



# **System Unification and Leading Organizational Change**

## How NineStar Connect Changed the Game



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# About

When a company operates in multiple software systems—even separate instances of the same platform —



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human error and endless chair swiveling create inefficiencies that affect your staff and customers. This is true whether it's a single company using multiple systems, two or more companies combining into a single entity, or companies expanding into new business areas (e.g., an electric cooperative introducing broadband service).

NineStar Connect was created from the merger of two companies: Central Indiana Power, an electric cooperative, and Hancock Rural Telephone, a broadband provider. These companies had decades of independent operations, ingrained processes, and separate technology.

In this white paper, learn the benefits from NineStar Connect's journey toward unified operations through a single software system. Their experience isn't just about technology—it's about organizational, cultural, and strategic change.





## Combining systems takes a mindset change

At NineStar Connect, both the electric and broadband divisions operated with “very well-established practices” before they joined forces. Both companies had their own workflows, data structures, terminology, and customer interaction models. While these legacy systems worked effectively in isolation, they were more like a patchwork quilt when joined—disparate elements, each playing its own part—than a unified whole. The NineStar Connect team created manual workarounds that gave the appearance of integration without truly achieving it. What looked like a combined company from the outside remained two organizations working in parallel internally.

Both Central Indiana Power and Hancock Rural Telephone were Members of NISC, utilizing their iVUE enterprise software to run their energy and communication businesses. When the organizations merged to become NineStar Connect, it

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**Misty Tinch**

*Manager of Software Solutions*  
NineStar Connect



## Combining systems takes a mindset change

was not only a new experience for NineStar, it was new for their technology partner as well. Initially, NineStar deployed a custom version of NISC's iVUE that supported both sides of their business, but with separate instances of the software. The goal, for both NineStar and NISC, was to eventually reach a point where one solution could meet the combined needs of their new business.

With the launch of NISC's iVUE Connect solution, the goal of a unified business was a reality. However, even with the possibility of improved and updated software, NineStar Connect's internal divisions kept them from taking advantage of the system's new capabilities. This caused a turning point that forced NineStar Connect to understand system integration differently. "This is not a software upgrade," says NineStar Connect Manager of Software Solutions Misty Tinch. "This is a shift in how you're operating, how your processes are going to work, and how everything is going to take place."

This recognition helped the NineStar Connect leadership understand what integrating their systems truly meant. It wasn't about clicking "update" on software—it was about deciding how electric and broadband operations would operate as one company at a deeper level. Where processes differed between departments, someone had to decide: which approach would the unified company use? These weren't IT decisions; they were strategic business decisions with organizational implications.

Understanding that system integration requires a cultural shift is non-negotiable for success. Company leaders must understand that employees will resist change more strongly when they perceive it as a software upgrade that changes familiar processes; instead, it should be positioned as a deliberate business transformation with clear strategic intent.





## Creating efficiencies with a unified system

Tinch offers a telling story: NineStar Connect purchased 43-inch monitors for their customer service representatives, technicians, and other staff because—under their previous, separate instances of iVUE—they needed to keep several windows open and on display to serve customers effectively. In other words, 43-inch monitors enabled simpler switching between processes, since every service request required manual correlation between separate instances of the solution. There's no better illustration of the inefficiency created by disparate systems than the digital obstacle course staff faced as they assisted customers.

With unified systems came measurable operational improvements for NineStar Connect (in addition to gaining more real estate on their 43-inch monitors):

1. **Unified customer information.** With a unified system, customer information is all in one place—including service history, billing information, payment status, and more. When a customer calls asking about broadband, CSRs can immediately see if that same customer also has electric service, which enables proactive cross-selling and better service recommendations.







## Creating efficiencies with a unified system

- 2. Improved communication.** With everyone working from the same system, NineStar Connect is breaking down silos and communicating better, both internally and externally. Trouble tickets, customer tracking, and service workflows now integrate naturally rather than requiring staff to bridge separate systems.
- 3. Member lists.** NineStar Connect had what it called an annual meeting list problem. Compiling an accurate member list for annual meetings had been “a monumental undertaking for years,” according to Tinch. With customers fragmented across multiple systems, figuring out who could vote required extensive manual work. A single platform resolved this issue almost instantly.

NineStar Connect found that new employees adopted the unified iVUE Connect platform easily; they didn’t have to unlearn old processes, and the integrated system was intuitive to use. Long-term employees had a harder time with the change, but, over time, became comfortable with the solution and discovered capabilities they didn’t have before. Tinch described that moment when someone realizes “Oh, we can do that now!” as “oxygen” for the NineStar Connect team: a motivational force that reinforced the value of integration.





## Improving CX with integrated systems

Operational efficiencies are immediate internal returns of system integration, while customer experience improvements offer long-term value. Efficiency and CX are interconnected: as internal operations streamline, customer-facing experiences improve proportionally:

1. **Holistic views for better service.** When team members can't see comprehensive customer information, they can't serve customers fully. Putting customers on hold or promising to call them back results from an inability to access complete information, leading to frustrated customers. But with a single point of information, staff can see every interaction a customer has had with any business unit and serve them accordingly.
2. **Service recommendations.** Unified visibility enables proactive service. Representatives can see if electric service members don't have broadband service—and vice versa—and can offer helpful service recommendations. The customer isn't approached by two divisions independently; they experience one company offering complementary services.







## Improving CX with integrated systems

3. **Workflow automation.** With NISC's SmartHub Order Management in place as part of their unified system, NineStar Connect's customers can manage their services—electric and broadband—through a single mobile application. This is the type of convenience modern connected customers expect.
4. **Reducing churn.** When customers subscribe to multiple services with the same provider, those customers become stickier, generate more revenue per user, and require less marketing expense. The investment in integrating systems repays itself through lifetime customer value.

Tinch says that these improvements are just the start for NineStar Connect. The company anticipates additional customer-facing enhancements on their unified platform. Customers will manage speed upgrades, pay bills, receive multichannel support, make service requests, and get outage information through a single interface.



## IV

### Things to consider before you switch

For service providers operating in multiple systems, unification offers compelling benefits. NineStar Connect's experience shows that success requires attention to several factors:

- Leadership must understand that system integration represents organization-wide transformation, not merely software updates.
- Cleaning up your data is a time investment that pays off, since data-quality issues can slow down the integration process.
- Identify subject matter experts for each area of your business, so team members understand their decision-making responsibilities.
- Some concepts require repeated explanations before they land with staff. Be prepared for redundant training and ongoing learning.
- Expect a longer adoption timeline for tenured staff, who face steeper learning curves and often come with doubts about new systems.







Companies like NineStar Connect have improved their efficiency and improved their CX by partnering with NISC and unifying disparate systems with our fully-integrated iVUE Connect enterprise solution.

Would your company benefit from integrated systems that optimize your efficiency and improve your customer experience? NISC would love to talk with you. Call us at 866.999.6472 or visit [nisc.coop](http://nisc.coop).



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