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Finger Lakes Technologies Group, Inc. **Rural Phone Companies Spawn Regional Telecom Powerhouse**

Times are tough for traditional telecom companies. With many customers ditching their land lines for cell phones or other alternatives to traditional phone service, many are struggling to stay afloat.

But two 100-year-old phone companies in rural Upstate New York, Ontario & Trumansburg Telephone Companies (OTTC), and especially their Finger Lakes Technologies Group, Inc. (FLTG) subsidiary, are thriving. In fact, FLTG recently expanded its sales force and extended sales from Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse into Auburn, Canandaigua, Victor and Ithaca. And it continues to attract new client accounts.



Paul H. Griswold

Paul H. Griswold, president and CEO of all three companies, credits their success to FLTG's emphasis on serving commercial customers with two lines of business:

1. State-of-the-art telecommunications services – including local, long distance and broadband – via its own 400-plus-mile fiber-optic redundant ring, the largest independently owned regional network in Upstate New York.

2. Data engineering – for example, installations of routers, switches, phone systems and other equipment – as a Cisco Systems Premier Certified Partner. (FLTG holds a full complement of Cisco certifications, and Griswold sits on Cisco's regional and national advisory boards.)

Plus, Griswold says, "We're versatile and quick on our feet, with the ability to shift gears quickly. And we have some of the best people in the industry." Another advantage is competitive pricing. FLTG is able to offer lower pricing because it owns its own network, he explains.

Impressive Client Roster

Founded in 1995, FLTG has attracted some very large clients over the past 15 years. It has installed Cisco solutions for a large, family-owned grocery chain in Upstate New York, a regional transportation authority, several area school districts and financial institutions, among others. And for Cornell University, a client for more than five years, it has built a diverse fiber route between Ithaca and Rochester. As a result, "we now have the connectivity we need to support our dedicated private research efforts with universities around the country," says R. David Vernon, director of Cornell's Network and Communication Services.

Griswold notes that many customers avail themselves of both product lines.



All in the Family

"Not a lot more than a few farmers hooking up to each other with barbed wire."

That's how Paul H. Griswold describes the early days of Ontario & Trumansburg Telephone Companies. And he should know. While he wasn't exactly there at the time – he turns 48 this year – Griswold is the fourth generation of his family to head OTTC. Paul's great-grandfather, Hovey Griswold, purchased the Ontario Telephone Co. in 1920 and the Trumansburg Home Telephone Co. six years later.

"My family took two old, traditional phone companies and transformed them into a state-of-the-art telecommunications provider," Griswold says. Hovey would be proud.

Continued Prosperity

The economy may still be sputtering, but all signs point to a prosperous 2010 for FLTG, Griswold says. He notes that the company recently joined forces with NetApp to provide business customers with state-of-the-art storage products and has applied for federal stimulus funds to expand middle-mile broadband services from Syracuse to Binghamton.

"Our goals for this year are not much different than they've been for the 100-plus years we've been in business," Griswold says. "We're looking to further enhance our products-and-solutions portfolio, continue building trust among our customers and deliver the best customer service in the industry." Stay tuned.



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