Northwoods realty group outsells the competition with the help of a modern network

Managed Network Edge and Fiber Internet Access enhance productivity and client experience

Redman Realty Group (RRG) is located in the highly desirable Northwoods of Wisconsin, an idyllic region of picturesque towns and distinctive homes nestled among 2,000 forested lakes. While the Northwoods have always been popular with outdoor enthusiasts, the area has recently seen a surge in popularity as more people seek out scenic locales in which to live, as they work remotely. In the first quarter of 2021, home sales were up 28 percent — the largest uptick in the state.[1]

Adam Redman founded RRG in 2011 with one office and a handful of agents, and has since expanded to four offices with 35 agents. They pride themselves on delivering a premium buying and selling experience: every listing gets marketing plans and promotion, 3D video tours, professional photography and a single property website.

RRG is busier than ever and every sale is a high-stakes transaction, in a market where houses are routinely snatched up within hours of listing. RRG's goal is to provide the most comfortable experience possible to buyers and sellers, handled by experienced, capable, and efficient agents. That goal cannot be supported by weak or unreliable technology. When RRG's infrastructure, and the region-wide

bandwidth issues, started slowing down their agents, CTO Barry Seidel and RRG founder Alan Redman knew they needed to take immediate action.

They'd simply outgrown their coax-internet — it couldn't provide the bandwidth they needed to support their expanding day-to-day operations.

Additionally, the network had problems when Seidel would attempt to do remote offsite backups. Due to the sheer size of the data, and he would have to break files up and schedule up to 50 backup routines running constantly, just to ensure he wouldn't crash the whole system.

Seidel had to trouble shoot with agents, which required a lot of time driving from office to office. The agents were having trouble promoting properties and sharing files with clients. In addition to time lost in transit, Seidel's efforts were complicated as he was dealing with multiple providers across locations. "We were having constant bandwidth issues. For example, we were the first agency in our market to promote homes with 3D Video Home Tours, but our unreliable broadband was causing the video playback to lag or freeze up on clients. Buyers don't have patience for that, and it can be a deal-breaker," says Seidel.

Redman Realty Group turned to Spectrum Enterprise for a network solution that would deliver the bandwidth they needed to support growth while providing a premium buying and selling experience.

Client profile

Client
Redman Realty Group

Industry
Real Estate

Services
Fiber Internet Access
Managed Network Edge
SIP Trunking

Overview

- Due to ever-increasing bandwidth needs Redman Realty Group had outgrown their existing coax internet access.

- Their diverse legacy phone systems were creating an unacceptable lag in client communications.

Outcomes

- The realty group has not had a bandwidth issue sending even the largest of 3D Home Video Tours to prospective customers with Fiber Internet Access.

- The organization streamlined phone tree routing with SIP Trunking, and every call to each location is always answered by a human being.

- Network management is simplified and security is strengthened with Managed Network Edge — a key concern when sending documents with sensitive financial information.

Why it matters

- Agents have more time to focus on clients and the IT team is more efficient now that the fiber network and a centralized phone system is in place.

- Redman Realty Group can more quickly and easily backup and transfer documents to a secure off-site location using the reliable circuit from Spectrum Enterprise.

Spectrum Enterprise upgraded Redman Realty Group's legacy phone system to a fast, reliable, feature-rich phone solution that ensures every client call is answered by a human being.

To add to his challenges, their legacy phone system was outdated. "We had no control over what happened at our other offices when the phones rang. Without being able to route calls into a centralized system, invariably calls would get dropped, lost on hold, or delivered to the wrong extensions. It was inefficient, and the speed at which messages are delivered is a huge factor in our business," says Seidel. He knew that if RRG couldn't upgrade to a fast, reliable, feature-rich phone experience, they'd lose clients to their competition. He also knew that he needed to modernize his network with a solution that could scale upward as they continued to grow.

The search for a faster networking solution

Seidel contacted local providers with a list of requirements. Topping his list was upgrading his disjointed phone systems and creating a fast, secure network that would allow agents from any office to store and share files remotely with other agents or clients. Because Seidel manages all of RRG's IT himself, these new services needed to be easy to deploy, with the option to co-manage the network — while staying cost-effective and not requiring a lot of new equipment.

"I had been exploring various cloud-based platforms for a while. But everything I looked at was either limited by our region's broadband issues, or the providers couldn't deliver a cohesive solution that checked all of our boxes," says Seidel. He didn't want to compromise, but he urgently needed to find a solution.

Seidel's perseverance paid off when he learned that Spectrum Enterprise had recently made fiber available in the Northwoods.

Seidel discussed his challenges and requirements with Spectrum Enterprise Account Manager Brandon Monson. He met with his team and designed a solution that included Managed Network Edge from Spectrum Enterprise to create a secure software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN), and SIP Trunking to consolidate their phones into a single hub. Both services would run over Spectrum Enterprise Fiber Internet Access (FIA) service.

"Brandon and his team were the only ones who came up with a design that met all my requirements in a single end-to-end solution," says Seidel. "From that point forward, it wasn't a question of whether Spectrum Enterprise could do what we needed. It was a question of Brandon asking me:

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Agents can now share files with sensitive financial information securely, and clients can enjoy smooth, uninterrupted streaming of RRG's marketing content, due to Managed Network Edge and Fiber Internet Access from Spectrum Enterprise.

'What do you want and when do you want to start?' I was sold," he remembers.

Simplified networking from a trusted partner

Managed Network Edge (MNE) simplifies the deployment and management of a secure network. Delivered with the Cisco Meraki platform, MNE would provide a secure, scalable solution that connected all of RRG's communications, equipment and network management. It would give Seidel and his agents the SD-WAN they needed for a secure, fast, network with all the bandwidth they needed between all four of RRG's locations and their remote backup site.

Seidel liked that an SD-WAN was a cost-effective solution with incorporated firewalls and unified threat management (UTM). Files and information could be shared securely, locally or remotely.

SIP Trunking would provide reliable, high-quality calling across all of RRG's offices and data center. No matter which office number was dialed, an RRG representative would answer every incoming call and route the call to the correct agent or office directly — ensuring that incoming callers

spoke to a person and not a machine. Seidel knew that would fully support RRG's commitment to premium personalized client services.

"That's the beauty of the Spectrum Enterprise solution. One of our offices is outside of the current Spectrum Enterprise FIA footprint. But, they would still be included in our shared network because the SD-WAN can run over the existing coax-connection in that office," says Seidel.

A targeted implementation yields success

Early in the installation process Seidel knew he'd found the right technology partner in Spectrum Enterprise. "The continuity of the installation was great, really, and Brandon and his team impressed me from the start. They quickly identified what we needed to do and how we could do it.

> "Agents love that they can transmit documents, print or scan to any of our offices, or to their clients, without any bandwidth issues. It's remarkable,"

Barry Seidel, chief technology officer

Brandon even knows what our office looks like — so he understood who we are, what we need, and what was holding us back. It was extraordinary. We've never had that before," says Seidel. Thanks to comprehensive planning and clear communication, Monson's team completed the entire installation in all four locations within three months.

Consolidating all of RRG's communications and networking into a unified solution had the added benefit of allowing RRG to eliminate two technology providers. Spectrum Enterprise is now their primary communications and technology partner.

A fast, secure network enriches the customer experience

RRG's network upgrades have greatly improved the home buying and selling experience for agents and clients. Now, agents can share everything internally on their local network with confidence, knowing sensitive client data is safe and secure.

"Agents love that they can transmit documents, print or scan to any of our offices, or to their clients, without any bandwidth issues. It's remarkable," says Seidel. "When they're not in our offices, or if they bring in an outside computer? We have the added layer

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The modernized network and the upgraded phone system helps Redman Realty Group keep their number one spot in the Northwoods realty market.

of security offered by the Managed Network Edge wireless endpoints — the content filtering is fantastic. I can see any type of traffic we're sending and receiving. It's very reassuring," says Seidel.

Their new fiber network supports smooth, uninterrupted streaming of RRG's marketing content. "The Spectrum Enterprise FIA has been perfect and believe me, I've pushed it, especially when it comes to our video tours. Reliable broadband has definitely improved that experience — we send those tours to our clients and now it just always works. I haven't had one complaint about bandwidth issues since we upgraded to FIA," says Seidel.

The remote offsite backups of data are also no longer a problem for Seidel. "Now I have a fundamentally reliable circuit that I can trust, and I can shovel data back and forth," he says. "I'm doing that all on our infrastructure, and I don't have to pay another service."

All four of RRG's office phone systems are now integrated into a single hub. Incoming calls ring at their main office, where each call is answered by an authorized representative. "People don't want to talk to a machine when they call," says Seidel. "Now, every time you call our offices a human answers. You won't get transferred to voicemail; you'll actually talk to the person you're trying to reach," says Seidel.

Because Managed Network Edge can be fully managed by Spectrum Enterprise, or co-managed by Seidel, he can be as hands-off as he wants. He has access into their new network through a centralized, intuitive portal that gives him instant visibility into performance. An integrated control panel allows Seidel to exercise faster, better decision-making. "I used to have to deal with intrusion detection and maintenance of firewalls myself. It was tedious and time-consuming. Now, I can login and see what's happening on the network and make changes instantly. Or I can let Spectrum Enterprise handle everything, freeing me up to focus on more strategic projects. The co-managed part is a huge benefit for me," he explains.

RRG'S goal has always been to be number one in their market. Year after year, they achieve their objectives. It hasn't been easy, and as Seidel explains, "It's become even more competitive now that there's less inventory in our market. Everything we've done to upgrade our infrastructure with Spectrum Enterprise has positioned us to stay on top. There isn't any other broker in the Northwoods with the infrastructure we have now."

He continues, "Our agents agree that our new technology solution and centralized phone system have definitely made them more efficient, and given them time back to concentrate on clients. And that gives them the competitive advantage they need."

Staying on top by tapping into future trends

Now that Seidel no longer devotes most of his time to managing his network, he can concentrate on the future. Like taking the time to stay on top of emerging technologies that he can provide to his agents, so they can provide the latest services to buyers and sellers. That's important to Seidel and the agents at RRG, as it demonstrates their commitment to serving their clients as best as they possibly can.

"If you've got a clean set of documents, and you can turn an offer around and send it in an e-mail in a fast, secure environment, clients appreciate that. It makes it as painless for clients as possible, and our agents can spend more time building relationships," says Seidel. "That's ultimately why we leverage technology, and why we chose to partner with Spectrum Enterprise."

1. Sarah Hauer, "There's a race to buy lakefront properties in Northern Wisconsin, with sales up nearly 30%," (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 14, 2021) https://www.jsonline.com/story/money/business/2021/05/14/northern-wisconsin-home-sales-up-28-first-3-months-2021/4986872001/

About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions: Internet access, Ethernet access and networks, Voice and TV solutions. The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit enterprise.spectrum.com.

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