

## ***Episode #9: Simplify Classroom Management with School Data Sync***

Amit: Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening, listeners. Wherever you are tuning into our podcast with Amit Pawar and Sam McNeil on EduTech Talks. Thank you for joining today, listeners!

Sam: Great to be here again, a fun opportunity for us to be recording a podcast side-by-side.

Amit: This is a rare occasion. I've got Sam visiting in Singapore on his way to Indonesia to talk with more of our Education customers. So, if you're in Indonesia, you might've already met Sam because the podcast would come after the recording and after the event in Indonesia. But it's fantastic to have Sam's expertise and the experience he's having in New Zealand come down to Asian Pacific and share with us here in Singapore and then take that experience to Indonesia so our customers understand and can cross-pollinate with our ideas from New Zealand customers and what's happening in Indonesia. So, while we're on the subject of New Zealand and Indonesia, I see a lot of exciting things happening in New Zealand with Microsoft Education platform for listeners who haven't caught up with that, just a quick brief tour of that would be great.

Sam: Yeah, look, absolutely. So, in New Zealand we have the Microsoft 365 A3 platform in play across all government, Ministry of Education schools and also most of our universities as well actually, Amit. So, the vast majority of the higher education institutes have leveraged in 365 A3 or even A5 customers that are really focused around the security elements or telephony or starting to get some of the reporting features with Power BI or opted for that A5 position there. But you know, pop quiz for you, Amit. I'm going to just make sure you're staying on your toes. What are the various components of Microsoft 365?

Amit: So, just for, yeah, for everyone's benefit I think, let's just unpack M365, which is Microsoft 365. Folks might've been familiar with, you know, in the old days just buying Windows in an Office.

Sam: Of course, yeah.

Amit: It was just a software that you bought and ended up using it forever. But now in the day and age of cloud enabled services, you could zoom on your intelligent edge and we've got a podcast on Intelligent Edge and Intelligent Cloud

Sam: We recorded it with Ray, right?

Amit: Yeah. So, I think in the day and age of Intelligent Edge and Intelligent Cloud, we really need to consider how you know customers are consuming these services. And to make all of this very simple, we've created one singular kind of product construct, which is Microsoft 365, which includes Office 365 as a cloud-enabled service. Then we've got the Office Pro Plus, which is installable software, which is very similar to your traditional software except one difference; this software now gets updated on a monthly basis with new capabilities and M365 then also has Windows 10 for Education, which is the highest level or the highest skew of Windows there is with the full capabilities that traditionally only enterprise customers are enjoyed. And along with that we've then added enterprise mobility and security,

Sam: Which you know, EMS, we're familiar with it, we worked with it every day. But some of our podcast listeners probably aren't. So what's EMS, can you unpack maybe a couple of features in there that would most commonly, applied to education customers?

Amit: I think the most favorite of all of them is Intune. Well in fact as the time of this recording, Intune also had a branding change, which will be more prevalent, which is now Endpoint Manager, right? So, Microsoft Endpoint Manager is now combining Intune with Configuration Manager as a singular product. So, whether you choose to manage your device from On-premise. As in in the old days with Integration Manager or as most customers are now moving to the more modern management construct, leveraging what was called Intune, but now it was Endpoint Manager lets you manage the devices from the cloud. That's one of the favorite parts of EMS, which is the mobility and security. So, the other component of EMS that is a favorite among our customers is Azure Information Protection. And that enables us to really think about protecting data at rest and at move. What that basically means is we encrypt the documents that are created using the familiar Office tools like Word, Excel, PowerPoint and others and lets us encrypt them in such a way that we can, you know, restrict the usage of those documents. So, whether I want you to be able to edit the document or not, whether if I'm the writer of the document or the creator of the document and you're going to consume it, I decide as the content creator as to what rights you as a content consumer has.

Sam: Yes. That's right. So, maybe you might want to block my ability to print it or to email it outside of the organization. And these are a fundamental security features that every educational institute needs to be thinking about. And actually I'm going to come back to this one a little bit later around conditional access because that's another feature that I'm seeing a lot of interest in from customers and they are linking that to things like Azure Information Protection. And I'll talk about that one. But you're on a roll here, mate. So, you've got Office 365, you've got Windows Team, you've got EMS. Is that everything that's included in Microsoft 365?

Amit: No, there's every student's favorite component of Microsoft 365, which is Minecraft Education Edition and who better to talk about Minecraft Education Edition than our own Sam McNeil who has done such phenomenal work with it in New Zealand. Maybe you can talk about that a little bit as well.

Sam: Look timely. So, I think this is kind of the cherry on the top of the icing on the cake, right? This is a thing that many schools are getting very, very excited about when they realize they can leverage game-based learning platform of Minecraft Education Edition inside of the M365 platform. And the key part here its identity actually. And we've talked about identity number of times on this podcast. Had some great discussions around why sorting out identity is important. But the cool part about Minecraft is it's bundled up and you know your identity inside of Azure Active Directory. That's what you sign into Minecraft where the teacher doesn't have to worry about students creating aliases, like you know, Batman or James Bond or slash-FFT-7 or something unhelpful and you know, his students will, their identity is known, it will say Sam M., Amit P. inside the game. So, that allows them to move on from the silliness of anonymity and into actually the 21st century learning skills that are so prevalent and game based learning, like critical thinking, like collaboration, like communication, like creativity and actually like coding, right? So, sometimes the, the five Cs

of 21st century kind of learning skills, coding is one of those like alternately sometimes citizenship. And again, when you're playing multiplayer games, actually citizenship and digital citizenship and what it means to be a productive and constructive team embed, all of those things can actually play out inside of Minecraft Education Edition. So, a wonderful learning platform on top of some of those other tools inside of the M365 Suite. So, that's a pretty compelling suite of tools there.

Amit: Yeah, absolutely. I'm actually wondering and interested in more about, I've just been recently following your work, what did you guys have doing to promote language and cultural awareness through Minecraft? I would love for our listeners to understand a little bit more about that as to what the New Zealand team has been able to achieve because I really want to encourage listeners outside of New Zealand to really take an example from what the Microsoft team has done in collaboration with New Zealand Department Education there. So, just briefly just tell our customers what our listeners, what they are, what the impact was of using Minecraft in that context.

Sam: Look, certainly. So, for those of listeners of ours that are maybe unfamiliar with New Zealand, we have an indigenous people called Māori and they proceeded in European colonizers and very rich culture, a very advanced culture in many ways. And so it's part of the New Zealand curriculum and the Microsoft New Zealand Education Team partnered with a local game developer called **50 Pi Tie** from Picker Studios. And together we created a moldy world inside of Minecraft and it was deliberately designed to be a pre-European sort of existence. So, New Zealand is an island nation way down at the bottom of the South Pacific. And together Picker Studios and Microsoft recreated what the land would have looked like right down to some of the indigenous animals. So, we have the Kiwi, our national bird can't fly, but nevertheless it's still a cool bird. And so we have to kiwi, we have some extinct animals that are in there like our Maura, which is kind of like a really large ostrich or emu and other native wildlife and, and trees as well. But critically we created opportunities to learn the language. So in New Zealand there, it's called today te reo Māori and working with Picker Studios, they were able to create language lessons inside of Minecraft that venues the Minecraft game play to test student knowledge. So, for example, one of the characters would speak aloud around the correct pronunciation of the vowels inside of Māori, a, e, i, o, u and then you would be tested based on their three questions. All three answers would come up and you had to stand on the correct block inside of and front of the right answer so students could test their knowledge very rapidly. So, this has been something that has met the needs of educators because they loved Minecraft but they see it actually we want something that is distinctly New Zealand, something that represents who we are and so when we delivered this, we also translated all of the menu options and all of the end game play into the Maori language at the same time so that those students in schools that were fluent and throw Māori were able to play along in a very immersive experience that didn't require English.

Amit: That sounds like a phenomenal outcome for a cultural immersion as well as language-learning outcome. I want to put it out to the listeners there. Give us feedback on how we could help you and from your cultural standpoint, from your languages that are spoken in your country. We would love to engage and see how Minecraft and the rest of the Microsoft 365 set of tools can come together to enhance the teaching and learning outcome as we are so focused on that Microsoft Education here.

Sam: And, and look, I think you're right. We are focused on it and you know, recently in New Zealand we had a very exciting moment when our leader, Satya Nadella came all the way down to New Zealand for a number of events. But one of those included visiting a school in Auckland, St. Joseph's Orakei Primary School where he actually got to interact with students who were playing Ngā Motu, which is the Minecraft Māori world that we created. He saw firsthand how students were engaged in their learning through using Minecraft, which was tremendously exciting. And actually on top of that, a really large announcement also came out around neuro translation services. And so, Sascha took that opportunity to announce that emotive language was going to be available inside of the neuro translation services with Microsoft. And so this is a fantastic effort. It's a quite large project that's picked up many different languages along the way, but it's designed to protect indigenous languages and allow for cross-translation between not just English to Māori and Māori to English, but you might want to translate from Hindi to Māori and the neuro translator service will actually enable and unlock a lot of that, so, very exciting announcements.

Amit: Fantastic. I mean this is testament to the mission statement around empowering every individual and every organization on the planet to achieve more. So, let's just quickly wrap up on what is M365 so we've talked a lot about Minecraft Education Edition, but just a quick 30-second recap. It is Office 365 plus Windows 10 plus enterprise mobility and security add the favorite Minecraft Education Edition. So that really is bringing it all together. Well, one of the aspects that you wanted to pick on and I know you're very passionate about this inside of enterprise mobility, insecurity is a particular capability that enables IT administrators to make sure that the right people are getting access to the right content and right applications. Help us understand a little bit about that.

Sam: Sure. So this is called Conditional Access and really it's a series of if-then sort of statements then IT administrator can pick up with to improve not just the security but also the ease of workflow for the employees or the teachers or the students inside the school. So you know, one example might be, you know, we've talked about multifactor authentication before on this podcast and how it's just critical for protecting organizations, right? We know that, but mode effect has been around for a long time, but often organizations were hesitant to pick it up and implement it because of the perceived friction or difficulty that end users would have been constantly prompted for the second form of authentication. So what conditional access allows you to do is say if a particular scenario exists, then do or don't enforce multifactor authentication. So, one of those might be if the devices connected to the school, wireless network don't require multifactor authentication because the chance are does that, that you know who you are, but because you're working at work equally, it might be a few outside of your home country. If the IP address range is not there, then do enforce multifactor authentication. And of course if you are on a different device that's unmanaged from the school enforce multifactor authentication, these are the sorts of things that conditional access can do. And to pick up on your point earlier around Azure Information Protection, this is a really good one. So if you want to encrypt your documents, which is a sensible thing to do at rest and in transit, then you can actually use conditional access further, which adds another layer on top of that security which says, you know, what's the if-then statement, if the device is managed by Microsoft endpoint as part of EMS, then allow access to the documents. If the devices unmanaged, don't allow access to those documents and that's a powerful layer of security. That means that if those documents, however they ended up on a device that is not actually managed by the organization whether they were stolen, you know email and to see it or something like that can't be opened because the device itself they're trying to open them on is not managed by the organization and

conditional access gives you that layer of control.

Amit: Sounds like something that IT departments really need to look at a little bit more. Another tool that we have been working on and engineering team has been really focused on and it's part of our featured section for our podcast today is School Data Sync. We are going to be talking a little bit more about that. What are your views on School Data Sync and introduce the future segment for us and while, you're doing that as well.

Sam: Yeah, lovely. So, School Data Sync is a fantastic way to provide a link between your school's student management system, student information system and M365, really. And I'm going to keep it really simple because I know our guest, you're going to introduce really shortly as I got to give us a far more detailed description of what that is. My views on it are this, if you're a school and you want to automate as much of the creation of users and the creation of tool sets inside of M365 as possible and reduce the amount of manual work or the amount of scripting that you need to do, you need to be looking at School Data Sync. It's as simple as that.

Amit: So, does that mean that at the beginning of the year I don't have to create thousand users and put them into 100 - 200 classrooms is it going to do that for me?

Sam: It's definitely going to help.

Amit: Let's find out.

Sam: Alright.

Amit: Hey Sam, this is our great pleasure to have our next guest on this feature section today. I mean, we've had so many guests but we have a very special guest. The first time we actually have someone from Microsoft Engineering Team with us for our podcast this month. It's my great pleasure and I've had the pleasure of meeting him in person and working with him over the last few months, helping our customers here across Asia Pacific to really, you know, achieve a lot more with our platform by deploying it in a more optimum way using a School Data Sync. So, as we know, today's section is on School Data sync. So, it is my pleasure to welcome on our podcast, Mr. Bill Sluss, Senior Program Manager from our Education Analytics Engineering Team. Welcome to the podcast, Bill.

Bill: Hey guys, thanks for having me on. It's great to meet you and all of your listeners today. For anybody who doesn't know me, I'm Bill Sluss. I'm the Program Manager for School Data Sync, which is also known as SDS. My role is generally to do product design, development, engineering and roadmap, but I also spent a lot of time focusing on other things like identity security, compliance, uh, data protection and privacy, all of those platform enablement type things that we develop here at Microsoft.

Amit: Oh, that's exciting because this is exactly, you know, what our listeners have been asking us and me about some feedback on that Bill. So, I'm glad we have the expert on our podcast today. So, we had received some questions from our listeners and we've had some prior kind of prep that Sam and I had before this podcast and we're super excited to talk to you specifically around Microsoft School Data Sync, Bill. Just for the benefit of our listeners, I would love to hear your take on what Data Sync is and what it means for schools,

institutions, even, you know, districts and schools across multiple districts who've been able to use School Data Sync as an enabler to get them started on their journey around leveraging the Microsoft Cloud.

Bill: Yeah, for sure. So, School Data Sync is a free web application and it's available in every Office 365 Education tenant today. And what we do is it'll take and connect with external student information systems, also known as an SIS or an SMS or an MIS depending on what region in the world you're in. And we sync and import, a whole of educational data, so information about students and teachers, parents, schools, classes, rostering information, which is basically class memberships in school memberships and we sync this data into Office 365 so we can do a whole bunch of stuff with it, but really our scenarios breakdown along two primary paths. We have a set of end user scenarios and also a set of IT scenarios. And so it all really starts with an extended Azure active directory schema. We build out a robust schema to support EDU specific attributes. It's really the first time that we've extended active directory for an industry vertical specifically and that opens up a huge opportunity for us when we get into our IT and end user scenarios. So for end users, primarily teachers and students specifically, we leveraged that EDU data to build out things like dynamic Office 365 groups and Class Teams. So, teachers and students can easily communicate, collaborate and take advantage of all of the education rich features that we're adding into teams. SDS builds and maintains these teams so teachers don't have to, they can come in on day one of a new term semester or school year. They can sit down and they can just start using our technology within the context of their class. They don't have to worry about figuring out how to create all their teams and add all the students and make sure that they're updated over time. Saves teachers a ton of time and energy. And then along the IT scenarios we leverage that same data set and we build out things like security groups and administrative units for a whole variety of IT use cases. So if you're doing things like device management with an Intune or app management with conditional access policy or directory management teams, management, nearly every IT config in Office 365 can leverage the groups in scopes created by SDS. We also use that data for things like user provisioning, licensing, automating teams, cleanup activities, directory hygiene. There's a whole bunch of scenarios where SDS can help benefit it. Those are our two areas of focus and SDS ultimately just saves IT time in both for end users and variety scenarios.

Sam: That's a pretty comprehensive answer right off the bat there, bill, so thank you for sharing that with our listeners. I guess my distilled version of that would be SDS is an accelerator to pre-populate Office 365 with the school's data from the SIS or the SMS. Is that a fair sort of summation?

Bill: That's exactly right. A lot of what SDS does is, is bulk enablement, right? So if you need to create one or two things, you can probably go to the M365 admin portal and do that there. But if you need to create hundreds or thousands or tens of thousands of things at a time, SDS is probably the route you want to go.

Sam: And look. I guess from my experience in working in schools previous to my time at Microsoft, two things kind of stick out to me. One is a whole range of different student management system, student information system products out there. So, I'd be interested in, you know, how that works in terms of integrating with a wide range of products and what SDS does in that space. And then secondly, you know, some schools a hippie just to kind of populate the systems once at the beginning of the year or maybe once at the

beginning of a semester and then kind of manually manage it after that. But the School Data Sync have any sort of scripted routine synchronization options that come with it?

Bill: Yeah. So, along your first question, we have two methods of actually importing data. So, the first that that's universally available, if you're running an SIS today, it doesn't matter which system it is, we accept CSV import. So, if you can take your, your student information system data, export it to a CSV file, we support a variety of file types. We can ingest that data via CSV file. We also have a first party flow connector and template that you can leverage that will help automate the pulling of that data from your source system over to SDS and Office 365 in an automated fashion. Now the more elegant version of what we offer in SDS is really around API synchronization. So in an ideal world we just connect Office 365 and SDS directly to your student information system. In order to do that, we need the SIS to enable the one roster APIs, which is a universal specification. It's built by IMS global to help facilitate EDU system interoperability. And so if your SIS has the one roster API spec, implement it over top of it, we can connect directly to that system and pull the data straight in line. No CSV file management required. Both of those methods make SDS viable for nearly anyone. And if your SIS has those one roster APIs, it makes it even easier.

Sam: Got it. Thank you for that explanation there. That makes a whole bunch of sense. And I guess extrapolating out what you've shared with us then is STS designed to work for a single school or is it more at a district level or a department of education level? Is there a sort of a sweet spot where SDS lands or is it pretty flexible in that space?

Bill: Yeah. Who, who uses SDS really depends on the configuration of the tenant. So, an Office 365, if you look around the landscape worldwide, there are, some organizations that are a single school entity that had their own Office 365 tenant. And then there's other organizations that span an entire country and represent thousands of schools and tens of millions of users. So, STS requires a global administrator role. So whoever is the global administrator of that tenant is who will be using SDS. And at whatever scale is enabled within that tenant. That's the scale at which you would deploy SDS. So, if you need to synchronize just a single school, SDS can certainly do that. It can pull in that single school data. But at the same time, if you're one of those massive ministries of education that that spans thousands or even tens of thousands of schools, millions of users, SDS can accommodate that scenario as well. So, it's really a solution that can scale to any need from small to large and everywhere in between.

Amit: Fantastic, Bill. So, from my perspective, I think I'm pretty clear on the input side of things in terms of being able to capture data from SIS or SMS or MIS systems. What about the output? You mentioned earlier when you described the SDS that we can actually create Office 365 security groups or dynamic groups, which other applications can we do this, I mean is it only limited to Office 365 or it can be also extend this beyond what's happening within the Officer 365 ecosystem?

Bill: Yes, so, today SDS will provision users in Office 365 Azure active directory will provision Office 365 groups and teams into Office 365 it will also do the security groups in Azure that you referenced. The only data type today that we write outbound is a new feature and capability called Grade Sync. So, this is a capability where if you enable inbound synchronization for classes specifically from your SIS using a one roster API connector so that the external system has to be one roster API enabled. If you connect SDS to that system and you pull those classes inbound and create corresponding Class Teams within the teams

environment, there's a whole bunch of grading features and capabilities so teachers can distribute assignments and grade them right within the Teams app itself and instead of asking teachers to then go back to their SIS, what we're building is, is a new mechanism that will export those grades automatically if the teacher chooses to do so. So, they will only have to do grading within the context of Teams and those grades will flow automatically outbound. That's the first outbound scenario that we're looking at. Certainly longer term we're exploring other possibilities, but for right now the Grade Sync outbound is the only outbound data, right that we have.

Sam: Bill, I think that's such an important additional feature because as we all know, the student management systems, student information system, they really want to position themselves as the single source of truth for data in this school. Right? And that keeps that relationship really sticky. If the grades that are maybe being marked inside of Microsoft Teams for Education can actually write those grades back into the association is to say that they're all recorded, they're in a single place but to continue to give the educators the ease and flexibility of the grading system inside of teams, which as we know only a few months ago, we added mobile grading on there as well, making it even easier for teachers to be able to mark those assignments that students submit to, so having that right back to the system, the SMEs as a key feature, has that been well received by our partners in this space?

Bill: It's gone over huge. Yeah. It's interesting. If you look at the history of active directory, it was really a direct rebuilt for business and as we look across the landscape of education, what we found is that not every organization around the world has active directory. In fact, I would argue that more are likely to have a student information system in an EDU than active directory. But yeah, it's, it's a huge value added. It saves teachers a ton of time and as we start to work with and talk to all of these various partners in the space, all of the systems that are out there that actually have the grade book as the source of truth in SIS or in the MIS. They're hugely interested in building that, that API integration to facilitate that downstream grade right back. It's gone over huge from both a partner perspective and for customers. Absolutely.

Amit: Excellent. Bill, thank you so much for describing what SDS does and how it actually is going to help our listeners. Now the obvious question comes up is I'm an IT pro in a school. How do I get started? Cause this sounds like a very good fit in my organization. Where do I go? What's the steps do I need to, like you said earlier on, this is a cloud-based thing, so I'm guessing we don't need to buy anything from a hardware perspective if it's enabled in the cloud. So, I would love to hear that workflow of, Hey, I'm an IT pro, I want to help my school onboard onto this solution. How do I do it?

Bill: Yeah, definitely. So if you're in process of sort of evaluating Office 365 or just specifically SDS, basically we'd always recommend that you start out by going to [aka.ms/sdssignup](https://aka.ms/sdssignup) again, [aka.ms/sdssignup](https://aka.ms/sdssignup) and that allows you to talk directly to us. We believe so strongly that SDS can be impactful for you and your education institution that we've built out and provide a free team of consultants that will help you plan, pilot, deploy at whatever scale you want at School Data Sync. So go there, talk to one of our consultants. They will help you through every step of the way from just core ideation, answering questions about what it can do, how it can work for you. They will answer all of your questions. Now, if you prefer to kind of go it alone and just kind of kick the tires on SDS, that's okay, too. We built SDS to work for any scenario. So regardless whether you're in a

hybrid identity model with a on prem and the most complex Federation set up with multiple external directors, it doesn't matter. You can run SDS in tandem with any of our other first party tools. So, if you're in an organization that is say, running AAD connect and synchronizing from that active directory On-premise, you can run SDS right alongside it. You can synchronize those same users. You'll get the core identity from your own premise active directory, and then SDS will layer in all of those additional EDU attributes that we talked about. On top of that, SDS can build out those groups in class teams for any organization. So, you can quickly go from not using Teams at all to using Teams at full scale, for every class in your entire org with very, very little time and energy. In addition to the Class Teams though, you also have capabilities for the IT scenarios. So, regardless if you're running Office 365 today, everybody needs security groups. It doesn't matter who you are. You definitely need security groups if you're doing anything in IT, whether it's group-based, licensing, conditional access and tune device management, SSPR groups and Teams policy. They just recently had Ignite Teams announcement that they're going to start supporting security groups for all of their Teams policy meaning, policy messaging, policy, app policy. All of those will have a security group that lives at the heart of it. And so, at a minimum I would recommend SDS running SDS to dynamically provision in and keep updated those EDU scopes, things like the all teachers group, the all students group and school-based security groups. So, if you're looking to get started, all you need, it's in your tenant already. It's a free app, but definitely reach out [aka.ms/sdssignup](https://aka.ms/sdssignup) but feel free to run through a sample dataset. We have stuff published up on Github. But yeah, I definitely recommend reaching out to us and we'll help you through it through it for sure, but it's there and available. If you're a global admin, feel free to run through a proof of concept at whatever scale you want.

Amit: Thank you for informing our listeners on how to get started there. Bill, I think this has been an amazing run through of what SDS is and Sam and I are definitely privileged to have access to experts like you and I'm glad that you've been able to also help our listeners with the guidance on how to get started with SDS. It's been a pleasure having you on this podcast, Bill, having the level of depth that, you know, our engineering team is working with our field and so Sam and I are from the Microsoft field. We get to work with you guys, provide feedback. We love the fact that the engineering team is always looking for feedback from our customers. Sam, any closing remarks on the SDS tool set and because I'm excited, I'm super excited. I'm already working with the team here, deploying a very large tenant in the Asia Pacific. So it's enabling a real impact in our customer base. Love to hear your remarks and as we close out this feature section, this month's podcast.

Sam: Yeah, thanks Amit. And Bill, thank you so much for being a guest on our podcast today. Look, the takeaway from me here is what you just called out on your last comments that you know, Microsoft believes so much in this, the value of SDS that we've built out a team of consultants to help our customers, our education customers live rigid effectively at no cost. And that for me says volumes in terms of our commitment to the platform. And it also means that the barrier to entry is very, very low for our schools and also for our partners who want to integrate and using the one roster API. So you know, the timing of this podcast is so good because I've had two conversations in the last week actually with SMS based in Asia Pacific that are wanting to explore integration with SDS. And so to hear this level of support that's available from your team, Bill is just fantastic. So I just echo what, what Amit has said really that this is something that has huge value to our customer base and that's been cool to hear a bit more about it on our podcast today.

Bill: Yeah, excellent. Thank you guys so much for having me on it. It was a pleasure to meet everybody out there and all of your listeners and I definitely look forward to working with them going forward.

Amit: Thanks again, Bill, all the best.

Sam: So, Amit, such a great conversation with those last, I'm really glad we were able to get our first guest from engineering on the podcast. There'll be many more I'm sure, but time is running along. So let us run to the close of podcast, which has tips and tricks. If you guys hadn't this year with us today.

Amit: I do. I've been talking to a lot of customers lately and they've been asking us, you know, Microsoft 365 it's so feature rich, so many tools, so many ways of achieving similar outcomes with those tools. So, what do I use and when and what is kind of the best practice around that. And in fact I'm going to borrow this tip from a customer of ours. It's a worldwide customer, Cerner, and they were recently at the Microsoft Ignite conference and they shared with us how they are informing their end users to use the various tools within the Office 365 and the larger M365 suite. So, when it comes to individual work as I'm doing my own work, I'm creating content, then I use OneDrive, right? So, that's where I store my files for my immediate use and maybe I'm sharing that with a colleague or two and I'm going to use those documents. And even in OneDrive there was segregation between one drive personal and OneDrive for business. So, they are training the users to understand that, Hey, if it's work-related it's going to go into OneDrive business and then there was OneDrive personal and the conversation we had earlier about Azure information protection can apply here as well in terms of where you want to see the document. The next one is Microsoft Teams. For the people I work with regularly. Like, just as an example, you and I, you're in New Zealand. I'm in Singapore. When we converse and we work as a team on various projects within the Microsoft Education Team we use the Microsoft Teams product and for larger kind of, you know, people who are around us and around our Teams. We use Yammer inside of Microsoft and sort of Cerner and that helps us communicate around the common interests or a particular subject matter that might be bigger than just immediate Teams requirements.

Sam: So, I'll stop you just briefly because Yammer is maybe less familiar with some of their audience, but would it be fair to say it's a description of sort of a social network for business and it has forums and polls and other things like that which can be leveraged internally as an organization?

Amit: Absolutely. I mean Yammer itself has evolved over the years as we've also brought in on the tools like Microsoft Teams. So Yammer has had to, you know, reposition itself as that enabler of communication outside of the immediate team. And therefore, yes, it is very much like a social environment that is corporate wide or rather in the context of education. Maybe it's school wide or district wide or statewide. If, if we're talking about different school systems here or within a university, it might be all of university community rather than the school of engineering and the school of computer science or whatever it might be. And of course, there is SharePoint, which is leveraged more as a tool, and that integrates completely with both Yammer and with the Teams as an enabler for that content repository and the ability for us to actually share and create co-create simultaneously. So, SharePoint really is the underlying engine to do that collaboration platform. So I was really, you know,

happy to learn about this from a customer point of view as to how they're using it versus how we are using it within Microsoft as well as some similarities as well. So that's my tip for the day. Use the right tool for the right job and you'll be successful.

Sam: Look, a really good one. And I think so important to see partners coming out with these types of communication is really around how to adopt the usage of the Office 365 and the M365 tools because that's something that all organizations need help with, both education and consumer and enterprise. My tip and trick is actually kind of similar actually, and this is one really around the old scenario. Where communication goes out via email across all of your organization and someone exited the user's reply and since the thoughts good, bad or otherwise to the entire organization. That's a pretty frustrating scenario. I think we've all been in it before and I was talking with some schools recently actually and they were saying what are some tips and tricks to prevent this from happening? And, so I have kind of three ways that that can be done, the first one is perhaps education and I think if you're doing a staff wide organization wide email, I think it's the responsibility sits with the sender. Do you use BCC line cabin? And that way if someone has reply, oh, it's only going back to the sender, not going to the entire organization. So, it's a really good practice that I think senders of large organization wide email should be adopting. The second tip is an Outlook WebEx it's a online browser-based outlook. You can actually set policy that changes the default reply from being reply all to just single reply. So, that way yet you have to choose to reply or rather than it happening by accident. And in the third way is actually you can restrict inside of exchange who can send to group aliases. So that's a really good trick really. If you've got a staff wide ideas and you only have authorized maybe senior leadership or the communications team out to vote to see into those aliases. And in fact we do that inside of Microsoft as well. So it's subsidiary wide email aliases that you just can't seem to and all staff. Imagine if you're, I decided to start sending emails to have many employees. Microsoft has now. It would be unpopular very quickly, right?

Amit: That's right. And I think only some there knows that. Anyway, let's keep that job to the professionals.

Sam: Indeed. So, that's my tip and trick around how to prevent the dreaded reply over from accidentally happening. And that's time. I think you need to close us out on it, Amit.

Amit: That's it. This has been an amazing podcast. Just you know, we've gone from talking about Microsoft 365 with all the components within it with Office 365, Windows 10 and price mobility and security plus Minecraft Education Edition and the phenomenal work that you guys have done in New Zealand, a lot to learn from that. And then we had Bill on this on this episode, Bill from engineering, School Data Sync. Which is really going to be productivity tool for IT pros. It has been our pleasure to, you know, put this podcast together for you. We look forward to your feedback and we are now available on most podcasts engines.

Sam: Yeah, most podcasts, Spotify, Apple podcast, Google podcasts. You got it. You name it. And I bet you'll find it.

Amit:

Excellent. Thank you again for tuning in listeners, and we look forward for you to join us in our next episode, which will be up soon. Thanks.

