Blinds To Go Ensures Uptime for Retail Transactions with CradlePoint Network Solution

Power-over-Ethernet
Business Network
Multi-WAN Router
Fiber/T1/Cable/DSL
Wired Network Outage
Wireless Broadband for Failover
Business Network Continues, No Interruption
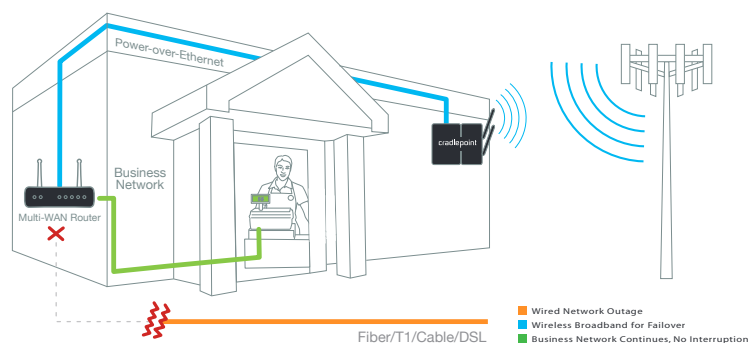
CradlePoint devices provide wireless backup of wired Internet connections for retail superstores in the Blinds To Go system. In the event of an outage of the primary Internet land line (T1/fi ber, DSL, or cable) at a Blinds To Go site, CradlePoint devices automatically switch to its wireless 3G/4G broadband connection within 30 seconds. The point-of-sale (POS) systems connected to the CradlePoint router continue to operate at broadband speeds without further interruption, ensuring continuous uptime for POS transactions at the Blinds To Go superstore.

Retailer Uses CradlePoint Solution to Provide Wireless Failover and Redundancy for Point-Of-Sale (POS) Systems.

SITUATION

Blinds To Go is a leading retailer and manufacturer of window blinds and shades in North America. They have over 100 superstores throughout Canada and the USA that offer consumers the largest selection of custom-made blinds and shades at low, factory direct prices.

CHALLENGE

Blinds To Go was seeking a last-mile telecom redundancy solution for point-of-sale (POS) systems in their retail outlets. Their goal was a failover solution that would provide continuous uptime for store transactions—with no interruptions—in the event of an outage of the primary wired source of Internet connectivity (T1/fi ber, DSL or cable, depending on location). Constantin Koutrias, Systems Administration for Blinds To Go, was specifi cally looking for a wireless solution: "90% of the issues with land line disruptions are in the last mile, so when your primary land line goes down, chances are that your secondary land line—the one you're using for redundancy—will go down, too."

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SOLUTION

Blinds To Go approached their account team at Rogers Wireless, looking for help with their telecom backup challenges.

"Critical systems like POS cannot be unavailable for long without injuring the business. Backing up the landline connection with a wireless connection on Rogers' high-speed network provides maximum protection against lost sales," says Pam Ferguson, Director, M2M & Partners at Rogers. "It's a smart, affordable and effective solution suitable for almost every business."

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Rogers supplied Constantin with a demo unit—a CradlePoint Mobile Broadband Travel Router—for initial testing. After experimenting with a number of different models, Constantin settled on Mobile Broadband 'N' 3G/4G Wireless Router as the optimum failover solution for the POS systems in the Blinds To Go chain.

"Being a retail business, we needed robust failover capabilities. There was no compromise to be made. We've been using the solution since March, and have not had any problems. We've definitely seen an improvement in uptime since we switched."

You might think that instituting a new failover system at over 100 retail locations would be a huge undertaking, but not with CradlePoint. "It had zero impact on business operations," says Constantin. "In fact, some stores didn't even realize that something new was installed."

To speed rollout and hold down costs, Constantin first pre-configured the units, then dispatched a technician to the various retail locations. "We configured everything ahead of time," notes Constantin. "It went really quickly, because we had to create just one configuration file, then load it into each unit. We were able to configure dozens of devices in just hours. The person we sent out only needed minimal expertise. The actual installation probably took less than an hour per store."

BENEFITS

• Simple. "The product is easy to configure via a simple web browser," explains Constantin. "It allows us to save a single configuration file to disk for easy and quick deployment to other units."

• Flexible. "We have not had any problems with these units being deployed in a retail setting," remarks Constantin. "I've never had to reboot a device."

• Management. "With CradlePoint, I have to support only one hardware platform, one configuration file," observes Constantin. "If an air card goes out, the replacement model is often a new upgrade—not the same card. With other solutions, that can mean you have to buy a new cellular interface. But the CradlePoint router doesn't care where the air card comes from. That gives us a lot of freedom. We can use several carriers, or switch cellular platform without having to worry about buying new hardware."

• Speed. "We noticed a 10-15% improvement in speed and reliability using the devices," notes Constantin. "It's a great value-add. And the speed at which the CradlePoint router fails over is great."

• Value. "The CradlePoint devices are cost-effective compared to similar devices available on the market," says Constantin. "And most of those devices don't offer failover right out-of-the-box, like CradlePoint routers do."

• Support. "As 3G networks expand rapidly worldwide, we are very pleased to see that CradlePoint is constantly upgrading its firmware to support more 3G devices every day," says Constantin. "And when 4G becomes more common, we'll be able to take advantage of the latest wireless technology with just a simple swap of cards."

Constantin sums up the experience Blinds To Go has had using CradlePoint routers as their retail POS failover solution: "As an organization, we no longer depend only on copper-based telecom providers. By leveraging advancements made to wireless high-speed data networks, such as Rogers' 3G HSPA+, we are able to ensure uninterrupted continuity of daily business operations."

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