

# Nicholas Financial Greenlights Managed Private IP

## Nicholas Financial Clearwater, Florida

### Business Challenges

- Reduce downtime with more reliable communications support
- Allow IT staff to focus on core business
- Enhance business continuity with effective disaster recovery plan
- Reduce vulnerability from IT employee turnover

### Network Solution

- Managed WAN Services
- Private IP

### Business Value

- **Connect.** New offices quickly integrated through managed service
- **Optimize.** Third-party management and detailed reporting enable better use of resources
- **Grow.** New applications supported by the network

“Verizon Business provides a plug-and-play network that can be expanded through the expertise and management of a provider, allowing for spikes in activity that would have consumed a small in-house IT staff.”

**Mike Marika,**  
CIO, Nicholas Financial

Nicholas Financial focuses on their growth plan by updating technology and moving network management tasks to Verizon Business.

### Company Background and Industry

Nicholas Financial has carved out a niche in the automobile financing industry. Based in Clearwater, Fla., the company acquires sub-prime new and used car loans from some 1,400 car dealers in 10 states throughout the Southeast and Midwest. In addition to its indirect lending activities, Nicholas Financial also sells extended warranties and credit, life, accident, and health insurance to many of its borrowers. The growth of Nicholas Financial has accelerated in recent years, and the company plans to add three to six more locations this year and in subsequent years to its approximately 40 full-service lending and collection offices.

### Key Business Challenges

Nicholas Financial has achieved success by developing in-house expertise and maximizing the value of internal resources. Success has brought with it a reassessment of operations, which identified the following needs:

- Give small IT staff better tools to support new productivity applications and office expansion
- Update disaster-recovery procedures to protect mission-critical operations
- Reduce vulnerability of network knowledge and experience that is concentrated among a small IT staff

CIO Mike Marika was facing a decision: continue to rely on his small in-house staff exclusively or bring in outside help. The in-house staff had been instrumental in the company’s growth, handling everything from developing software applications to installing network hardware and cable. With an in-house-designed and -supported network, the CIO ran the risk of losing a substantial amount of expertise with the departure of a member of his small staff. “We lost a staff member, and that was the alarm,” recalls Marika. Marika also felt it was “time to employ solutions that would come up to the standards we needed.”

One of those standards involved disaster recovery. In 2004, Nicholas Financial offices in Florida closed down four times due to hurricanes. The company had been operating with a point-to-point DS0 frame relay network with 56K circuits in branches and 256K fractional T1s to the headquarters in Clearwater. A hurricane or other unforeseen problem could leave an office without service, effectively halting business. In the past, if a router went down in a remote site, it might be 24 hours before the CIO could get a router to the site and walk a non-expert through setup.

### The Solution

The Verizon Business solution is a managed, wide area network (WAN) using MultiProtocol Label Switching (MPLS) Private IP, with an upgrade from DS0 to full T1s. Verizon Business Managed WAN Services provides comprehensive network monitoring and management functions for wide area and IP networks. By leveraging Verizon Business’s extensive global network and technical expertise, Managed WAN Services allows Nicholas Financial to focus on their core business.

## Case Study

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### About Verizon Business

- Leading provider of advanced communications solutions for business and government
  - Owns and operates one of the most expansive IP backbone networks in the world
  - Offers services on 6 continents, in 150 countries, and more than 2,800 cities around the globe
  - Offers innovative applications to help simplify, secure, and transform businesses
  - Delivers converged and integrated services that bring communication solutions together
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Verizon Private IP Service, a network-based virtual private network (VPN), facilitates communication across a private Internet Protocol (IP) backbone and provides highly scalable connectivity options and a simple any-to-any network design that can grow with the business and converge traffic onto a single network infrastructure.

### Why Verizon Business?

Through Private IP and Managed WAN Services, Verizon Business offers support for business growth, efficiency, and security. Private IP is based on MPLS technology, which integrates performance and traffic management capabilities into a fully meshed environment, allowing for a uniform communications platform and expansion with minimal disruption. By opting for a managed solution, Nicholas Financial adds a staff of around-the-clock experts to its IT department, as well as the support of extensive monitoring and reporting. The Managed WAN service monitors critical metrics such as latency, volume, and congestion. And the Verizon Business Customer Center enables real-time tracking of the managed-service implementation process, project status, inventory tracking, contacts, and change management requests. In addition, Verizon Business design engineers helped Nicholas Financial implement a fast and thorough disaster recovery plan, with back-up servers in Tampa.

### Results and Next Steps

With a proactive disaster recovery and day-to-day management plan supported by Verizon Business's expertise, Nicholas Financial will realize smoother and more efficient operations. Data security—a paramount concern for companies passing social security and credit information—has been enhanced by keeping branches' Internet access separate from the Private IP network.

Marika can use the reporting to realize better management. He can now more closely relate expenses to business activities. "I can look at the call records of individual employees, toll-free and fax machine usage, and long distance volume," he noted. "I get a lot of analysis on the way the offices are working."

And Marika has the ability to upgrade the network without additional hardware. "There are potential applications, like Voice over IP, that we are considering, and it's easy to add bandwidth in the network to support it," he said.

The CIO also likes using a single-source provider with a wealth of expertise in communications technology and how it is deployed to support Nicholas Financial. Now, the company has reduced the risk of losing significant expertise due to a departing staff member. "Verizon Business provides a plug-and-play network that can be expanded through the expertise and management of a provider, allowing for spikes in activity that would have consumed a small in-house IT staff," Marika said. "With Verizon Business's services, the IT staff can continue to make the most of its ability to drive core business goals such as expansion, efficiency, and security."

### For More Information

Visit [www.verizonbusiness.com/us/managed/](http://www.verizonbusiness.com/us/managed/) or [www.verizonbusiness.com/us/data/vpn/privateip/](http://www.verizonbusiness.com/us/data/vpn/privateip/) for more information.

