

# Rural Fiber Footprints and Superior Customer Service: The State of Indiana

The Indiana state government has more than 700 interconnected, remote offices throughout the state. To put this in perspective, these offices outnumber Apple and Microsoft retail stores worldwide, combined. Obviously, interconnecting so many locations is no small task, especially considering that many are situated in rural areas across Indiana. And, since cornerstone community services like public safety and child welfare rely on this connectivity, the State's network carriers must offer service that is fast, reliable, and cost-effective.

Charles Sharp serves as the Wide Area Network Infrastructure Service Manager for the State of Indiana, and it's his job to discover and manage these carriers while ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

"Our main challenge was figuring out how to extend our network to the remote areas of the state. Major carriers like AT&T, CenturyLink and Frontier do not have a presence in every market where we have offices," Sharp explained. "IFN can partner with small independent carriers to meet that need. They also provide services in the major carrier markets as well, so IFN provides a level of diversity that makes them a very viable solution for us."

Unlike the large, national carriers, IFN is unique in that it is made up of 20 independent carriers with fiber footprints in the rural areas where Sharp needed connectivity most. IFN's relationship with these carriers and its ability to backhaul traffic to Indianapolis made the choice an easy one. And the fact that IFN installs new fiber to expand its network on an ongoing basis was an added bonus.

As Sharp and his team work to add more locations to the State's network, he's noted another distinguishing characteristic that sets IFN apart from other service providers they have encountered.

"Most of the big-name service providers are complex and difficult to work with. Companies like AT&T are so large that you have to go through so many different channels just to get something installed. The process is just too cumbersome to deal with," Sharp explained.

With IFN, Sharp has a dedicated project manager and regional sales manager that he can go to when questions or issues arise. He has even enjoyed one-on-one meetings with IFN CEO Jim Turner to make sure that IFN is meeting his needs — something few AT&T or CenturyLink customers can say.

"IFN's strong support structure is the number one reason for their success as our carrier," said Sharp. "IFN as a company is big enough to fulfill my needs but small enough that there are no boundaries for communication."

Since partnering with IFN to expand connectivity, Sharp and his team have observed marked results.

"We've noticed that as we move services over to fiber, ticket volumes go down because fiber is more reliable and provides a better connection," said Sharp. "Our ultimate goal is to move all of our offices over to fiber, and IFN is a key player in achieving that goal."



**"WE NEEDED A SOLUTION THAT COULD TRANSMIT DATA FAR AND FAST."**

"Today, I can't run an office on anything less than 20Mbps, and in reality, most of our offices need speeds between 50 and 100Mbps, which can only be achieved with fiber."

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