

# BUSINESS connections

## Two Companies, One Great Partnership

Carolina West Wireless and SkyLine work together to benefit customers and communities



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**Additional Issues**

Extra issues are available to business customers on a limited basis while supplies last. Contact Robin Miller at 1-844-SKYBEST.

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# BUSINESS connections

**Enhance the new year with new strategies.** As 2023 begins, SkyLine/SkyBest encourages you to explore new ways to help meet your business goals.

This topic begins on page 3 with a question: **Are You Using Google Alerts?** If you're not, you may want to start. Google Alerts makes it easier to stay updated on what people are saying about your business, what your competition is doing and more.

On pages 4 and 5, you'll find a **Business Spotlight on Carolina West Wireless.** SkyLine Membership Corporation owns 50 percent of Carolina West Wireless, and the partnership between our companies benefits us as well as our customers. You'll want to check out all the new offerings at Carolina West Wireless, including IoT solutions and mobile Wi-Fi.

**To Create a Customer Service Culture,** your business may need a new, more expanded way of looking at it. You'll find tips on page 6. Then on page 7, learn how **SkyLine Lends a Hand in Holiday Giving.** We're honored to work with many churches, local organizations and businesses to make sure children and seniors in need enjoy something new during the holidays.

Happy New Year from all of us at SkyLine/SkyBest. We look forward to working with you on new projects in the months ahead.

Sincerely,



Kim Shepherd  
Chief Executive Officer

**ON THE COVER:**

Left to right: Mike Parker, CWW VP of Business Development; Hank Taylor, CWW VP of Sales; Jamie Stone, CWW Business Account Executive; Channing Ritchie, CWW Enterprise Sales Manager; Christina Kyes, CWW Field Sales Representative; Andrew Ortiz, CWW Business Account Executive; Chasity Shumate, CWW Business Account Executive; Haleigh Hogg, SkyLine/SkyBest Outside Sales Executive; Zara Worley, SkyLine/SkyBest Outside Sales Executive; and Brent Keith, SkyLine/SkyBest Strategic Sales Supervisor

# Are You Using Google Alerts?

*If not, your business is missing out on valuable information*



Google Alerts is a free, easy-to-use tool that lets you know when new content appears online about the topics you select. You can leverage this information to better manage your blog content, discover what people are saying about your business, keep an eye on the competition and more.

For example, here are topics you could ask Google Alerts to monitor in real time:

## Business Name Mentions

Google Alerts lets you track the name of your business, Twitter handle and other social media identifiers. When your content is indexed by Google's search bots, you're notified by email. In addition to mentions in online articles and blogs, you can also be notified of mentions in social media conversations.

Whether these mentions are positive or negative, it's important to know people are talking about your business so you can respond appropriately. With Google Alerts, you won't be left in the dark.

## Leadership Mentions

Your executive team and other key personnel will likely receive online mentions, so it makes sense to track alerts on them. This can help you manage the reputation of your business and its leaders, take advantage of engagement opportunities and show others in your industry that you're paying attention.

## Newly Indexed Content

When you write a new article or blog post, set up an alert to tell you when someone mentions the title of your work online. This way, you can interact with those who take an interest in what you've published. You can also find out if other sites republish your content and make sure you get proper credit.

## Backlinks Tracking

Google Alerts can notify you when another site links to your page, and this link building is especially important if your business does a lot of blogging. You want to know which sites are linking to your content and helping generate website traffic.

## Competitor Mentions

Depending on your competitive landscape, it can be challenging to keep up with what your competition is doing—whether releasing a new product or making news in other ways. By requesting periodic alerts based on mentions of your competition, you'll stay updated on their activity.

## Industry Topics

Creating alerts around key industry terms can prevent you from missing timely news updates or an opportunity to join a forum discussion.

### To create an alert:

1. Go to [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts).
2. In the box at the top, enter a topic you want to follow.
3. Click "Show options" to tell Google your preferences on how often you want to get notifications, the sources and regions you want to see, your language, how many results you want to see and where to send the alerts.
4. Click "Create Alert."

# Carolina West Wireless

*You may be surprised how many options it now offers your business*



*SkyLine/SkyBest Outside Sales Executives Haleigh Hogg (front left) and Zara Worley (front right) discuss partnerships and strategies with CWW Business Account Executives Jamie Stone (back left) and Chasity Shumate (back right).*

Formed in 1991, Carolina West Wireless was the first to bring cellular service to western North Carolina. It began with a commitment to serving the area’s customers and communities, and that commitment remains unchanged. What has changed is the scope of its products and services.

## Competitive with National Wireless Carriers

Hank Taylor, VP of Sales, said, “Initially, the phones and coverage offered by Carolina West Wireless were limited. Today, our customers have access to the same range of options they’d have from a national wireless carrier — including nationwide coverage with no roaming; Unlimited talk, text and data plans; and the latest Android and Apple smartphones, tablets, Apple Watches and more.”

In recent years, Carolina West Wireless deployed numerous 5G sites and continues to grow this wireless technology to deliver higher speeds and increased reliability. The company also has robust IoT (Internet of Things) capabilities and partnerships to help businesses solve resource, process and investment challenges.

“IoT is all around us and can be overwhelming for business leaders. We can help them connect the dots and understand what’s possible with IoT. There are big, industry-changing events happening worldwide — such as self-driving cars and remote medicine — and many are driven by IoT technology. But there are simple IoT solutions that small and medium businesses can take advantage of, and we’re here to help with that,” Taylor said.

## Cell Phones are Just the Beginning

He continued, “Cell phones are just the beginning. We have

vehicle trackers to enable a business to optimize fleet routing for improved productivity and time management. We have sensors that provide real-time monitoring of temperature, water intrusion, door openings and other events. For example, a restaurant will have significant inventory in its freezers, and can be notified immediately if there’s a variation in temperature, possibly saving thousands of dollars in food loss. If it needs to be monitored, we have a solution.”

Carolina West Wireless also provides mobile Wi-Fi, which many school systems use in buses so students can learn online during their travel time. Businesses of all sizes can access solutions to help improve revenues, overcome challenges and potentially lower costs. These solutions include vehicle and dashcam systems that increase safety, reduce liability and optimize fuel efficiency.

## Local Service, Local Partnership

Headquartered in Wilkesboro, Carolina West Wireless serves customers in 11 western North Carolina counties and operates 30+ stores in 17 communities. At these stores, customers can browse for new devices, ask questions and get help selecting the right wireless plan for them.

“The fact that Carolina West Wireless is local is a tremendous benefit to our customers. They get local customer care and a com-

mitment level that a national carrier cannot deliver. Plus, since our team lives, works and plays here, our customers are being served by neighbors,” Taylor noted.

SkyLine Membership Corporation owns 50 percent of Carolina West Wireless, and the partnership between the companies is a multi-faceted one.

**“It’s truly a partnership between SkyLine and Carolina West Wireless. SkyLine uses our phones and vehicle trackers in their fleet, and we use their technology to support our wireless network.”**

— HANK TAYLOR, VP OF SALES, CAROLINA WEST WIRELESS

Taylor said, “It’s truly a partnership between SkyLine and Carolina West Wireless. SkyLine uses our phones and vehicle trackers in their fleet, and we use their technology to support our wireless network. We also work together to provide comprehensive communication solutions for our customers, since the products and services we offer complement each other and allow us to deliver a terrific portfolio of solutions.”

Brent Keith, SkyLine/SkyBest Strategic Sales Supervisor, had this to say about the partnership: “At SkyLine/SkyBest, our focus has always been helping our customers access the communications services and equipment they need to be successful. Since reliable mobile service plays an important role, we’re proud to recommend Carolina West Wireless and leverage their dedicated business team to provide mobile solutions.”

Both SkyLine and Carolina West Wireless are big believers in giving back to the communities they serve through donations and sponsorships. For its part, Carolina West Wireless maintains the Communication4Education fundraising program. When customers opt in, Carolina West Wireless donates 3% of their monthly bill to the local school of their choice.

“So far, we’ve donated over \$500,000 to local schools. We’re also the exclusive wireless provider for App State Athletics. Giving back to the community is important to us,” Taylor said.

*SkyLine/SkyBest’s Strategic Sales Executive Brent Keith (middle right) poses with members of Carolina West Wireless’s Business Team: Mike Parker (left), Hank Taylor (middle left) and Channing Ritchie (right).*



### There’s a Carolina West Wireless Store Near You

With Carolina West Wireless, you get the best of both worlds—the coverage you need from nationwide service, plus the convenience of a local provider with stores nearby.

When you’re in the market for a new phone or other device, check out Carolina West Wireless. It offers great deals on a great selection including:

- iOS smartphones from Apple
- Android smartphones from LG, Motorola and Samsung
- Apple iPad models
- Accessories
- Connected solutions
- Apple Watch models

Be sure to ask about getting a free phone with a qualifying wireless plan.

**Not sure where your nearest Carolina West Wireless store is located?**

**This QR code will take you to a map of the many locations in North Carolina.**



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# Create a Customer Service Culture

*Start at the top  
and let it spread*



A common characteristic of highly successful businesses is the ability to deliver excellent customer service. It builds lasting customer relationships and fosters valuable “word of mouth” advertising. If you’d like to create a stronger customer service culture at your company, here are five fundamentals to keep in mind:

## **1. Make customer service a clear priority.**

For true impact, the focus on customer service must be a strong one, beginning with upper management and spreading throughout your company. Employees should clearly understand that they work for the customer, no matter what their job title. Don’t rely solely on your salespeople or customer service representatives to keep your customers happy.

## **2. Train your entire staff.**

All employees contribute in some way to customer service, whether they typically have direct customer contact or not. This is why it makes sense to provide training for your entire staff. Remember, when customers have a problem, they don’t want to be shuffled between employees that are not trained to assist them. During training, use role-playing to help your staff prepare to handle even difficult customer service challenges.

## **3. Empower employees with the tools they need.**

Don’t have your customer service representatives say, “Those are the rules I have to follow; there’s nothing I can do about it.” There is always a way to satisfy a disgruntled customer. To do so, however, employees must be given the latitude to take the necessary action to provide exceptional service and resolve issues promptly. One major hotel chain established a yearly monetary

fund that select employees could access at their discretion to right wrongs with customers.

## **4. Recognize and reward employees for outstanding service.**

Behavior that is rewarded will be repeated. To foster the growth of a customer service culture, take the time to recognize and reward employees who demonstrate excellent service behaviors. Acknowledge them at staff meetings. Put an article in the company newsletter. Give them extra time off, tickets to a special event or a plaque at a recognition dinner. Seize every opportunity to celebrate and publicize the times when employees go the extra mile for your customers.

## **5. Regularly ask customers what they think of your service.**

The best way to find out if you’re satisfying customers is simply to ask them. Formal efforts could include customer surveys and interviews. Informally, you can talk with your customers as you see them at your place of business and pay attention to their comments on social media. Ideally, use a combination of these methods. After you gather this feedback, always communicate the results to your employees so they can use the information to improve their performance.

# SkyLine Lends a Hand in Holiday Giving

SkyLine and community go hand in hand. As a member-owned cooperative, SkyLine has an ongoing commitment to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve.

During the holiday season, SkyLine is humbled to be among the legion of churches, local organizations and businesses to make a positive difference in the lives of area residents. Our employees gave generously of their time and resources to provide gifts to children and senior citizens in need:

- **Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission**

SkyLine employees provided gifts for 14 children, ranging from toddlers to teenagers, through the Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission (BROC). This organization aims to alleviate the causes and symptoms of poverty throughout Alleghany, Ashe and Wilkes counties.

- **Project Star through Appalachian Senior Programs**

Since 2003, Appalachian Senior Programs has sponsored Project Star for disadvantaged senior citizens in Ashe County. Agencies submit names of senior citizens in need, and star ornaments are created for each senior with a list of basic necessities they could use such as warm blankets, socks, coats, toiletries and food items. The stars are then hung on Christmas trees in different businesses.

After a caring Ashe County citizen chooses a star, items are purchased and distributed to senior citizens before the holidays. SkyLine employees took part in this effort, and purchased items for 25 senior citizens.

While it's particularly meaningful for SkyLine to lend our support during the holiday season, our staff is well aware that need exists throughout the year. That's why our Project Teamwork crisis outreach fund was established in 1997. SkyLine employees are invited to make a weekly nominal contribution to help other employees and area families during crisis events such as fires, accidents or serious illness. Project Teamwork provides immediate financial assistance when it's needed most.



SkyLine/SkyBest employees delivered gifts for children at BROC (Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission).



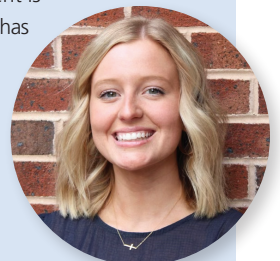
## Karen Powell Retires After 32 Years

For many, Karen Powell is the “face of SkyLine.” Powell served as Public Relations Administrator for SkyLine since 1990 and met many people along the way. She retired on November 30, 2022.

Edward Hinson, Chief Marketing and Sales Officer, said, “We’ve been honored to have Karen Powell serve our membership as well as our community for the past 32 years. I know she’ll continue to make the world around her a better place.”

Powell said, “I leave SkyLine with a heart full of gratitude. I enjoyed a long career in my hometown as the cooperative’s key communicator and got to lead community outreach programs across the region. I plan to remain connected to the community and will make a full-circle return to where I started as a teenager—working ‘part of the time’ on the air at WKSJ Radio (580 AM and 93.5 FM) on Radio Hill in West Jefferson.”

Powell’s replacement is Hallie Grubb, who has worked as an intern for SkyLine/SkyBest while earning a Bachelor of Arts in Media and Journalism from UNC - Chapel Hill.



SkyLine  SkyBest

# The Ups & Downs of Internet Speed

**600** Mbps

Download speed



Stream TV for customers

Log on to a webinar



Play music

**600** Mbps

Upload speed



Upload files & images to your website

Live on social media



Camera system

Up & Down



WiFi Calling



Point of Sale



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We're happy to help!

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Front L to R: Zara Worley & Haleigh Hogg  
Back L to R: Hollie Brown, Brent Keith & Robin Miller