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CradlePoint deal connects business with 4G networks

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It's only been about 10 years since the term "Wi-Fi" was first used commercially, but the phrase "we live in a wireless world" is already an old saw. Today it's not about whether you can connect to a super-fast wireless network, it's how many devices you can connect.

Don Bush, marketing director for Boise-based CradlePoint Technology, said with major cell carriers switching from 3G to even faster 4G networks, Web-connecting everything from phones and laptops, to printers and cameras is a new business reality. The trouble is that many of those devices still lack the necessary equipment to access the network.

"The problem with Sprint, the same as with Clear, is that they've got this signal that's out there, but that you and I can't use," Bush said. "We provide the bridge for those networks."

CradlePoint designs and markets a line of wireless routers and adapters that are quickly becoming industry standards for remote connectivity. Since

its launch five years ago, the company's products have been used by first responders in disasters like hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and by small and large businesses alike with mobile employees who need to keep connected.

Now with a deal announced this summer, CradlePoint routers will be used by cell giant Sprint Nextel to connect mobile broadband devices with the company's expanding 4G networks - essentially "translating" the 4G signal so it can be used simultaneously by all of a business' Web-enabled devices.

"For the first time businesses can say, 'I don't need to run wires; I can use the 4G network,'" Bush said. "This partnership with Sprint - it's a huge deal for validation of our market. With our original product [which creates a personal Wi-Fi hotspot] everybody thought that was really cute two years ago. Now we've got them up to the enterprise level."

Revenue has grown 12 to 20 percent quarter-over-quarter, Bush said, and the company just completed a round of funding. CradlePoint has brought on 14 employees since January.