBerry Spark Communications Services Delivers



At a Glance

Through a self-service software platform, SAIS Group offers luxury services to high net worth individuals and luxury brands. For these men and women, privacy is essential – many of them don't even maintain social media accounts in the interests of keeping their information safe. For that reason, when it decided to add messaging functionality to its software, SAIS Group knew it needed to do so in the most secure way possible.

SAIS Group

Industry:

Luxury Services

Location:

Europe, Asia, U.S.

Product:

BlackBerry® Spark
Communications Services

Website:

www.sais-group.com



SAIS
GROUP

The Organisation

With offices in Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore, San Francisco, and Paris, SAIS Group provides luxury services to affluent individuals and businesses across the world – although much of its clientele is based in Europe and Asia. The organisation has partnered with a wide range of luxury brands, including hotel chains, clothing lines, wineries, banks, and more. Through these partnerships, it has created a Customer Experience Management (CEM) platform.

“With KEYYES as our proof-of-concept of the CEM, we’ve integrated our partners into a single ecosystem,” explains Will Beattie, CTO at SAIS Group. “We’ve created a unified user experience that allows customers to do everything from booking restaurants and hotels to shopping for products. Our technology division, called Kaddra, sells the CEM platform as a white-label-solution.”

SAIS Group’s digital capabilities are still relatively new, and the organisation did not begin developing its ecosystem until Will Beattie signed on as CTO approximately 18 months ago. Since then, it’s gone through a significant digital transformation. More recently, it sought to develop a secure chat platform that will be integrated into its ecosystem.

The Challenge

For SAIS Group’s clientele, data privacy is particularly important. The men and women who work with the organisation are extremely private about their lives, to the extent that most don’t even maintain a presence on social media. SAIS Group needs to be able to show them that it is serious about protecting their information.

“The ecosystem we built with Kaddra is privacy by design,” explains Beattie. “We were lucky enough to be building the software whilst GDPR was being developed as legislation, which allowed us to ensure it was GDPR compliant from day one. But for us, it’s about more than just ticking the boxes of compliance.”

Very few people in SAIS Group even have access to customer data. Anonymity is a key principle of SAIS Group’s business dealings, and the backdrop to its digital platform. Even simple details such as names are usually kept anonymous, and payment data is stored via a third-party payment solution.

“We make sure everything is totally secure. We only share what a partner absolutely requires to provide a service,” says Beattie. “It’s time-based as well – let’s say you’re booking a restaurant. The restaurant only needs that information for the time of booking; after the booking, they no longer have access to it.”

This is also one of the core reasons our CEM platform works as a self-service portal. Per Beattie, introducing humans into any process immediately brings privacy concerns into play. There’s always a chance that someone will make a mistake or act maliciously; always a chance that someone might compromise sensitive information.

"There are a lot of security pitfalls with traditional concierges, even those that offer digital solutions," explains Beattie. "You have to call them up and give them your credit card details over the phone – they then access that information via an agent whenever you want to do something. The way we look at it, by removing the human in the middle you're implicitly much more secure, and much more capable of protecting user privacy."

It was this commitment to privacy and confidentiality that caused SAIS Group to recognise a potential business opportunity.

"There are a lot of consumer messaging tools on the market today," explains Beattie. "Particularly in China, WhatsApp has become a widespread tool for business communication. It's the de-facto method for both B2B and B2C communication, as well as communication between consumers."

"We see this as a big problem," he continues. "WhatsApp, like many of its peers, is owned by an advertising company. A business that has every incentive to read messages and mine data for marketing purposes."

Beattie and his colleagues quickly realised that there were no messaging options for the security-conscious in their market. There were no solutions for individuals and businesses that required private, protected communication. They set out to change that – a decision which eventually brought them to [BlackBerry® Spark Communications Services](#).

The Solution

A platform that allows developers to snap rich chat, voice, video, and data transfer into applications and smart devices easily, BlackBerry Spark Communications Services has flexible APIs that seamlessly connect to an application's core functionality, allowing for the creation of nuanced interactions between users, processes, and endpoints. And perhaps most importantly, it's backed by BlackBerry's expertise in both messaging and security.

In short, it was exactly what SAIS Group was looking for.

"We knew about BBM®, and knew it had the functionality we wanted to offer," explains Beattie. "We also knew that if we needed a secure platform, BlackBerry was our best option. Historically, they've always done security very, very well."

Beattie's team reached out to a BlackBerry representative in Singapore, who walked them through BlackBerry's new portfolio and introduced them to BlackBerry Spark Communications Services. A short time later, SAIS Group started using the platform to develop a tool known as K Chat. This highly encrypted messaging application is designed specifically with the privacy and security needs of high net worth and ultra-high net worth individuals in mind.

"The progression we're ultimately working towards is security between all points, whether customer to customer, customer to partner, or customer to K Chat. We want to offer the highest security possible across our ecosystem. BlackBerry Spark Communications Services allows us to do exactly that."

- Will Beattie,
CTO, SAIS Group

It provides end-to-end encrypted chat, voice, and video, with FIPS-validated, app-level AES 256-bit encryption, ensuring data is always protected on a device, no matter where it's accessed.

"Whether or not a chat is secure may not seem like a privacy issue on a platform like ours, at least at first," he explains. "But when you drill into it, it can be. Imagine a CEO of a Fortune 500 company is planning a dinner with someone who's doing M&A activity with a business he's looking to acquire. The information related to that booking is extremely sensitive."

Initially, SAIS Group intends to bake K Chat into its CEM platform. This will allow easy communication between the organisation's partners and its clients, as well as enabling SAIS Group's customer service team to seamlessly and securely reach out to users that require assistance. Although it's still in the implementation stage, Beattie notes that BlackBerry Spark Communications Services has been quite easy to work with.

"In general, implementation has been very smooth," he says. "The documentation is very thorough, and BlackBerry has been quite helpful."

The Results

A Unified Application: SAIS Group's initial plans for K Chat is to embed the solution into the CEM ecosystem. This aligns well with one of its core driving principles – the idea that a user should be able to accomplish a wide range of tasks from within a single app. Most apps today, explains Beattie, have a single function.

"I think as a macro trend for apps, it's about trying to pack as much into a single piece of software as possible," he says. "That's why we're trying to bring everything into one ecosystem, so the customer only has to rely on a single platform to purchase products and book services. Chat is a huge part of that – if the customer is in the ecosystem anyway, it makes total sense to have Chat embedded so they can interact both with our partners and our customer support team."

Commitment To Security: BlackBerry Spark Communications Services is also helping SAIS Group fulfill its commitment to both privacy and security. BlackBerry is a widely-recognised name where security is concerned. To that end, Beattie has indicated that the organisation plans to use BlackBerry Spark Communications Services to help secure other aspects of its platforms and other products in the future, as well.

"Having a secure platform and being able to back up that security with a name like BlackBerry is a huge value add for us," explains Beattie. "It allows us to address any concerns that organisations working in industries like finance might have over working with us. And it also helps us adhere to the core tenet of our business, to our goal of offering a highly-secure, highly-private self-serve digital concierge."

Better Internal Communication: SAIS Group isn't just using K Chat externally. It's also making extensive use of the solution internally.

“SAIS Group plans to migrate all employee and partner communication to K Chat once the application is launched,” says Quentin Chiarugi, CEO of SAIS Group. “We want to showcase to our corporate partners how valuable K Chat can be for their own employees and their customers.”

A New Line of Business: In addition to being baked into the CEM platform, K Chat will be released as a standalone solution within the next year or so. It will be offered as part of SAIS Group’s CEM platform and a suite of other security-focused solutions, all geared towards high-security organisations and individuals.

“BlackBerry Spark Communications Services is bringing us the communication aspect,” says Beattie. “It’s bringing us one-to-one messaging. But it won’t be limited to just that.”

About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) provides intelligent security software and services to enterprises and governments around the world. The company secures more than 500M endpoints including 150M cars on the road today. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company leverages AI and machine learning to deliver innovative solutions in the areas of cybersecurity, safety and data privacy solutions, and is a leader in the areas of endpoint security management, encryption, and embedded systems. BlackBerry’s vision is clear — to secure a connected future you can trust.

For more information, visit BlackBerry.com and follow [@BlackBerry](https://twitter.com/BlackBerry).

