

nisc

CASE STUDY

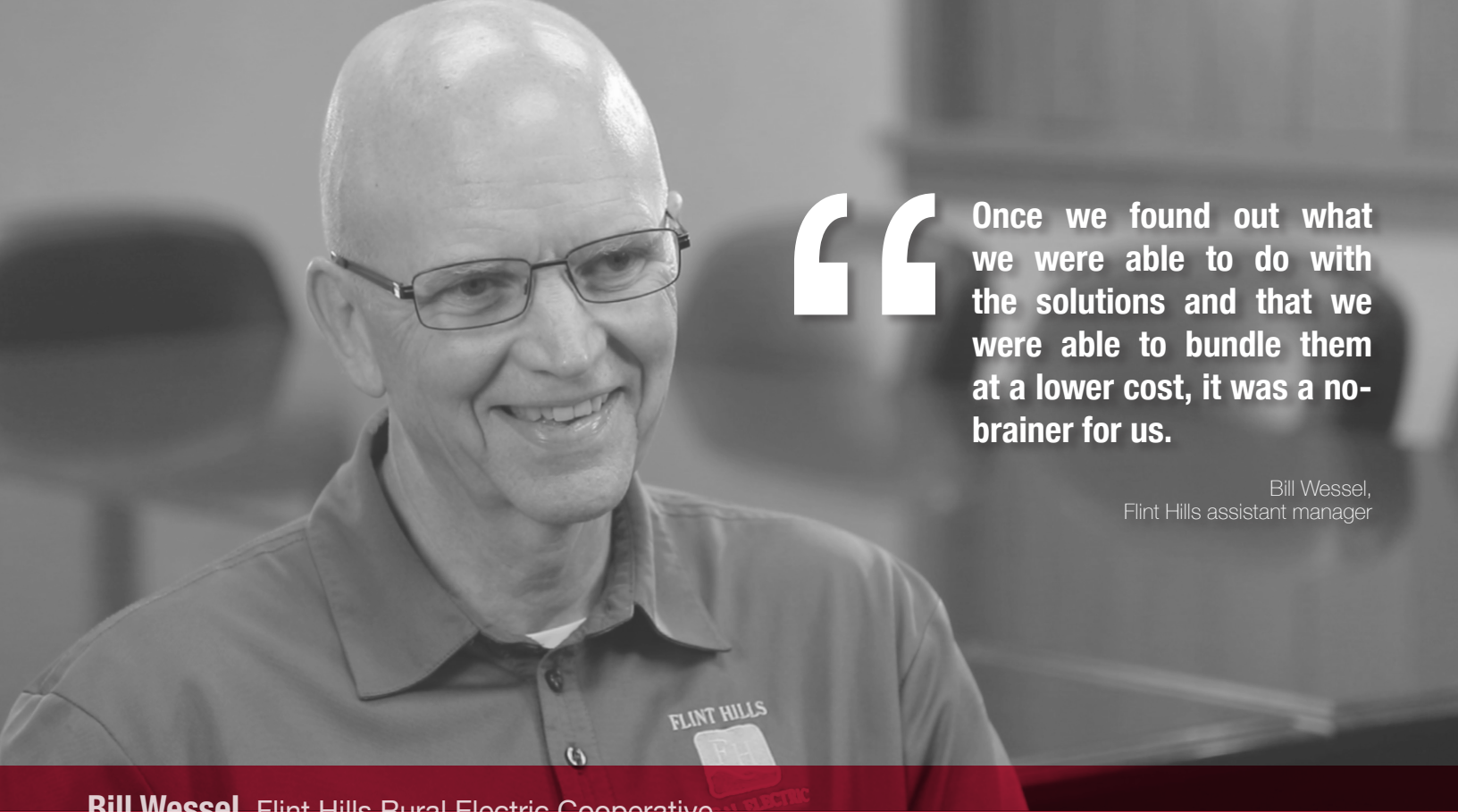
FLINT HILLS RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Longtime Member Benefits From Small Utility Productivity Package



SUMMARY:

Flint Hills Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Council Grove, Kan., maximizes its partnership with NISC and affordably meets its technology needs by utilizing NISC's Small Utility Productivity Package (SUPP). The cooperative has trusted NISC to provide innovative solutions since the partnership's inception in 1969.



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Bill Wessel,
Flint Hills assistant manager

Bill Wessel, Flint Hills Rural Electric Cooperative

THERE'S A SAYING AT NISC: *A Member is a Member is a Member.*

No, it's not an imitation of a broken record—it's affirmation that each and every NISC Member, no matter their bottom line or how many accounts they serve, are given NISC's very best care and attention.

While Members are treated equally no matter their size, how NISC helps those Members achieve their goals can differ. Members serving relatively fewer accounts face unique challenges when it comes to efficient and cost-effective operation of their company.

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We trust that NISC is going to be there for the day-to-day things, but they're also going to be there for the critical times that we need them...

Chuck Goeckel,
Flint Hills general manager

A TOOL FOR SMALL UTILITIES

Flint Hills Rural Electric Cooperative Association, headquartered in Council Grove, Kan., serves approximately 6,500 accounts in eastern Kansas, and serves as a shining example of how a Member of their size can effectively engage with NISC and use their technology to maintain a high level of customer service.

For Flint Hills and Charles (Chuck) Goeckel, Flint Hills general manager, economies of scale and employee time constraints are two of the cooperative's foremost challenges.

“Our meter density is 2.6 meters per mile, so it becomes a cost challenge to divvy up the cost of a mile of line to just 2.6 customers,” Goeckel said. “Another challenge is that we're pretty small—we have 23 employees. Those employees need to wear multiple hats for the functions that they do, and it becomes a challenge to keep them educated in multiple areas to be able to backup other employees for emergency purposes.”

To help smaller Members such as Flint Hills meet their technology needs in an affordable manner, NISC offers the Small Utility Productivity Package (SUPP).

NISC SOLUTIONS ELIGIBLE FOR SUPP

- ▶ **RemitPlus**
- ▶ **Document Vault**
- ▶ **PrePaid Metering**
- ▶ **Mobile WorkForce**
- ▶ **Outage Management System**
- ▶ **CallCapture Secure Payments**
- ▶ **Meter Data Management System**
- ▶ **SmartHub (consumer engagement)**



Adam Dirks, Flint Hills Rural Electric Cooperative

The SUPP allows smaller-sized utilities the option of bundling four of NISC's most popular solutions at a discounted rate. It's available to Members serving 10,000 or fewer meters and running core NISC applications—Customer Care & Billing (CC&B), Automated Billing System (ABS), Automated Mailroom Services (AMS)—in an Application Services Provider (ASP) hosted environment, which means NISC houses their servers to eliminate the need for the Member to replace them once outdated.

Zach Heidbrier, NISC regional business manager (RBM), visits each of his Members' sites at least once each year, and helps them year-round to tackle projects, initiatives and challenges. He sees the SUPP as a valuable tool for Members such as Flint Hills.

"The SUPP allows smaller Members the ability to purchase the technology that they may not otherwise be able to afford," Heidbrier said. "It allows them to reach out and offer their members the technology that they deserve, no matter where they live. All of our Members have the ultimate goal of serving their end-users, and ultimately our goal is to help them better-serve their members."

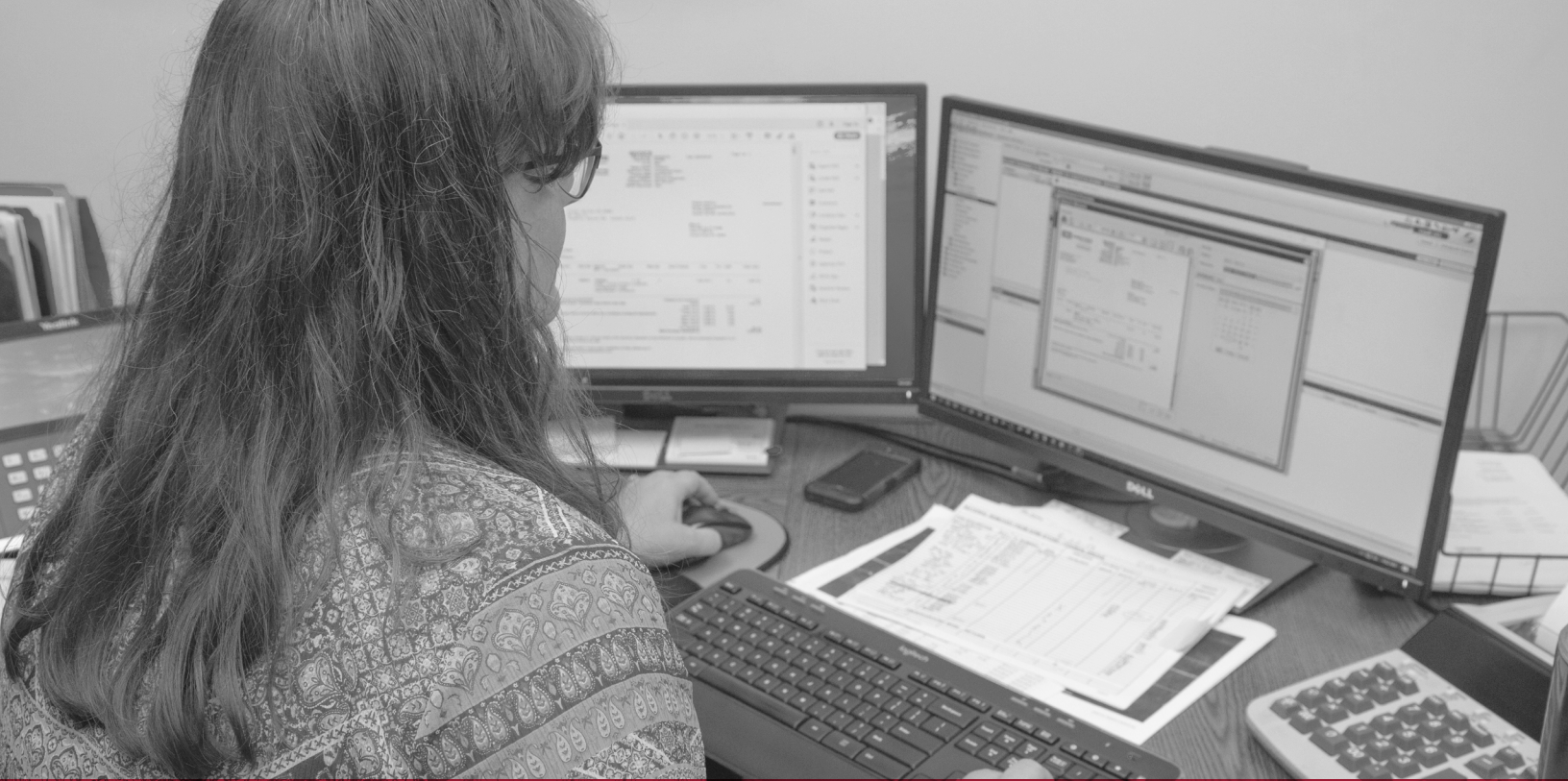
SMALL UTILITIES, BIG SAVINGS

Bill Wessel, Flint Hills assistant manager and head of Member Services, said the cooperative uses NISC's Customer Information Systems (CIS), ABS and mapping solutions on a daily basis, while their customers use SmartHub to track their daily usage and the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) product for payment.

"The Small Utility Productivity Package has been a blessing for us both in cost savings and productivity," Wessel said. "Once we found out what we were able to do with the solutions and that we were able to bundle them at a lower cost, it was a no-brainer for us."

Flint Hills bundled eight different software packages as part of the SUPP, saving the cooperative \$15,000 on its payments to NISC per year.

"The greater savings are the efficiencies that we get from those packages," Goeckel said. "Whether it's through the Outage Management System and getting crews to an outage quicker, saving office time and money through Document Vault, or enhancing the member experience with Prepaid Billing and SmartHub, enabling the member to get any information they want at any time of day."



Bernice Spinden, Flint Hills Rural Electric Cooperative

Once the co-op implemented the solutions, NISC's product usability and support rose to the top for Wessel.

"We are a small staff so we are cross-trained, and everybody seems to catch on pretty quickly to how to use the products efficiently," Wessel said.

"What I appreciate the most is the service that I receive from NISC. If I have a problem or have a question, I can call NISC and get an answer that day. With some other co-ops or software vendors that we work with, I could be looking at a week before I get an answer."

THE NISC DIFFERENCE

The SUPP is among several differentiators that sets NISC apart from other technology providers. Opportunities to take part in peer-to-peer training, the NISC Community—an intranet that allows Members to communicate with each other and NISC subject matter experts, and access to a dedicated RBM, such as Heidbrier, help them navigate challenges.

To get the most out of their partnership with NISC, Heidbrier recommends that Members communicate

frequently with their RBM, engage peers and NISC subject matter experts on the Community, let their voice be heard on Member Advisory Committees, and utilize tools such as the SUPP.

Flint Hills has been an NISC Member since 1969, and over the last 50 years, the partnership has flourished on a foundation of trust.

"We trust that NISC is going to be there for the day-to-day things, but they're also going to be there for the critical times that we need them, whether it's a network being down or somebody having difficulties with billing or payroll," Goeckel said. "When the board decided to join NISC in 1969, their expectation was to use modern software to provide essential information to help operate our cooperative more effectively. In 1969, NISC met that expectation, and still meets that expectation today."

To learn more about NISC's commitment to Members, or for more information about our iVUE enterprise software products and services, please visit www.nisc.coop or email sales@nisc.coop.

