



## New York Bank Strengthens Bandwidth, Enhances Services with VMware SD-WAN

[The First National Bank of Long Island](#) was founded in 1927 in Glen Head, New York. Through its branch network branded as the First National Bank LI, the bank focuses on business and consumer needs on Long Island and in New York City with a broad set of lending, deposit, investment and digital products.

### Industry

Financial services

### VMware footprint

- VMware SD-WAN™
- VMware SASE™

### Partner

[Windstream Enterprise](#) drives business transformation through the convergence of proprietary software solutions and cloud-optimized networks to unlock clients' revenue and profitability potential. Businesses trust Windstream Enterprise as their single source for a high-performance network and award-winning suite of connectivity, collaboration and security solutions delivered by a team of technology experts whose success is directly tied to clients' complete satisfaction.

To grow and serve its community as a truly local independent bank, the First National Bank of Long Island relies on extraordinary service, a customer-first approach, and modern digital systems. The bank is upgrading its IT infrastructure to support its goals of superior customer service and business expansion. In place of outdated and slow networks, the bank chose VMware SD-WAN as a managed service from VMware partner Windstream Enterprise. With strong bandwidth and centralized management in place, the First National Bank LI has the tools to accomplish its business and technical goals.

### The right technology to compete and help customers succeed

As the last remaining independent bank on Long Island and in the New York City metropolitan area, the First National Bank of Long Island sees technology as a competitive advantage. The bank's recent digital initiatives include making customer transfers more flexible, designing an automated system to enable residential mortgage applications, and enhancing mobile banking. In addition to improving services at physical branches, a digital transformation will enable new business practices that will open the bank to new customers and new opportunities.

To accomplish this, the First National Bank LI has been upgrading and modernizing its technology on many fronts, including networking. Part of that transformation has been to implement VMware SD-WAN for faster connections.

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"We believe VMware has the very best SD-WAN product out there. The reporting is great. The Windstream Enterprise WE Connect portal is both strategic and granular. They are both excellent solutions."

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Daniel Viola, VP and Director of Information Technology, The First National Bank of Long Island

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## Discovering the benefits of VMware SD-WAN

Daniel Viola, vice president and director of information technology for the First National Bank LI, learned about VMware SD-WAN through a relationship with a networking consultant who did a deep dive on VMware SD-WAN with Viola and his team. “At the same time we were considering the transition to VMware SD-WAN, industry magazines were naming Windstream Enterprise as one of the best VMware managed-service shops,” said Viola.

The bank has been working to modernize its systems with VMware partner Windstream Enterprise since 2018. In 2020, the First National Bank LI began a project to replace 1.5Mbps T1 lines. Windstream Enterprise provides a fully managed service that includes 100Mbps business internet as the primary connection and VMware SD-WAN infrastructure. The Windstream Enterprise service includes a second connection for an active-active configuration to virtually eliminate downtime.

The bank has VMware SD-WAN running at 44 locations, with three more branch locations planned. VMware SD-WAN is present in 41 bank branches, two data centers, and at the bank’s headquarters.

Viola noted that VMware SD-WAN has brought the bank numerous benefits. The increased bandwidth allows the First National Bank LI to run bank-critical software more easily. It’s simpler to set up connectivity for new branches, especially with support from partner Windstream Enterprise.

Windstream Enterprise is not only helping the bank source and implement new lines for connectivity, the partner provides a

fully managed VMware SD-WAN service. While Viola and his team can make small changes at individual locations if needed, Windstream Enterprise does the heavy lifting. “We open a ticket, talk with our technical service manager, and Windstream Enterprise can make a global change for all our locations. You couldn’t do that in the old T1 world,” says Viola. And, Viola adds, instead of experiencing regular connection crises when the T1 lines would go down, “we are experiencing better than 98 percent uptime with Windstream.”

Viola and his team can see concise statistics on VMware SD-WAN and other connectivity projects through the Windstream Enterprise WE Connect portal, built on the VMware SASE Orchestrator. The portal provides complete visibility into the network, allowing better and faster troubleshooting.

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“Going from T1 lines to VMware SD-WAN is amazing. It’s a paradigm shift. It’s huge.”

Daniel Viola, VP and Director of Information Technology,  
The First National Bank of Long Island

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## Better technology and bandwidth enable new business practices

VMware SD-WAN underpins a number of new use cases for the First National Bank LI. “We don’t even know what to do with all the bandwidth right now,” says Viola. “Employees can use video collaboration. We can move files around with ease. From an IT infrastructure perspective, it’s a huge change for the better.” Viola added that the improved connectivity and uptime enable new use cases as well as make regular management jobs, such as running bank-critical software, more efficient.

With sufficient capacity, it’s easier for bank employees to use video for important tasks. A T1 line didn’t provide enough bandwidth to accommodate both multimedia files and day-to-day operations. Now, it’s much easier for staff to take mandated training classes that include video and join video conferences, cutting down on travel and time spent away from serving customers.

VMware SD-WAN also drives efficiency and cost savings across bank operations. Viola noted the example of alarms, which every bank must have. “All the alarms had dual access,



“Because we’re a community bank, we can be more flexible in how we do business in our community,” says Viola. “Now that we have the bandwidth, the business side of the bank can tell us what they would like to do, and I can say go for it because we can support you.”

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“Moving to VMware SD-WAN saves dollars and staff, reduces risk, and is a large process improvement.”

Daniel Viola, VP and Director of Information Technology,  
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cellular and a plain old telephone service (POTS) line,” says Viola. “To replace that, we’re in the middle of a project running a data circuit from VMware SD-WAN directly into our alarm panel and shutting down our POTS lines. It’s a tremendous cost savings of about USD \$80,000 a year.”

The alarm example extends into personnel and operational savings. “When these phone lines went down, the branch would have to call someone,” says Viola. “Then we had to get our alarm company involved and our corporate services department, and then it came back to IT. We had four departments working for a phone line. Moving to VMware SD-WAN saves dollars and staff, reduces risk, and is a large process improvement.”

## Positive changes for customers and future business needs

The First National Bank LI is also able to make positive changes to the way customers are served. The bank focuses on commercial loans to small- and medium-sized businesses and residential mortgage loans. To make the loan process more convenient—and help the bank compete with larger institutions—representatives from partner lending companies can be physically located in the First National Bank LI branches and use the bank’s network. This helps them more easily access customers’ records and makes the lending process smoother.

“Lenders can sit at any branch-office PC and establish a remote desktop to a virtual machine,” says Viola. “This has been a significant change for us, and we have only been able to do it in the past two years. Our lending partners have been able to execute a business plan, not bound by infrastructure or location.” Lenders and employees can take advantage of the flexibility of the VMware SD-WAN network and do business in any branch via remote desktop.

The partnership with VMware and Windstream Enterprise has enabled the bank to grow quickly and modernize its networks. “For about the next five years, we will be able to focus on business rather than having to worry about capacity and network, which is huge,” says Viola.