



Busy Keller Williams office reduces costs and improves connectivity with FortiVoice

For almost all companies, the telephone is a mission-critical business tool. But for a busy real-estate franchise, phones are even more important; they're the lifeline that connects agents in the field with their ever-changing roster of clients. Every call counts for always-on realtors, and they need to reliably connect with the office no matter where they are.

So it's not surprising that when this Keller Williams franchise in Texas came close to maximizing its old phone system, finding a solution was a high priority. What did surprise Colleen Brown, the franchise's MCA (the Keller Williams equivalent of CFO), was that she found a solution that both improved their connectivity and will save them a lot of money in the long run.

Not that Brown went looking to save money. For her, being connected effectively was the primary driver.

"Oh, absolutely," she says. "We've got more than 220 agents, and each of them has many, many listings. So we've got people all over calling in looking for them. We have to be able to communicate. We had to have a fast, efficient way of handling that communication."

Her agents are particularly prickly if they miss a call, so she needed a solution that would ensure maximum uptime and seamless connections. "If one of my agents finds out that there are people calling in who can't get through to them, they come to me and say, you just cost me a million dollar sale," she says, laughing.

Of course, not every missed call is worth a million, but they were missing some, and that was a serious concern. "Our lines were full, so we had clients calling in and getting busy signals."

The Customer

Keller Williams franchise

Industry: Real Estate

Location: Headquarters in Denton, Texas, office in Aubrey, Texas.

The Solution

One FortiVoice system in each location; an FVC-200D-T in Denton and an FVC-200D in Aubrey

80 FON-360i telephones

5 FON-460i telephones

8 FON-870i cordless telephones

Business Impact

Improved customer service and collaboration

Significantly reduced service costs

Increased workforce efficiency

Improved multilocation integration

Seamless emergency failover

As crucial as those connections are, fiscal responsibility is baked into her role at Keller Williams, so when Brown set out to solve her phone issues, she didn't take off her fiduciary hat.

"We do profit sharing, so I'm responsible for not only making sure my owner is making money, but every one of my 220 agents are counting on me to watch their money as well. I was looking at how much I was spending just for phone service. I was saying to one of my agents that there's got to be something better. I'm paying four different phone companies and spending \$2000 a month just on phone services. And that's every month, year in and year out."

Although it wouldn't have reduced the service costs, she could have kept her existing system for less than a complete replacement would have cost, but she didn't like that idea.

"We couldn't add any more phones to our system. Our system was outdated, so to add more phones, we would have had to buy old equipment, which is not a good investment."

With all of that in mind, she set out to get some bids to find out what her options were. Enter Fortinet partner Lonnie Simmons, CEO of ProTel Support. As soon as he saw her set up, he confirmed her suspicions about service costs.

"When I talked to Lonnie and realized that by going with VoIP, I could reduce my monthly phone bill from 2000 to 500 dollars, that was a no-brainer," Brown says.

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Another no-brainer for her was avoiding the kind of hosted services that some other Keller Williams franchises she knew of had chosen.

"Some of them are doing monthly deals, where they're paying for each phone per month forever. I really appreciate that Lonnie said, here's your upfront cost. And you know, in 18



About the customer:

Keller Williams Realty, Inc. is the largest real estate franchise by agent count in the world, with 700 offices and 112,000 associates in more than a dozen countries around the world. The Denton/Aubrey franchise has been serving the area since xxx.



About the partner:

ProTel Support is a dynamic telecommunications and networking company with over a decade of sales, service, project management, engineering and technical support experience.

months we'll have paid it off, and my expenses are going to drop to just whatever my service plan is. Otherwise, you're going to keep paying that every year for the rest of your business life. It would be irresponsible for me to put that burden on them. Instead we'll have paid this off and everybody makes more money."

Simmons' plan called for FortiVoice phone systems and phones in each of Brown's two locations; the head office in Denton and another in Aubrey. Connected over the Internet, the two locations now function as one. Brown says the integration is a particularly significant improvement for everyone at the office in Aubrey.

"They absolutely love that. They're 30-40 miles away, and they always felt like the stepchild," she says. "They would call in and just get treated like any other person; they had to sit on hold. Now they can call whoever they need directly and they love it."

In addition to streamlining the integration of the offices, Simmons built in protection from downtime.



FortiVoice FVC-200D phone system

“We’ve set it up for failover,” he says. “If for any reason they lose service in either location, the calls are automatically routed to the other location so that they’re not missing calls. You don’t want to miss that million dollar deal!”

Brown has been through it with the old system. When things went wrong with it, and it happened more than once, “we were just dead in the water,” she says.

FortiVoice has improved the connectivity of the whole organization, hooking in the realtors’ cell phones and crucial suppliers and stakeholders as remote extensions for easy access. And the built-in fax server has simplified and improved the process in what is still a fax-dependent business.

The new system will also save them a bundle in configuration costs. Their old system, typical of most business systems on the market, required a technician visit every time they wanted to change something.

“Any time we needed to add a phone or move where someone was sitting, we would have to call in the technician, and

they would charge us \$200 to \$300 to come out and do a ten-minute job. We were just losing out.” Brown says.

And realtors, it seems, move desks often. Really often. Simmons, whose ProTel Support has outfitted more than his share of offices in a wide variety of industries, still can’t get over it. “It’s the craziest thing I’ve seen in my entire life,” he says. “In the two months since we did the install, agents have moved 20 times.”

With FortiVoice in place, moves are now a snap. They just pick up their phone and plug it in at their new desk, and they’re up and running with the same settings and configuration as before. Additionally, Brown can handle most other configuration changes the company needs by herself.

“Lucky for Keller Williams, Colleen can already administer that phone system,” Simmons says.

“She doesn’t even call us anymore, which hurts my feelings a little bit, personally,” he adds, laughing. “But she doesn’t need us anymore.”



FON-460i phone and FON-870i cordless phone



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