

## FAIRPOINT EXECS UPBEAT IN NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

**The firm's leadership is meeting their new telecom subscribers and employees in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont this week, in the wake of a bruising 14-month takeover of Verizon Communications' landline business.**

By W. David Gardner, [InformationWeek](#)

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FairPoint Communications executives are touring their new telecommunications constituencies in northern New England this week, meeting workers, subscribers, and politicians in the wake of a bruising 14-month transfer process in which the North Carolina firm took over Verizon Communications' subscriber landline base in the region.

There was an element of damage control, mixed with upbeat future predictions, in the comments of Gene Johnson, the firm's chairman and chief executive, as he gave pep talks to workers in Maine and New Hampshire. "We will continue to grow and we will continue to build out infrastructure," said Johnson, according to the *Manchester Union Leader*.

FairPoint took over the lion's share of Verizon's landline subscribers in Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire, as Verizon has moved to shed some rural lines and older technology. Verizon is concentrating on expanding its FiOS fiber optic technology and Verizon Wireless, whose ownership it shares with Vodafone Group.

The \$2.17 billion transfer was officially [completed](#) Monday and FairPoint's stock promptly plunged 25%, although it subsequently made a partial recovery. Opponents of the transfer -- unions and some regulators -- had argued that FairPoint wasn't strong enough financially to run the former Verizon operation or to introduce advanced technologies as aggressively as Verizon could with its deep pockets.

Citing FairPoint's plans to spread broadband services in the three states, Johnson said the company should really be considered a modern Internet company and not an old-fashioned telephone business.

Johnson also met with New Hampshire Governor John Lynch and Maine Governor John Baldacci on his tour.

In Vermont, Walt Leach, FairPoint's executive VP for corporate development, met with employees and said the company plans to create 145 new jobs in the state. FairPoint also plans to have broadband reach 80% of the state by 2010.