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Viya CEO Denies Business Closure, Outlines Restructuring Efforts and Service Improvements

Viya CEO Geraldine Pitt told the PSC that the company's restructuring phase is nearly over, with plans to invest in infrastructure and better communication. Despite concerns over job losses, departing employees receive transition packages and support.

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Janeke Simon **March 12, 2025**

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A Viya Kiosk at The Market, St. Croix in January 2022. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Is VIYA going out of business? "Absolutely not," said CEO Geraldine Pitt, when she appeared before members of the Public Services Commission on Tuesday.

However, according to Ms. Pitt, “we have had to restructure to remain relevant...to grow the business in the future, to catch up with technology.”

“We are really behind the 8-ball as a business,” Viya's CEO told commissioners, explaining some of the major changes the company has gone through recently as part of a restructuring and reorganization plan.

One of those changes has been the establishment of a customer service call center in Guyana. “The decision to do that was really based on how do we leverage technology...as a wider regional team, to be able to invest in technology needs, be able to get customers’ issues resolved quickly,” Ms. Pitt noted, acknowledging that the new call center agents would need time to get up to speed. “There's always going to be a learning curve,” she noted.

However, things are improving. Customer satisfaction with the new representatives has moved from 73% in October to 84% currently. The abandonment rate for customer service calls has fallen from 8, 9, and 10 percent in November, October and December respectively to 1 percent in January and February, Ms. Pitts said. While service levels were admittedly below PSC standards in the last quarter of 2024, the outgoing Viya CEO said that performance in the new year has been “way above the expectations.”

These positive trends are likely to continue, Ms. Pitt assured. “There is no reason to think that's an anomaly in any way,” she said. Instead, it is “a reflection of the direction that the business is going in and the changes that we've made to accommodate...our customers.”

Viya will continue to reshape itself to meet the needs of a changing world, Ms. Pitt said. “We need to free up capital, to invest in people, to invest in infrastructure...the changes happen very quickly,” she noted. “A big part of what we're going to be doing it's a lot of correct communication to customers in terms of outages,” Ms. Pitt said. The comms overhaul will occur internally as well, in order to ensure that on-site fixes and repairs can comprehensively address customer issues in one visit. The length of time a customer may have to wait at home for a technician to arrive is also set to decrease, Ms. Pitt said, as more efficiencies are realized in the scheduling and dispatching arena.

“We are in a transition phase,” Ms. Pitt told commissioners. “That transition itself, I would say it's almost over,” she remarked, promising a more comprehensive update to the PSC once Viya officials were able to disclose more details.

Responding to a question about competition from satellite providers, Ms. Pitt said that Viya was closely monitoring the industry, but at this time had no plans to wade in. The future “is hardly based on just fixed technology,” Ms. Pitt said, “but it is still the best method of carrying internet and getting speed to your house.” The low cost of installation of more conventional internet service is also a plus for Viya customers, she said. However, “we always are going to be open to options that gives us the best communication technology for our customers.”

For the company, satellite internet has been used in other markets that they serve, “where there's no fiber in the ground.” However, in the territory, “we have a fairly good distribution of fiber and we still believe it's the best technology to provide service to,” Ms. Pitts concluded.

Complaints about intelligibility of some of the accents of some of the representatives were downplayed by Ms. Pitt. “It's about patience, it's about declaring, and how they respond to your declaration of the fact that you can't understand them,” she said, noting that Viya would swiftly step in if a rep became impatient or responded inappropriately.

Senator Carla Joseph, an ex-officio member of the PSC, was more concerned about the economic and human impact of Viya's restructuring. She asked for the total number of people who had been separated from the company as a result of the shift in strategy. "I'm looking at it as a legislator," Senator Joseph explained, noting that the territory may have lost income tax revenue and other revenue if the displaced individuals no longer reside in the territory.

Ms. Pitt noted that persons leaving the company are provided with a package that ensures they are not merely set adrift. "They will have three to six months' income...maybe more...to transition them into the next phase," she noted, as well as counseling if they chose, and other benefits including healthcare. "We've had excellent workers," Ms. Pitts stated, assuring that they would be taken care of as Viya's reorganization continues.

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