Case Study: Weber School District

OVERVIEW

Location	Ogden, Utah
Students	33,905
Schools	46
Products in use	Bark for Schools, Parent Portal

Introduction

Available at no cost to all K-12 schools across the U.S., Bark for Schools monitors school-issued G Suite and Office 365 accounts for signs of cyberbullying, suicidal ideation, sexual predators, school shootings, and more.

Bark for Schools was developed in the wake of the tragic shooting at Parkland, Florida, as a way to give back to school communities. Our service is now in use in more than 2,600 school districts.

> "The ability to find real-time data in an easy-to-read format was a selling point to our team."
>
> **— Alex Korkishko**
> Senior Systems Engineer
> Weber School District

Background

We spoke with Alex Korkishko, Senior Systems Engineer at Weber School District.

Before Bark, Weber was looking for a proactive solution for monitoring school-issued Gmail and Google Drive accounts. The district already had web filtering and SSL decryption in place, but monitoring was their next priority.

"As a senior systems engineer tasked with research for a product like Bark, I had looked at multiple solutions and settled on Bark for a pilot test," said Korkishko. "Bark's business model was an attractive factor to us."

The Need for Proactive Help

The issues Korkishko said the district was looking to address included suicide prevention, bullying and harrassment, threats of violence, and inappropriate content.

"We opened Google Chat to students, but had no real-time filtering," Korkishko reported. "We have Google Enterprise and Google Vault for reactive investigation, but every incident would have to be addressed individually and after the fact." Bark for Schools would provide the ability to receive proactive information about these situations.

Before Bark for Schools, Weber only had one individual performing forensic work to help protect students — and many serious issues were going unaddressed.

Selecting Their Review Teams

Creating and managing the team responsible for reviewing and responding to alerts is crucial to the success of Bark for Schools and the safety of students.

"An automated daily report goes out to a principal of each school, and they decide if the case should be handled by a counselor or another mentor in the school," Korkishko said.

The district eventually settled on one reviewer per elementary and junior high school, and two reviewers for each high school. These are the individuals who will get the emergency phone calls and alerts for their schools.

BY THE NUMBERS | SEP. 2019 – DEC. 2020

Activities analyzed	68 million
Alerts reviewed	2,500
Cases per school	~50

Managing Alerts for Thousands of Students

With the review teams in place, Weber next had to figure out how to deal with alerts coming from more than 30,000 students across the district.

"Thanks to Bark's alert settings, you can adjust the sensitivity if the number of alerts start to get out of hand and too many false positives are reported," Korkishko said.

Reducing the amount of alerts the reviewers receive on the front end would allow them to concentrate on the most serious, time-sensitive situations in student accounts.

The Moment They Knew Bark Was the Real Deal

"The first alert we ever received was a flagged Google Hangout conversation between high school students about a gun in a car," Korkishko said.

The short snippet that the Bark alert provided was conclusive enough to get the team alarmed, as it was from just 20 minutes prior.

"We were able to notify the SRO and school administrator to follow up with the student at school," Korkishko said. "Administration was able to apprehend the student and, indeed, they found a weapon in his car in the parking lot."

What advice do you have for schools about to implement our service?

- Plan out your reviewer teams and put in place procedures to follow up on alerts.

- Educate your reviewers on the proper tactics and protocol to ensure the confidentiality of Bark alerts.

- Prepare your team emotionally for some of the more serious alerts they may get, like abuse or depression.

What is the most beneficial thing about Bark?

"I'd say it's definitely the proactive reporting and insight into our students' digital footprints," Korkishko said. "It's helping us realize what the problems are before they become real."

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