



# Long & Foster

Long & Foster is the largest privately held residential real estate company in the nation. In addition to helping customers buy and sell real estate, Long & Foster offers mortgage, title, insurance, relocation, and settlement services, helps connect customers to maintenance, repair, and home improvement service companies. The real estate brokerage has more than 16,000 sales associates in 238 offices.

## Objective.

Long & Foster wanted to improve communication between its sales force and customers. The Internet was changing the way customers bought and sold property, and Long & Foster decided to proactively change its communication methods to evolve with the shifting market.

As the real estate market heated up and competition became fierce, Long & Foster needed to make sure that agents could respond promptly to customer queries and provide their customers with the necessary information that would help close the deals.

## Solution.

To encourage agents to communicate with customers via email, Long & Foster decided to support enterprise-level, handheld, wireless devices for use by both the internal staff and the real estate sales force. The wireless rollout began in the fall of 2000, and today, more than 2,000 wireless devices accompany Long & Foster real estate agents out in the field. Most agents use BlackBerry® handhelds or Palm® Treo™ smartphones, which send email and property photos (depending on the device functionality) and connect to the Internet over the Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband network. Between 50 and 100 agents use Evolution Data Optimized (EV-DO) cards when traveling. To ensure secure transactions, data is encrypted using Intellisync™ Data Sync from Nokia and BlackBerry Enterprise Server.

Agents use the handheld devices primarily to send email and attachments, and to check the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) for properties, contacts, brokers, prices, and photos. Agents are inundated with email messages, so Long & Foster wanted a reliable network provider to support the huge volume of messages. Long & Foster selected Verizon Wireless because the Mobile Broadband network is the nation's most reliable high-speed wireless broadband network.

"The Verizon Wireless network is extraordinarily reliable and strong. Verizon Wireless was able to provide the level of support that we expected," says Michael Koval, Senior Vice President and CIO of Long & Foster. "We've had a tremendous amount of continuity, and the account manager is always available. Verizon Wireless keeps me happy."

**LONG & FOSTER**  
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### Company Description:

Long & Foster is the largest privately held residential real estate company in the nation. In addition to helping customers buy and sell real estate, Long & Foster offers a host of homeownership-related services. The company has more than 16,000 sales associates in 238 offices.

### Objectives:

- Improve communication between sales agents and customers by introducing wireless access to email and the Internet.
- Allow agents to get the information they need while they are out in the field, away from their office.

### Solution:

- The Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband network allows 2,000 BlackBerry and Palm Treo handheld devices to send and receive email and access the Internet.
- Between 50 to 100 notebooks, equipped with EV-DO cards, allow the Long & Foster team to connect to the applications they need while they are traveling or when local area network (LAN) lines are unavailable.



## Results.

Long & Foster has experienced tremendous growth during the last six years. The number of agents and offices has increased from 6,200 agents in 125 offices to 16,000 agents in 238 offices, and many offices have tripled in size.

Having reliable wireless access is critical to Long & Foster's business. "It gives us a huge competitive advantage," Koval says. "Our connectivity is very important to our organization."

Within 6 to 12 months of its wireless rollout, Long & Foster dramatically improved email response times and customer service. Prior to the wireless solution, agents read less than 50% of their email messages, Koval says. Because the sales and support teams now carry handheld devices, they read 70% to 80% of emails the same day, and their average response time to an email is 10 minutes or less. Koval says that users respond in near real time. "In today's environment, customers will not tolerate long waits."

The wireless solution has contributed to Long & Foster's financial success, too. Overall gross volume for all Long & Foster companies has tripled, reaching \$64 billion in 2005, Koval says. "Agents say that without the handheld devices and access to email and the Internet, they would not have been able to close some deals. Overall customer satisfaction is much higher, and agents have better communication with customers."

In an industry known to prefer personal interaction over technology, Long & Foster's high-end solution stands out for its ability to support personal relationships through technology. "We needed to evolve and leverage the latest technology," Koval says. "You must be better and faster than the competition, or you will lose the relationship. Our wireless connectivity gives us the advantage we need."

### Results:

- Improved overall customer satisfaction.
- Decreased response times to customer emails from days to minutes.
- Provided mobile Web access, allowing agents to work from the field.
- Enabled agents to close deals more quickly.
- Helped the company increase overall sales threefold.
- Contributed to overall revenue growth, which reached \$64 billion in 2005.

"You must be better and faster than the competition, or you will lose the relationship. Our wireless connectivity gives us the advantage we need."

**MICHAEL KOVAL**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CIO  
LONG & FOSTER

Speeds require an EV-DO Rev. A-capable device. When using an EV-DO device that is not Rev. A-capable, you can expect download speeds of 400 to 700 Kbps and upload speeds of 60 to 80 Kbps. Mobile Broadband speed claims based on our network tests with 5 MB FTP data files, without compression. Mobile Broadband is available to more than 240 million people in 248 major metropolitan areas and 232 primary airports in the United States.

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