
Desire2Learn moving to Tannery building

BY CHUCK HOWITT, RECORD STAFF

KITCHENER — Desire2Learn Inc., one of the brightest stars in the local technology sector, has announced it is moving to new larger offices in downtown Kitchener.

The online education company is moving from its present headquarters in the McPherson Centre at King and Water Streets into The Tannery, the renovated and refurbished former Lang Tannery bounded by Victoria, Francis, Charles and Joseph streets.

The move will take place in the third quarter of 2010, the company said in a news release today.

Desire2Learn, which recently settled a bruising patent lawsuit with its chief competitor, also announced that it is "prosperous and growing with more than 40 positions available and dozens more planned."

"As we are about to start our 11th year of business, we are thrilled to be preparing for this move," said John Baker, founder, president and chief executive officer of Desire2Learn. "Excellent synergy will be possible through collaboration and association with other technology tenants in the new facility."

The Tannery will also be home to the new Digital Media Convergence Centre, a \$100 million public-private venture led by Communitech, an association of information technology companies in the region.

The 330,000-square-foot Tannery building is being redeveloped by Cadan Inc. of Toronto.

Based in Kitchener, Desire2Learn has a workforce of about 150 employees, including personnel elsewhere in North America, the U.K. and Australia. The company develops software that allows teachers to create websites and run classes over the internet. It is one of the world's largest players in course management software.

Its client list now exceeds five million learners worldwide, drawn from individual schools, provincial and state-wide programs, post-secondary institutions, governments, healthcare organizations, private corporations and associations, the release said.

Recently, the company got a huge monkey off its back when it settled a three-year-old lawsuit launched by Blackboard Inc. of Washington, D.C., a much larger competitor in the field.

Company officials were not available for comment on the move.

Baker, 33, launched Desire2Learn while still a systems design engineering student at the University of Waterloo. His first contract was designing web pages for professors that students could access to find information about classes.

His first major contract was designing a distance-learning program for the University of Guelph.

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