

The Leader in Wireless MLS Services



A White Paper for Real Estate Agents

# Choosing a Mobile MLS Solution That's Right for You

## A White Paper for Real Estate Agents

### Choosing a Mobile MLS Solution that's Right for You.

#### ***Introduction***

***If you're interested in our mobile MLS solution - MarketLinx Wireless - but you're not sure what you need to get going, then this is the guide for you!***

Does the thought of buying a “*wireless device*” seem intimidating? Does interpreting buzz words like CDMA/1x and GSM/GPRS give you heartburn? Have no idea what it means when wireless hardware, networks, and software support WAP vs. HTML internet protocol? Do you think that WI-FI sounds like a new radio station, and Bluetooth® sounds like dental work gone awry after an o-so-delicious blueberry cobbler?

Let us help you navigate through this unknown territory and make a decision that's right for you.

#### ***Selecting your Wireless Device and Data Plan***

First of all whether you know it or not, you already own and operate a wireless device every day – your TV remote control. Chances are it's one of the most valuable tools you own for your home. With the right mobile MLS device, you'll likely feel it's one of the most valuable tools you own for your business.

Wireless hardware and data plans are tightly woven together. Selecting your hardware first may inherently decide your data plan, and selecting your data plan first may inherently decide your hardware, since not all carriers support all hardware.

No matter which drives your decision, here are some important buying criteria that you should consider.

- **Wireless MLS Access:** Is the service available in your area? MarketLinx Wireless is available in major markets throughout Canada and the United States.
- **Coverage Area:** What is the full geographic area you do business in, and which carriers provide the most complete cellular network coverage for that area? Which carriers have the best indoor coverage in your home, office and favorite neighborhoods?
- **Use:** Aside from wireless access to your MLS data, what other functionality do you intend to use the device for? Cellular phone service? Wireless access to e-mail? Remote internet access? Wireless access to information services such as daily headline news and daily weather forecasts? Understanding whether you'll be using the device predominantly for mobile telephony or handheld computing will help narrow your choice to either a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) with cell phone functionality, or a cell phone with PDA functionality.

Cell phones with PDA functionality typically feature a lightweight, compact design with smaller display area. PDA's with cell phone functionality tend to have a larger, heavier form factor but feature a much more expansive display area and easier keyboarding suited to e-mail usage and web surfing.

➤ **Capacity:** If you're planning to use your device for cellular phone service, you'll need to select a voice plan from your carrier that suits your needs. Selecting a voice plan is something most of us have experience with. But how do you select a data plan from your carrier? Here's a quick glimpse at the average size of some typical wireless data downloads:

- 50 kb for 1 MLS listing, including photo;
- 4 kb for 1 e-mail message with no attachments. Average usage required to equal 1 MB of data is approx. 250 e-mail messages;
- 50 kb for 1 e-mail message with 1 page MS Word/Excel attachment. Average usage required to equal 1 MB of data is approx. 20 e-mail messages, or 1 e-mail with 20 page attachment;
- 1 MB for 1 e-mail message with 10 page MS PowerPoint attachment. Average usage required to equal 1 MB of data is approx. 1 e-mail message.
- 50 kb for one HTML web page access. Average usage required to equal 1 MB of data is approx. 20 web pages;
- 6 kb for an informational retrieval (e.g: daily headline news or daily weather forecasts);

As a point of reference, most real estate agents find that a 5-7 MB data plan is more than sufficient for their needs as a new user. More experienced users who are actively internet surfing and utilizing wireless e-mail capabilities, in addition to conducting wireless MLS listing searches, usually opt for a 10 MB data plan.

➤ **3<sup>rd</sup> Party Software Support:** Next to MLS access, the ability to access client contact information anytime, from anywhere is a critical business requirement for almost all real estate agents. Check to see whether your contact manager of choice – MS Outlook, Top Producer®, Agent Office®/Agent 2000/On-Line Agent, Maximizer™, ACT!, Goldmine® – provides download or synchronization capability to the handheld wireless device you are considering.

As a rule, Windows based software such as Microsoft Outlook will synchronize with Palm® or Windows Mobile® devices. Many other contact manager programs, however, only allow you to synchronize to Palm® at this time. Synchronization is achieved through mobile middleware such as ActiveSync® and IntelliSync. Most new devices on the market today have synchronization software bundled with the device.

## ***Using Your Device for Cellular Phone Service***

If you've decided you want a wireless data device that functions as a cell phone as well, and cellular phone service is the functionality that is most important to you when you are away from your office, here are a couple of things to consider:

- **Battery Life:** Make sure you select a device with enough battery capacity to last you for your work day. Not all devices are created equal, and some utilize battery power more efficiently than others. At the very least you should consider purchasing an in-car adaptor to help keep your device charged even while you're on the road.
- **Phone Number Portability:** Many real estate agents use their phone number as an extension of their branding. In the United States and recently in Canada, phone numbers are now portable across all carriers, which means you can maintain your

established business number even if you elect to get your voice service through a different carrier than you've used in the past.

## ***Using Your Device for E-mail***

Over the past few years, a growing requirement amongst REALTORS® is the ability to access e-mail while you're on the road. Every wireless data device allows for some form of e-mail access with some being easier to use, simpler to set up and more reliable. If you intend to send or respond to a great deal of e-mail, then consider getting a device with a keyboard such as a RIM BlackBerry® or a Palm® TREO™ which all have integrated QWERTY key boards.

- **Push versus Pull:** BlackBerry® *pushes* e-mail from the server to your device without you having to make a request. Palm® devices, by comparison, require a manual send/receive request.
- **Emerging Technology:** Good Technology™ has released a new mobile e-mail solution called GoodLink™. The software operates on Palm® devices, and provides BlackBerry-like *push* technology. In addition, new Palm® devices can now be enabled with *simulated push* technology that functions much like BlackBerry® push technology.

## ***Maintaining your Wireless Device***

Now that you've selected a device that's right for you, please remember:

- **Backing up your data:** A key area most people forget about when using any type of data entry device such as their computer or a PDA is backing up their data. Synchronizing your data with your PC is not the same as backing it up. When you synchronize your data you are just copying your data onto your computer, if you had a corrupt file on your PDA you will then write it over a good file on your desktop computer or laptop. If you had backed up this data then you would always have a safe copy. It is critical when using a portable device that you back up your data regularly onto a specially formatted back up memory card or onto a back up file on your computer. The advantage of a back up card is being able to reload your database while you are on the road if you need to change devices, or if you had a problem with your data. For instructions on how to do a backup, refer to your device manual.
- **Charging your device:** You should also get into the habit of charging your device every day to ensure you are always in touch and that your data is always accessible. Allowing your battery to drain to the point where you can no longer use your device will mean that once you've recharged it, you may have to reload any third party software, and re-synchronize your contacts and calendar. Allowing the battery run all the way down also leads to a shorter battery life and early replacement. A car holder and charger combination is a wise investment.

## ***Closing Thoughts***

As you can see, key factors to ensuring you get the most out of your new device are centered around understanding what functions you want to perform outside of the office (eg: wireless MLS access, e-mail, cellular phone service, internet access). From there, you are in a good position to make an informed decision on the right device / carrier, and the right wireless voice and/or data plan. In essence it's like buying a house - you need to understand what you are getting today and will it support your future uses.

Using wireless data today is easier than ever. You can take a device out of a box, charge the battery, and then immediately access the internet, e-mail and more within minutes. With MarketLinx Wireless, you can access your MLS data from anywhere you are doing business – on a buyer’s tour, at an open house, at a listing presentation, or even at the corner coffee shop. We hope this guide will assist you in making the right purchase decision for you.

If we can be of further help, please contact MarketLinx Wireless Support at 1-877-460-2550