

End-to-End School Management Solution for Private Schools



**Brad Lee – CEO
RenWeb**

CEOCFO: Mr. Lee, would you tell us about RenWeb?

Mr. Lee: Sure, and thanks for this opportunity.

RenWeb is a completely integrated school management software solution for private and faith-based schools. It's cloud-based and mobile friendly, so it offers school administrators, teachers and parents anytime, anywhere access to their school information via a secure login.

Our service begins when Parents go online and use RenWeb to apply for their child to attend a school. RenWeb manages their information through the admissions process, enrolls the student into school and schedules them into class. The instant RenWeb schedules the student into a class, the student is added to the teacher's online gradebook for the class where the teacher can record and score homework assignments, tests and quizzes. The instant the teacher records a grade in the gradebook, the grade displays in our integrated parent portal where parents can go online through their PC or through an app on their mobile device to view all of their student's homework assignments, grades, report cards, school announcements and calendars.

RenWeb also manages the school's communications, billing and collections, online payments, nurse's office, library, cafeteria and child-care area so it is truly a comprehensive and integrated end-to-end solution.

CEOCFO: Are most schools using a system today or is this new territory?

Mr. Lee: We don't serve public schools so I can't speak about them. But in the private and faith-based market, approximately 70% of the 550 schools we converted to RenWeb in 2015 were using a data management system. The other 30% were using an access database, excel documents or just paper files. That would suggest that just under a third of private and faith-based schools still do not have a system today. Our goal is to provide them an affordable solution that is comprehensive and easy to use.

CEOCFO: How are you reaching out to schools to let them know about RenWeb and why they should be using it? How is it better than other products?

Mr. Lee: RenWeb was one of the first products that came to market with a web-based solution. That allowed us to grow quickly and become the largest provider of school management software in the US for private and faith-based schools. Today we serve 3,800 schools in all 50 states and in over 50 foreign countries. That means we have a lot of brand-awareness in the market and receive a lot of referrals from customers.

Along with being web-based, our growth and popularity comes from the fact that we offer a completely integrated solution. Some schools today are using a student information system provided by one vendor, a gradebook provided by a second vendor, and a parent portal provided by a third vendor. These three separate systems do not integrate well, so it forces schools to synchronize data across the three vendors. RenWeb's integrated solution solved that problem so many schools purchase RenWeb for that reason.

We are also reaching new customers through our acquisition by FACTS Management in 2014. FACTS provides tuition management and financial needs assessment services for private and faith-based schools. Together, FACTS and RenWeb serve approximately 9,400 schools. Because RenWeb integrates with FACTS, the integration provides us an opportunity to jointly serve these customers with an integrated financial and school management solution.

CEOFO: Does easy enrollment for parents affect how a school assesses your solution?

Mr. Lee: Absolutely. Parents are online on a daily basis making purchases, paying bills and filling out online forms. They expect to be able to reenroll for school using online forms as well rather than by filling out the same paper reenrollment forms each year. Plus, RenWeb's Online Reenrollment service is much easier for schools to use as well because when parents make updates to the data that is presented on the online reenrollment forms, the information automatically updates RenWeb. That means the schools don't need to hand-enter updates into the system.

CEOFO: What features that your system has readily available are not taken advantage of properly?

Mr. Lee: I think more of RenWeb's customers should take advantage of our e-commerce options rather than only accept paper checks from parents. If a school offers its parents the opportunity to pay for tuition on a monthly basis, we recommend that they take advantage of FACTS Tuition Management. FACTS sets up monthly payment plans with the parents and then manages the collections for the schools which improves their school's cash flow and allows the school to outsource dealing with delinquent parents.

CEOFO: Do you find schools of a certain type, size, and geography has more interest than others or is it across the board?

Mr. Lee: We serve schools with fewer than 50 students and schools with more than 3,100 students. All schools need these capabilities, but purchasing software is more financially challenging for smaller schools. That is why we price our service based on the school's enrollment so RenWeb is less expensive for small schools versus larger schools.

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CEOFO: How have you kept your system simple and intuitive yet efficient?

Mr. Lee: We have been in business with this solution for over 10 years. Obviously, when we first offered it, it was a Windows based solution on a PC. When then had to expand it so it could serve PCs and Macs. We then had to create a new capability where it could be mobile friendly. While we continue to evolve the solution, we are staying focused on serving private and faith-based schools. Because we know their needs very well from working with them for so long, we are able to keep our solutions intuitive for them.

CEOFO: Are private and faith based schools becoming more concerned with parent relationships?

Mr. Lee: That is definitely true for these schools. Schools in general can better educate their students when they have informed parents acting as their partners. That is why our ParentsWeb solution and our mobile app, which allow the parents to see grades and homework assignments in real time, are so important to our schools and their parents.

CEOFO: What is the competitive landscape?

Mr. Lee: We serve more private and faith based schools than any other student information system so we know the competitive landscape pretty well. We have different competitors in the independent school market, versus the Christian school market, versus the Catholic school market. Each market has its specific needs and nuances. That requires us to offer different products and to provide different configurations of RenWeb to serve each market.

CEOFO: What are some of the differences in a private school versus a faith based school or a big city private school versus a rural school?

Mr. Lee: In general, the community of students and families that a school serves often determines the financial well-being of the school. It is the mission of many schools to try and turn away as few students as possible, regardless of the student's financial need. That creates pressure on the financial well-being of many schools. It is financial well-being that drives the biggest differences between schools, not whether they are private or faith based.

CEOFO: Are schools taking advantage of your Parent Alert feature?

Mr. Lee: Absolutely. We have over 1,200 schools that use Parent Alert. They use it to send not only emergency alerts, but also to send reminders to parents about upcoming events or meetings. They also use it to let parents know what time the team bus will arrive back from the game so parents spend less time waiting in the parking lot. It has a lot of different uses.

CEOFO: What is ahead for RenWeb?

Mr. Lee: We have announced that we are going to launch RenWeb's own Learning Management System, or LMS, this year. An LMS enables the distribution of online course content and creates a collaborative online learning environment

between teachers and students. It's especially useful to schools that are replacing textbooks with mobile devices that they are placing in the hands of their students. Because the LMS will share information with RenWeb so well, it will be very attractive to schools when compared to the other LMS's on the market.

CEOFO: *What surprised you as RenWeb has grown and evolved?*

Mr. Lee: I think the biggest challenge for us has just been how quickly mobile devices have taken over the market. We were able for many years to serve just Windows-based PCs. We then had to expand to serve Macs, but we had quite a bit of time to develop a solution. Now we have iOS devices, Android devices, tablets and Chromebooks, and each require unique development if you want to deploy native apps for the devices or create responsive web pages for each device. That has been the most challenging technical issue we have had to face.

CEOFO: *Why choose RenWeb?*

Mr. Lee: I believe we are the most popular and widely used school management software solution in the market for several reasons. It's because of the depth and breadth of our services, our completely integrated solution, our attractive pricing for both large and small schools, and our commitment to customer service that differentiates us from many other providers.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOFO Magazine



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