

Resort and Casino Takes its Gaming Floor to the Next Level

Pechanga Resort and Casino teams with Cisco and Bally Technologies to create a dynamic networked gaming floor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>PECHANGA RESORT AND CASINO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temecula, California, United States
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify management and content updating for up to 3400 slot machines • Improve marketing flexibility and the customer experience • Increase revenue
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco IP network teamed with Bally Technologies' networked floor and Business Intelligence Solutions to simplify slot management and provide business analytics for improving customer service
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortened content refresh process from one week to eight minutes • Increased revenue using dynamic game configuration • Improved advertising and promotional flexibility

Challenge

The Pechanga Resort and Casino opened in June 2002 and is now the largest casino in the western United States. Located in Temecula, California, the resort is less than 90 miles from San Diego, Los Angeles, and Palm Springs, making the resort highly convenient for visitors to enjoy world-class gaming, golf, dining, spa facilities, and entertainment.

The casino originally opened with approximately 1300 Class II slot machines, which operate on a bingo-based mechanism, and more than 2000 Class III slot machines, which use a random number generator mechanism to determine results. Class III games are the most common and popular games. In 2008, Pechanga began an overhaul of its gaming floor to improve its marketing, promotion, and management capabilities while delivering a superior player experience and increasing its Class III machine population.

Slot machines send accounting and player data to back-end systems for slot accounting, regulatory reporting, and monitoring, traditionally

over a serial network. However, slow serial connections do not support rich media or allow the casino to push personalized content to specific machines.

Many slot machines have multiple displays, offering two or three screens for displaying games and messages to players. To keep the gaming experience fresh for customers, game content is updated frequently with new videos, images, sound, or math models. Because slow serial connections did not allow content to be published over the network, Pechanga technicians had to visit each machine and load content manually. The more machines that are installed, the longer it takes to update all of the games on the floor.

With several thousand slot machines on the floor, it could take up to a week to update all of the machines, limiting the casino's marketing flexibility. For example, if on Wednesday, the casino had an opportunity to book a weekend boxing match, it was impossible to update all of the machine displays in time to advertise the match to casino players before the event occurred.

The Pechanga IT team's goal was to implement a next-generation Ethernet network for its gaming floor. In addition to delivering updated content to thousands of slot machines, retrieving accounting and regulatory information from those machines and supporting the slot back-end information system, the network had to deliver digital signage information throughout the casino and accommodate future floor-facing applications. Deploying a new Ethernet network would have been relatively easy in a brand-new facility, but Pechanga was already fully operational. Transitioning from the existing environment to a new one, without disruption, was going to be extremely challenging.

Solution

Based on the Pechanga IT department's familiarity with Cisco enterprise network solutions, the IT team designed the new gaming floor network using Cisco solutions to help ensure scalability and reliability.

"We chose Cisco again for several reasons," says Gilbert Mendoza, executive vice president and chief information security officer for the Pechanga Technology Solutions Group. "First, we already knew and trusted Cisco for our enterprise delivery platform. Second, Cisco offers the technical expertise of the industry behind it. We want to be able to use all of that technology to support thousands of machines communicating on the network today and to help us scale for future applications. Finally, Cisco has an established reputation as a company that understands secure and trusted networks. This improves regulators' confidence in our ability to securely create and manage innovative gaming experiences."

With a network design in hand, Pechanga quickly identified Bally Technologies as an ideal fit for helping to implement its slot machine system vision. Bally proposed its Networked Floor capability with Casino Management, Slot Management, Download Configuration Manager, Bonusing, and Business Intelligence Solutions. The Networked Floor is based on Cisco switching solutions enabling dynamic bidirectional polling, game configuration, and data and content transport to and from digital gaming devices. The Bally Business Intelligence Casino Management and Slot Management systems help Pechanga use the data generated by each machine to improve gaming floor performance, understand player and game interaction, and drive its marketing, loyalty, and promotional strategies.

"We now are able to think about customizing marketing and reinvestment programs. Using our extensive database of customer information, we can begin to tailor promotions, rewards, and loyalty programs in real time, at the point of play. That is very exciting and holds great promise."

— Gilbert Mendoza, EVP/CISO at Pechanga Technology Solutions Group

Teams from Pechanga, Cisco, and Bally conducted extensive planning in preparation for the new network implementation and executed the plan overnight, while the casino remained fully operational. The new gaming floor is fully Ethernet, based on Cisco Catalyst® 6500 Series and 3750 Series switches. There are up to 3400 Class III slot machines with two ports each, with over 8000 IP addresses on the gaming floor alone.

"The Pechanga team is unique in its clarity of vision and execution commitment," says Bruce Rowe, senior vice president of strategy and business development for Bally Technologies, Inc. "The quality of the IT talent at the property and their knowledge of networking is absolutely world-class."

Results

With teams from Pechanga, Cisco, and Bally Technologies working together, Pechanga implemented the new gaming floor with zero downtime. The new Cisco network and Bally technology deliver high-speed, bidirectional communication with slot machines, employees, and players. Today, a technician can download new content to more than 3400 slot machines in approximately eight minutes, instead of a week. Efficient polling tells staff which games are resident on each machine, which peripherals are installed, the current software version installed on each machine, and other operational information, while providing alerts when a machine needs immediate attention, such as an emergency cash drop or if the bill acceptor cannot take money.

While Pechanga has significantly reduced the amount of labor required to update machines, it has also improved revenue generation. The Bally Business Intelligence system capabilities have enabled Pechanga to begin using dynamic game configuration to accommodate different styles of play and tailor games and denominations to specific types of players to optimize player experience.

"We now are able to think about customizing marketing and reinvestment programs, says Mendoza. "Using our extensive database of customer information, we can begin to tailor promotions, rewards, and loyalty programs in real time, at the point of play. That is very exciting and holds great promise."

Pechanga will be able to improve its advertising flexibility as well. Using Bally's iVIEW SmartScreen, an LCD screen above the main game display, and Bally's Download and Configuration Manager, the team can quickly download advertising or promotions to each machine and capitalize on event opportunities. Bally iVIEW can also download credits to a player at any machine, and then upload unused credits back to the system, eliminating the need for players to carry cash.

A significant benefit to Pechanga IT is the ability for Bally's solutions to work on slot machines from any manufacturer. Bally's iVIEW Display Manager supports advanced digital display, allowing Pechanga to push the same content to any manufacturer's machine, digital sign, or kiosk. This allows Pechanga to increase the return on its existing investments by eliminating the cost that would otherwise be associated with having to modify game systems or computers for all of the different devices. In addition to delivering cost savings, it also enables Pechanga to help ensure consistent branding throughout the property.

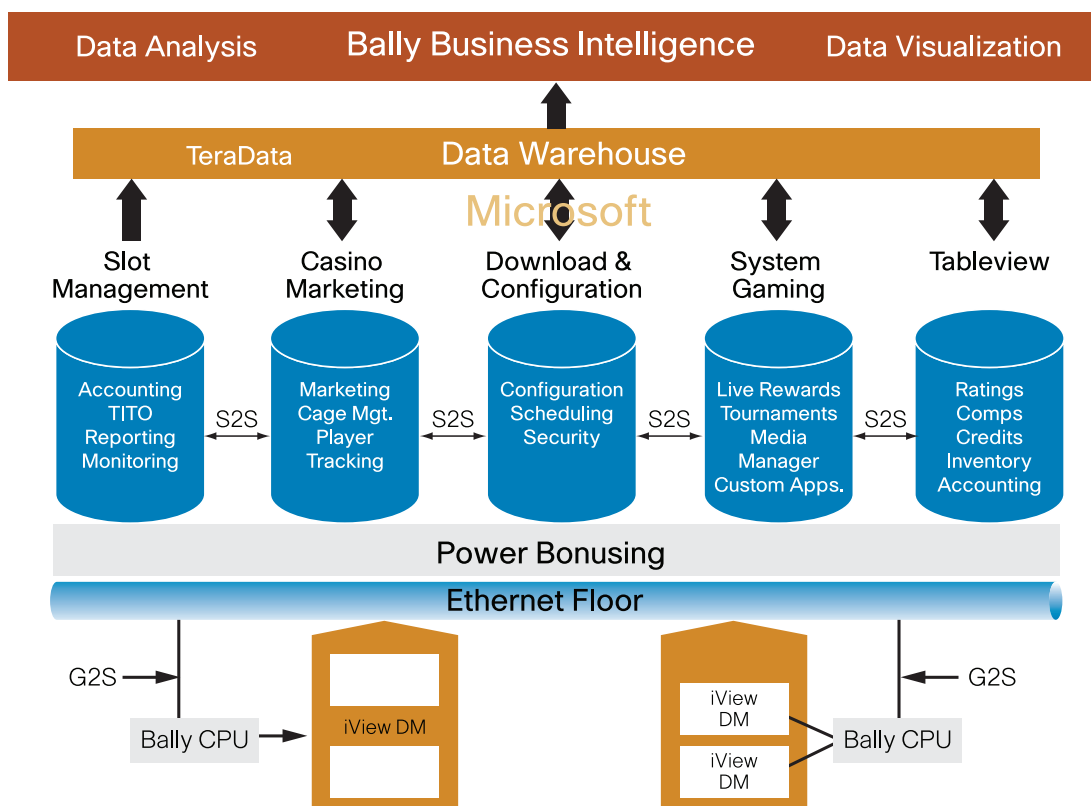
Next Steps

With advanced marketing capabilities, Pechanga plans to use variable data publishing, customizing information delivered to signs or slot machines based on day, time, or the actual individual person using the machine. With this capability, the Pechanga marketing team can measure where messages go and how often they appear, and tie them back to the customers who viewed them. And with at least 5000 addressable screens on the gaming floor alone, exposure opportunities increase almost exponentially. Using the same capability, the casino hopes to dynamically manage revenue, adjusting game products by type, price, floor location, time of day, day of the week, and peak gaming periods.

"From the first project meeting, we knew that we had a winning team here," says Mendoza. "The leadership from Cisco and Bally was impeccable. The results we are beginning to achieve are exciting, and we have high expectations for being able to share our successes with other gaming operators."

Technical Implementation

Figure 1. The Networked Floor



Each slot machine connects to the network with a Game Monitoring Unit, which delivers data to the slot accounting and provisioning systems. Back-end systems use the data to track game play and identify players by their player cards, enabling Pechanga to tailor loyalty and reward programs. A second port connects using Bally's iVIEW SmartScreen or iVIEW Display Manager, which allows the casino to reach out to players on any gaming machine. The casino can push out new content to each machine and also enable players to track their player points, download credits, and take advantage of promotional opportunities.

PRODUCT LIST

Switching

- Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series
- Cisco Catalyst 3750 Series

Unlike previous network implementations, the gaming floor includes Cisco switches that are located where employees have access to them. The Pechanga IT team implemented the 802.1X Layer2 protocol to secure access to the gaming floor network platforms. Using 802.1X security, the IT team can control which devices communicate on the gaming floor network, access to each systems, and network topology. The team knows immediately if someone tries to install a laptop or some other access device. They also use the protocol for dynamic VLAN assignment. Based on each device profile, the network automatically provisions the port with the proper permissions, freeing the IT team for other tasks.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco solutions and services, visit: <http://www.cisco.com>.

To learn more about Pechanga, visit <http://www.pechanga.com>.

To learn more about Bally Technologies, visit <http://www.ballytech.com>.

This customer story is based on information provided by Pechanga Resort and Casino, and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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