



# Network Solutions, Inc.

## Success is All in the (Company) Family

By Tom Schuman

**T**alk to any number of businesses – in Indiana or around the country – and more than a few will describe their family atmosphere. Granger-based Network Solutions, Inc. (NSI) has plenty of evidence to support its claim.

- Larry and Sandy Tadevich started the company (a provider of a wide variety of business technology solutions) with their oldest son in 1989. Today, all five of their children are involved in the growing organization.
- Business was executed out of the Tadevich family home for the first seven years, with as many as eight employees. Today's 50 company employees include 35 (most live within a short driving distance) working out of a Granger house that was rezoned and remodeled. There is also a sales and engineering operation in Indianapolis and a sales office in Chicago.
- Many of the talented engineers and technicians who come to work at NSI (some returning to the South Bend area from as far away as Virginia, Texas and California) are escaping life on the go with other companies. "We're not going to have them on the road four or five days a week," notes NSI Vice President Chris Gardner. "I don't see us becoming a large national or multinational company. There's plenty of business in southwest Michigan, Indiana and Chicago."

Larry Tadevich, company president, says he was fortunate to enjoy flexibility, including the ability to take his children on some of his road trips and attending their sporting events, during his corporate career. "We've really tried to structure the company along those lines," he states. "If your kids have got something at school, go. There will be another project where you work late to balance it out."

Ethical principles also come into play. Tadevich explains that the dove on the business card as part of the company logo reflects the fact that "I'd much rather treat people fairly and honestly than

make an extra dollar. That's appreciated by the people who work here."

In the early years, NSI sold a large mix of system-related products. The move to become a CISCO partner allowed the company to focus in greater depth on fewer technologies. As CISCO has grown and the industry has evolved, NSI has kept pace. Complexity, however, is present as communication networks assume an even more critical role within companies.

"It was a much simpler sales cycle back then," recalls Gardner, who joined NSI in 1999. "What used to be a 30-day sales cycle is now three or four months, or even one or two years."

That has also led to other changes. Tadevich adds, "As a company, we've always been very technically strong. The soft skills, communicating well, have become very important in our hiring process. There is a delicate balance to know the work technically and also have the skills to be in front of the customer."

Strong training programs, a bonus plan that rewards team successes and new business that comes almost exclusively on referrals from happy customers all add to the family environment. "When you do a good install and you get that 'you guys were great to work with,' that's the fun part," Tadevich concludes.



**Steve Tadevich (left) and Chris Gardner point out some of the equipment that allows NSI to duplicate customers' network environments.**



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### You Should Know

An on-site lab (in the basement of the renovated house that serves as company headquarters) allows for the installation of new technologies for customers in addition to extensive internal training. **Company summary on Page 48**

A "Summer in February" event encouraged employees to be creative in decorating their work spaces.

