

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Innovative And Choice Now One Under New Name: Viya

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ST. CROIX -- As DeeJay Swaine, a well known St. Croix disc jockey served up the music from old to new school, former Innovative and Choice employees responded by moving their bodies rhythmically during a gathering in an Estate Diamond Ruby building once owned by then-Innovative, [which was sold to Warren Mosler](#).

The employees, no longer belonging to two companies, spoke enthusiastically about the merger under one name that had been teased for months: Viya.

Yes, Viya, which company officials called vibrant, filled with life and, they say, sounds similar to "barn ya", a popular phrase among Virgin Islanders, oftentimes used to express

their pride for the islands.

"We tested different names, and we thought that the refreshing one, the young one, the energy one was Viya," said company CEO Alvaro Pilar, who enters the role with 20 years of experience in the telecommunications and cable industries, including leadership experience in sales, distribution and customer service.

The merger, long in the making, came to fruition following [the sale of Innovative to ATN International, Inc.](#), which owns Choice Communications. That sale was predicated by a protracted court battle that saw Jeffery Prosser, the former owner of then-Innovative Communications Corporation, [losing the company in bankruptcy](#) to Rural Telephone



Viya Jeep

But with the past squarely behind them, employees and company officials alike looked to the future, which they enthusiastically proclaimed as filled with great potentially, and soon-to-come announcements that will benefit Virgin Islanders.

"We are able to take the best of each one; Choice had a really good customer experience, but they were limited in the amount of network that they could have because it was a smaller frequency. Then we go to Innovative, which has been the provider for many years in the islands, and we get the opportunity to get this customer experience and knowledge," Mr. Pilar said. He spoke of the then-Innovative's improved infrastructure and network, and of Viya employees' delight to be representing a company with a reliable service.

The company employs roughly 400 people territory-wide, and is one of the largest employers in the Virgin Islands. Vice President of Public Relations, Jennifer Matarangas-King, said Viya sees itself as an enabler for development in the territory. "Because if people know, 'Oh, I can move here and these are the things I can expect.' That's how people make decisions, so we see ourselves as not just providing services, but we also know we are a big part of the equation in terms of attracting new businesses."

Former Choice employees spoke with The Consortium during the company gathering, relaying a sense of pride in the new firm. "I'm excited, I'm optimistic. It's greater, better and bigger things coming to the Virgin Islands, and we need that," said one of the former Choice employees. Another, Holden John-Rose, said the "better together" hashtag that the companies were circulating, helped galvanize all minds under one umbrella.

Janie Encarnacion, a longtime Innovative employee, said her excitement was for the customers, who she believes will benefit the most from Viya.

Yet, while most people have only seen the final product, Mrs. Matarangas-King spoke of the months of intense training that preceded the merger -- including customer care, sales and technical training.

"This wasn't just oh, we have a new store, and everything behind the scenes is the same -- it's not, it's really not," she said.

Tuesday's event was only for employees; the company will unveil in earnest the new name with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 9:00 a.m. in St. Thomas today, while the St. Croix branch will keep the festive mood alive in tandem.

Viya offers phone (landline), cable, mobile phone and internet services to the U.S. Virgin Islands. The company says it will soon be offering a standalone mobile internet service.