



Success Story

BankAtlantic

 **BankAtlantic**

NORTEL
NETWORKS™

Founded in 1952, BankAtlantic is one of the largest financial institutions

headquartered in the state of Florida. Through its branch network and Internet banking division, BankAtlantic provides its customers with a full range of commercial and individual banking products and services. Always on the lookout for new ways to enhance customer service through technology,

BankAtlantic is an industry leader in delivering innovative solutions.

In addition to creating its own proprietary network of automatic teller machines (ATMs), BankAtlantic has pioneered and developed a unique market niche by using its technological expertise. The bank deployed real-time, satellite-driven ATMs on board the ships of three major cruise lines, extending its market-leading services to the high seas.

Through the BankAtlantic Foundation, the bank supports a wide array of activities in the arts, education and social welfare, as well as community and economic development. In addition, the bank provides ongoing support for Habitat for Humanity's goal of eliminating substandard and poverty housing in Florida.



Why Business Communications Manager?

As BankAtlantic reviewed products from different vendors, three clear factors emerged that influenced their decision in favor of Business Communications Manager.

- **Remote Management** enables the systems in each branch to be managed from the central site in Fort Lauderdale, eliminating the need for third-party management services.
- **Auto Attendant** empowers bank customers to route their calls directly to their destination, increasing corporate efficiency and reducing customer wait times.
- **Regional Voice Mail** decentralizes the voice mail function to the branches, ensuring that a dropped connection to the central site will not impact branch operations.

Increasing profitability

with Voice over IP solutions

Because of its steady growth and two major acquisitions over the last six years, BankAtlantic needed to create a unified network capable of providing standardized services to all of its branches. Disparate telephony systems needed to be replaced, and essential features such as voice mail, automated attendants with customer controlled routing, fax overflow, and four-digit dialing needed to be implemented while maintaining branch independence.

Remote management of the existing equipment was not possible, and the bank was incurring high management costs resulting from contracts with third-party network administrators. A standardized frame relay network was partially in place, with plans to extend the network to each of the branch offices. To meet its current and future needs, BankAtlantic began exploring solutions offered by different vendors.

The Challenge

To create a scalable, fault-tolerant, business-critical Voice over IP network capable of supporting over 70 branch offices.

One of the chief problems that BankAtlantic faced was a wide range of legacy equipment at each of its branch offices. Some of the systems were no longer supported by the manufacturers, and it was difficult and expensive to have them repaired. A key requirement was to eliminate the expense of hiring third-party vendors to manage and maintain the outdated equipment. Essential features such as voice mail were not offered, and it became clear that a new solution had to be found.

Due to the constant transaction traffic generated in the financial marketplace, BankAtlantic was already in the process of deploying a frame relay network. With fractional T1 connections to each of its branches, there was bandwidth on the network that was not being utilized. As a company on the technological forefront, the bank decided to explore VoIP as a way of putting excess bandwidth to work, improving corporate efficiency, and reducing operating expenses. BankAtlantic investigated Voice over IP (VoIP) solutions from different vendors, and chose Nortel Networks to help meet its networking challenges.

“ At the end of the day,
it comes down to return on investment. When we looked
at the **cost/benefits scenario**
delivered by the Nortel Networks
business model, **no other
vendor could compare.** ”

Lloyd DeVaux
Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer
BankAtlantic

The Solution

Centralized control with regional autonomy

With assistance from Nortel Networks, BankAtlantic developed a solution that balances centralized control with regional autonomy. The central site hosts a Nortel Networks Meridian 1* PBX, which is networked to a Business Communications Manager at each of the branches. Each branch has the power to control its own voice mail system and the Auto Attendant's call routing capabilities, and the system can be managed from the central site.

Over 90% of BankAtlantic's toll charges are incurred by intrastate calling. The bank's goal is to reduce or even eliminate these charges by putting branch-to-branch traffic on the corporate network. Customers can simply place a local call and route themselves to either their branch office or the call center, at no additional cost to the bank.

In addition, the Business Communications Manager can route calls over the WAN or the public network. If WAN bandwidth is not available, calls are automatically routed to the Public Switched Telephone

Network (PSTN). Ideal for any industry, this approach ensures business-critical reliability and a highly available solution.

Eric Lozano, Senior Vice President of Technology Infrastructure, illustrated this point. “With alternate routes and store-and-forward capability, everything survives even if a WAN connection goes down. When our customers come into the branch, they want top-flight service, and the new network ensures that we're always ready to meet their needs.”

By shifting calls to the corporate WAN, BankAtlantic is targeting a 30% reduction of outbound lines at each branch. The company expects further savings on toll charges resulting from intrastate long distance on the remaining lines, and an equivalent reduction in per-minute usage of their toll-free 800 lines. Mr. DeVaux provided the following analysis: “In the financial marketplace, telecommunications represents a high percentage of our overall operating expenses. We feel that we can reduce our overall expenditures by over 30%, which will have a real impact on our bottom line.”

Benefits

- **Delivers centralized management** for all 70 branches, maximizing the effectiveness of system administrators and eliminating the need for third-party managers.
- **Creates a unified network** with consistent hardware and software solutions, enhancing the efficiency of corporate operations.
- **Features Auto Attendant** capabilities, enabling customers to save time by routing themselves either to bank personnel or the call center.
- **Supports CallPilot* Voice Mail** in the core and branch environments, simplifying operation by providing a consistent voice mail interface across the network.
- **Eliminates the need** for two to three outside phone lines per branch, leading to a direct decrease in operating expenses.
- **Limits the number of callers** dialing into the 800 network, shifting traffic to the more cost-effective private WAN.
- **Reduces charges** incurred by intrastate calling by shifting a majority of branch-to-branch telephony traffic to the private WAN.
- **Stores faxes** when fax lines are busy, and increases efficiency by sending the fax through when lines become available.
- **Improves customer service** through computer telephony integration (CTI), which gives the call center a more personalized approach.

“The goal was to **standardize our equipment** across the network. Now everyone’s **using the same hardware and software**, and our training and network management is **efficient and cost-effective.**”

Lloyd DeVaux

*Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer
BankAtlantic*

Streamlined branch deployments keep business running smoothly

“Our branch rollouts have been great,” remarks Mr. Lozano. “We’re bringing up branches at a rate of almost one per week.” The deployment started with a 30-day review of the Business Communications Manager in the BankAtlantic test lab. The bank needed to explore the new features offered by the system and developed an implementation plan. Mr. Lozano continued, “We worked out a checklist for the branch installs, and it’s been going very smoothly.”

To ensure that business procedures would continue without disruption, BankAtlantic performed an upfront survey to discover the individual nuances of each branch. Even though there were key systems from several different vendors at the various sites, the upgrades have been going exactly as planned. “We type in the translations, and then move the lines over. We haven’t had an issue yet.” Mr. Lozano concludes.

Training

Legacy key systems at the branches had prevented BankAtlantic from offering voice mail or four-digit dialing to its employees. To ensure a smooth transition to the new system, training is provided to branch employees on the new phone and voice mail features. The class only takes one morning, and a quick reference guide is provided to each participant.

The Architecture

The BankAtlantic network architecture is a spoke-and-wheel frame relay network, with the Fort Lauderdale offices serving as the central site. The Business Communications Manager systems at the branches are connected over a fractional T1 frame relay network to one IP-enabled Meridian* 1 PBX switch. The Meridian 1 switch has a Nortel Networks Internet Telephony Gateway card installed to support connectivity over the IP network.

The central core and branch office switches are installed with the Nortel Networks CallPilot Voice Mail application, providing a unified platform for voice mail services across the network. The desktop telephones are Nortel Networks T7316 Business Series Terminals, a high-quality digital telephony solution.

The branches are operating at a committed information rate (CIR) of 128 Kbps, which is delivering smooth performance. Each channel only requires a maximum of 11 Kbps, and bandwidth demands have been comfortably met at this level. Future plans include data-intensive applications and image transmission across the network. To meet this potential demand, network bandwidth can be incrementally scaled to the full T1 rate of 1.54 Mbps.

Strong relationships maximize profitability and facilitate business success

As a major vendor with a background in both telephony and data networking, Nortel Networks used its unique expertise to help BankAtlantic develop a solution that would meet its needs. After starting with a disparate collection of key systems from several different vendors, the bank now is well on its way to establishing a unified network that will deliver peak performance under all operating conditions.

The broad range of services offered by the Nortel Networks equipment is increasing the efficiency of the bank’s personnel, enabling them to deliver much higher levels of customer service than was possible in the past. Nortel Networks understands the importance of establishing a partnership role, and is working closely with BankAtlantic to create a business environment designed to facilitate their future success.

Solution Overview

Company name **BankAtlantic** www.bankatlantic.com

The service A unified network delivering consistent services to each of BankAtlantic's 70 branches, managed from the central site

The solution Nortel Networks Business Communications Manager networked from the branches to a Nortel Networks Meridian 1 PBX system at the central site, supporting Nortel Networks T7316 Business Series Terminal digital desktop phones

Key benefits for BankAtlantic:

- Full bandwidth utilization of the frame relay network
- Standardization of voice mail and Auto Attendant services across the network
- Cost-effective centralized management of branch environments from the central site
- Replacement of costly dial-up connections with cost-effective connections over the corporate WAN
- Reductions in station-to-station long distance charges



For more information, contact your Nortel Networks representative or call 1-800-4-NORTEL (1-800-466-7835), or 1-506-674-5470 outside of North America.

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