



Alure Home Improvements

Alure Home Improvements opened its doors in 1946 as a small, family-run painting and decorating company. Since then, it has evolved into an award-winning, full-service remodeling firm that provides customized home remodels for clients throughout the New York Tristate Area. The company's work has been showcased five times on ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

Objective.

Alure's various design and installation divisions each serve different territories that cover large geographical areas, including upstate New York, where the company has a design showroom. With such a large area to service, it was imperative for Alure to move its workforce to a high-powered mobile solution that would allow teams to communicate with each other and with customers while outside of the office—helping boost productivity, streamline processes, and increase customer response times.

In addition, Alure found that its customers were increasingly using email to communicate, necessitating a powerful and trustworthy wireless messaging solution that would provide connectivity throughout the company's vast territory.

Alure also needed to centralize and simplify the exchange of critical information between its management teams, sales force, and work crews. Until recently, Alure's sales force had been relying on an alternative solution that forced them to go to a kiosk and sync up their mobile devices to get appointments or other critical information. Needless to say, Alure wanted to be less reliant on physical locations and become mobile in the truest sense—receiving updated appointments, messages, and other important information in real time, no matter where the job was.

Management at Alure also desired a more efficient and streamlined process to manage the productivity of its workforce without requiring multiple layers of overhead and system managers spread throughout the territories. And with Alure's growing presence at trade shows and open houses, management needed a way to keep tabs on the progress and success of these events.

Solution.

Alure chose a solution that would ensure that its mobile workforce of close to 100 employees had the fast, reliable connectivity and coverage it needed no matter where teams were. Because Alure was already using Verizon Wireless as its mobile phone service provider and BlackBerry® handhelds as its wireless device of choice, the Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband service was the perfect choice to leverage the company's investment.

"Verizon [Wireless] came to us and made it very attractive for us to get involved," says John Doyle, Director of Technology and Communications at Alure. "They were there every step of

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Company Description:

Alure Home Improvements started doing business in 1946 and has since evolved into a leading full-service remodeling company that specializes in customized home improvement solutions for customers throughout the New York Tristate Area. Every Alure division has in-house specialists for design, coordination, production, and installation. The company was recently honored with the prestigious Remodeler of the Year award by *Professional Remodeler* magazine, one of the country's most respected trade publications for the construction industry.

the way, providing us with different contacts for gaining software, and helping us not only implement the system, but grow it.”

Verizon Wireless worked with Alure on a trial program that would meet its needs. Having this kind of resource from the beginning gave Alure a thorough picture of the solution and allowed the company to see how it worked up close. Once Alure had decided on implementing Mobile Broadband service from Verizon Wireless, it only took a couple of days to deploy the solution for division owners and managers.

Doyle says the solution’s BlackBerry Enterprise Server immediately solved many of the company’s remote-communication pain points. With the system’s wireless calendar synchronization, teams enjoyed more mobility with less reliance on physical desktops. Shortly thereafter, Alure developed a process that allowed teams to distribute appointments and manage end users’ calendars, synchronizing schedules and letting other team members work more efficiently.

“The Verizon [Wireless] solution has made our people more flexible and less reliant on the fixed systems in the office,” Doyle says. “We’re realizing more productivity from each individual than if we had to rely on them coming back to the office to manage email, their calendar, and other related tasks.”

Verizon Wireless also gave Alure a faster, real-time solution for communication between the company and its remote teams. Mike Kuplicki, General Manager for Alure, says that he easily manages up to three times as many people with the Mobile Broadband solution than he did before.

“Now I can run 20 salespeople in three separate locations and do it without too much effort,” says Kuplicki. “And because we use email primarily, I can keep a record of our messaging at all times.”

Along the same lines, Alure finds it much easier to receive valuable feedback from trade shows and open houses in real time.

“I get continuous feedback and updates throughout the day without getting on the phone and having to step away from a client,” says Seth Selesnow, Alure’s Marketing Director. “If they have two quick seconds, they can send me an email. It just makes things easier to communicate with them.”

Not only can Alure communicate better with its mobile workforce, the company found it can enhance its communication with clients, much of which is done after hours or at inconvenient times. Selesnow says wireless email is a much less intrusive way to communicate.

“If I didn’t have a BlackBerry, the alternative would have to be pick up the phone and call somebody in the middle of the night,” Selesnow says. “Instead, I can send my email at midnight and know that when the person wakes up, the message is there. I can work on my time, as opposed to just trying to do things during business hours.”

Objectives:

- Allow management, sales, and production teams to conveniently communicate with each other and their customers over a wide geographical territory.
- Leverage wireless email as a primary and trusted form of communication.
- Centralize and simplify the exchange of critical information between management teams, sales force, and work crews—with less reliance on located systems.
- Streamline workforce management processes and events without multiple layers of overhead and system managers.

Solution:

- Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband service gave Alure unfettered wireless connectivity to management, workforce, and customers through instant messaging and email.
- The BlackBerry Enterprise Server and Verizon Wireless BlackBerry handhelds provided Alure with wireless calendar synchronization, which gave teams more mobility with less reliance on physical desktops.
- Verizon Wireless provided Alure with enhanced management of sales force, workforce, and event staff that wasn’t dependent upon an Ethernet or Wi-Fi connection.
- Wireless email made it possible to communicate with customers in an unobtrusive manner after hours.

Results.

Alure found that using BlackBerry handhelds in addition to Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband service increased overall company productivity and gave employees more flexibility with the balance between work and personal life. The solution also made for easier, more discreet communications, and enhanced personal and customer satisfaction.

Alure also relied on Verizon Wireless PC Cards with Mobile Broadband service to help its production teams stay productive in the field, no matter where the job took them. Doyle says that kind of access to his company's back-end systems and databases was crucial given the nature of his business.

"As our people move from job to job, they can access the systems they need to update information, create orders on the spot, and manage jobs throughout the area," says Doyle. "It was also important for us to update project schedules and budgets on the fly, as well as manage email with large file formats. Verizon [Wireless] gave us that freedom."

In addition, Alure took advantage of the solution's tethering capabilities—allowing the company to simulate the PC Card experience with its BlackBerry devices and giving Alure even more business freedom and functionality from the road. Doyle says that capability alone allowed his production managers to create remote offices easily at customer work sites.

"Our people could simply log in to the system and create a contract and print it on the spot," Doyle says. "This gave us faster turnaround because customers didn't have to wait longer for their jobs to start."

With a more productive workforce and streamlined processes, Alure has experienced 30% growth every year since 2003. The company has been able to broaden its territories without needing a physical presence in many of those areas. Management now has access to all company appointments and client information and can service both customers and employees from one central location.

Kuplicki says that kind of access has come in handy, even in the most dire of situations. When the entire Northeast section of the country experienced massive power blackouts in the summer of 2003, he says his Verizon Wireless network kept Alure working when other forms of communication were completely shut down.

"Naturally, we lost our email service," Kuplicki says. "Voice service was spotty because many cell towers were busy at the time. But the one thing that we didn't lose was the BlackBerry PIM-to-PIM [personal information management] messaging. We were able to keep in touch with each other through the network. It proved that we didn't have to rely on our back-end systems and we could still communicate."

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Results:

- BlackBerry handhelds with Mobile Broadband service increased overall employee productivity with a more flexible balance between work and personal life, and made for easier, more discreet communications, and enhanced personal and customer satisfaction.
- Alure has grown almost 30% in three years and has broadened its territories without having to place a physical presence in many areas.
- The management team now has access to all appointments, employee data, and client information from one central location.

"The Verizon [Wireless] solution has made our people more flexible and less reliant on the fixed systems in the office. We're realizing more productivity from each individual than if we had to rely on them coming back to the office to manage email, their calendar, and other related tasks."

JOHN DOYLE
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AND COMMUNICATIONS
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