



SUCCESS STORY



First Cellular

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Challenge

To become the top provider of wireless services in Southern Illinois

Solution

An ongoing partnership with VeriSign, Inc., including GSM implementation and support, speedSUITE, and SwitchTrac

Results:

- Full-featured, flexible billing tools allow First Cellular employees to focus more on customer service.
- First Cellular reduced activation times for improved customer satisfaction.
- VeriSign consultants provided a smooth transition to GSM and allowed seamless compliance with government mandates.

+ A Major Player in a Select Territory

First Cellular of Southern Illinois has a clear focus: to become the region's top wireless provider. And if the company continues on its current track, national providers will soon be struggling to catch up in the vicinity of southern Illinois. First Cellular's core strategy is to outsource much of its key infrastructure to service bureaus, allowing the company to stay focused on serving its select customers. To do so, First Cellular had to find a partner that could offer a wide variety of services, yet also be highly flexible to the company's specific needs. First Cellular began working with VeriSign, Inc., in an ongoing partnership that has been instrumental to the company's considerable success. VeriSign runs the largest private Signaling System 7 (SS7) network in the world, and on top of this foundation, it provides a formidable array of solutions designed to streamline and enhance the offerings of top-tier telecommunications carriers. VeriSign operates Intelligent Communications, Commerce, and Content services that enable carriers to rapidly provision new revenue-generating services while mitigating today's cost, complexity, and security challenges.

+ Flexible Billing

First Cellular began by implementing VeriSign's speedSUITE,SM a comprehensive billing system that greatly reduced the administrative burden on First Cellular's staff. The new system allowed First Cellular to centralize all activations and changes at the point of sale, for a greatly enhanced customer experience. "Our new billing system provides us with immediate, up-to-date information that goes directly from the point of sale to our switches," explained Jeanne Manis, First Cellular's manager of customer support systems. "This has provided a phenomenal improvement over our previous billing system, and has



Where it all comes together.™



SUCCESS STORY

"VeriSign gives us the opportunity to become one of the largest wireless players in a small field."

Jeanne Manis
Manager of Customer
Support Systems
First Cellular

substantially contributed to our success." Manis noted that access to real-time data also had a direct effect on the bottom line. "With more granular data, we're able to perform an automatic quality assurance on our revenue; we don't have to manually check our accuracy, and we don't have to worry about whether or not we're losing revenue in an area over which we don't have 100 percent visibility." With greater control over the budget, First Cellular was able to pursue more proactive marketing efforts—such as unlimited calling and prepaid plans—with greater confidence. Also, speedSUITE reduced a two-hour activation process to one that can be resolved in a matter of minutes. Customers deeply appreciate this, and the extra time also allows First Cellular staff to concentrate more on customer service.

In addition to speedSUITE, First Cellular also implemented several of VeriSign's advanced billing solutions, including SwitchTrac,SM a tool that provides increased switch-level visibility. SwitchTrac enabled First Cellular to access timely subpoena information, which helped the carrier to comply with State mandates. "SwitchTrac actually allowed us to provide 911 information to the local public safety entry points," said Manis. "This made us look extremely good from the State's perspective."

+ GSM Migration

First Cellular leveraged VeriSign's expertise for a variety of other projects, such as the carrier's migration to GSM. For any carrier, this involves extensive research into the offerings of many vendors, large-scale network buildout, rate-plan changes, and many other efforts. However, Manis says that VeriSign was able to facilitate a near-seamless transition. In the process, VeriSign was also able to assist First Cellular in compliance with number-portability mandates. "VeriSign demonstrated that it could fully support our move to GSM and help us to implement number portability. If we didn't have access to VeriSign, this would have been extremely difficult."

+ A Trusted Partner

Manis also appreciates the substantial level of expertise that VeriSign demonstrates. "VeriSign makes it a point to attend key industry conferences," says Manis, "So they are always current with the latest technology. This is extremely important to us; if I ask VeriSign to do something, I know that they will say they can do it." Manis adds that VeriSign's customer-service staff has proven to be extremely well prepared from a technical perspective.

Visit us at www.Verisign.com for more information.