

Wildhorse Resort and Casino Takes a Leap into the Future

Implementing Cisco Networking Technology to Improve Customer Experience

Tucked away in north central Oregon, Wildhorse Resort and Casino harnesses world-class Cisco networking technologies to set new standards of excellence in the hospitality, gaming, and entertainment industry.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>Customer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildhorse Resort and Casino <p>Industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospitality, Gaming, and Entertainment <p>Location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pendleton, Oregon
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting/retaining talented technical people for rural location Dealing with aging network that made it difficult to add improved guest services Meeting deadline for significant expansion to property
<p>SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cisco Catalyst and Cisco Nexus Switches and Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS) Cisco Unified Communications, VoIP, digital signage, IPTV, and paging Cisco security solutions
<p>RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saving money and increasing productivity Utilizing every new capability to the fullest Improving guest experiences across the board

Challenge

Wildhorse Resort and Casino is a premier resort and gaming destination in Pendleton, Oregon. Owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the property comprises a casino with more than 1000 slots, a new 202-room hotel with 32 suites, multiple restaurants, a five-screen Cineplex, night club, convention space, golf course, and RV park.

From any perspective, Wildhorse is a spectacular property. Still, in 2007, management laid out a 10-year master plan for expansion that would make it a truly first-class destination, one providing unsurpassed guest experiences, state-of-the-art gaming opportunities, and compelling reasons for patrons to make their way to this rural area of the Pacific Northwest. This ambitious goal presented three main challenges.

First, the resort needed talented technical people. “We are in the wheat fields of Oregon, an hour’s drive from any large metropolitan area, where few people are quick to relocate. This means we have to grow our own, train people with an aptitude and attitude for the hard work it takes to keep a world-class property running,” says Melodie Lente, director of information systems at Wildhorse.

Second, Wildhorse was working with an aging network that had grown organically, without much of a plan, which made it difficult to add or upgrade services.

And finally, because its network and small IT staff was not ready for all that Wildhorse wanted to achieve, the resort needed help in meeting its objective for a significant expansion planned for the fall of 2011.

Solutions

With the expansion as top priority, Wildhorse brought in INX, a strategic partner of Cisco. Selected for its proven expertise and reputation for being more than a reseller, INX would come with a consultative approach, upfront planning that would focus on business uses, and a managed services capability that would help ensure successful deployment and enable Wildhorse to operate with a smaller team.

Once onboard, the INX group, led by account manager Ethan Barrow, familiarized themselves with the Wildhorse vision and interviewed 19 different lines of business on the property. The next step was to partner with the Cisco Territory Manager, Chuck Watkins, and Wildhorse's Lente to formulate a plan and a process for the complex project, what INX calls its Strategic Delivery Framework. With the roadmap complete, the team was ready to bring about the transformation:

- **Designed a Cisco® Unified Communications platform**, voice over IP, digital signage and IP television, paging system, and Wi-Fi.
- **Implemented a virtualized active/active data center environment** with highly available NetApp storage area networks (6210 SANs), Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)™ for the resort's casino management software, and VMware vMotion technology for virtualization and to support high availability.
- **Moved to Ethernet gaming floor**, enabling IP slot machines and the capability to deliver marketing content to the gaming user.
- **Deployed physical security** to provide visibility and access control at the network layer.
- **Utilized INX Managed Services** to monitor the Cisco Unified Communications system, the network infrastructure, and overall performance so that Wildhorse can augment staff at a fraction of the cost.

Wildhorse brought on just what it needed, at just the right time, to meet key objectives of its 10-year growth plan.

"It's really an integrated piece with the right technology and the right people. Our close partnership with INX and Cisco and all they bring is rare in this business. You couldn't have better partners."

— Melodie Lente, Director of Information Systems, Wildhorse

Results

Within just weeks of implementation, the solutions had already begun to reduce costs, improve operations, and help ensure effectiveness in a disaster recovery scenario.

Saving Money, Increasing Productivity and Safety

The upgraded voice over IP system has reduced telephone communication costs dramatically.

"We've cut about 50 percent with Cisco Unified Communications, saving on long distance and consolidating lines, monitoring phones, and tracking telephone usage, and now our people are more productive throughout the property," says Lente.

With the new unified paging system, Wildhorse is also improving safety throughout the property. Patrons and employees are better protected, and the security team always knows who is coming and going.

Utilizing Every New Capability to the Fullest

The Wildhorse data center is now nearly 90 percent virtualized. And at the same time that databases have grown substantially, operating costs have been reduced and performance increased.

PRODUCT LIST

Routing and Switching

- Cisco UCS 5108s with 6120 Switch Fabric Modules
- Cisco Nexus 7010s
- Cisco Nexus 2248s (with 10G)
- Cisco Catalyst 3560s
- Cisco Catalyst 3750s
- Cisco 2911 Routers
- FlexPod Certified Solution

Communication

- Cisco Unified 7945G IP Phones
- Cisco Unified 7965G IP Phones
- Cisco Unified 6901 IP Phones
- Cisco 7925G Wireless IP Phones (Voice Over WLAN)
- Cisco Communications Manager
- Cisco Emergency Responder
- Cisco Digital Media Manager
- Cisco 4400 Digital Media Players and Software
- Cisco 40- and 60-inch LCD Displays

Wireless

- Cisco 5508 Wireless LAN Controllers with CleanAir Technologies
- Cisco 3500 Access Points (802.11n)

Security

- Cisco ASA 5510 with IPS
- Cisco IronPort C150 Web and Email Servers

Physical Security

- Cisco CPAM Physical Access Manager Appliance

Now that Wildhorse has moved to an Ethernet gaming floor, slot machines can be changed more quickly and efficiently. The casino can more readily satisfy specific player preferences, and the overall guest experience is better than ever.

The entire property is integrated, so that from all the points of sale, every venue from the hotel to casino to golf course, management collects valuable information about guests. This not only streamlines the Wildhorse marketing approach, but improves communications and safety readiness. “The list goes on and on,” says Lente. “So many things that we could not do before.”

Improving Guest Experiences Across the Board

With greatly enhanced communications, Wildhorse no longer takes a “shotgun” approach to marketing, and now customizes messages to each individual or groups with similar needs. “Having game-specific promotions makes our patrons feel special. Now we can quickly identify VIPs and cater to them with unique packages for golf, dining, gaming, and the hotel,” says Lente.

Wildhorse can even download playable credits to guest cards that are played in lieu of cash at the slot machine, “Players love having playable credits at the slot machines and using their points at all the venues,” she says.

Results are visible at every turn. Static posters are down and new digital signage is up, which is making an impact throughout the property. According to Lente, their guests appreciate the televisions on the casino floor, and also the dynamic signs that keep them informed of new games and special promotions.

She speaks with pride about the new paging system, which makes it easy to clearly communicate with their players, especially during safety situations.

Ensuring Success, Preparing for the Unexpected

With the new INX Managed Services approach, Wildhorse offloads day-to-day tasks to INX, which monitors the network infrastructure, Cisco Unified Communications, and overall performance. In the process, Wildhorse is reducing costs, while freeing its small staff to focus on other responsibilities.

“I can’t say enough about the managed services,” says Lente. “Because of our location and small staff and network issues larger and more complex than ever, I don’t have resources for 24 x 7 monitoring, so being able to confidently offload all that to INX has been invaluable.”

Now Wildhorse is ready for anything. Including a flood in July 2011 that could have resulted in losses amounting to millions of dollars. But with a next-generation data center in place, and by deploying two active/active networks within just 48 hours before the flood, the INX team was able to help avert disaster. Wildhorse operations did not miss a beat.

According to Lente, it is not just the technology, but the people and the can-do attitude that make all the difference. “It’s really an integrated piece with the right technology and the right people. Our close partnership with INX and Cisco and all they bring is rare in this business. You couldn’t have better partners.”

Next Steps

Every key piece of technology necessary to help ensure success of its 10-year master plan is now in place, and Wildhorse is already proving to be a gem of the Pacific Northwest. But management is not standing pat with a casino of the future.

Today, with the network running as planned, Lente and her team have the confidence they can say “yes” to any new idea that might improve performance and enhance the overall guest experience. Wildhorse is building a five-screen Cineplex, a new concert and event center, and more towers to the hotel. Beyond that, they look ahead to virtual desktops to improve employee performance and new RFID capabilities that will drive customer experience to the next level.

“We have created an oasis in the middle of nowhere, and now we are among the frontrunners when it comes to technology and people,” says Lente.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Connected Gaming Solutions, go to: <http://www.cisco.com/go/gaming>

To find out more about Cisco Routing and Switching, go to:
http://www.cisco.com/web/HK/solutions/network_index.html

To find out more about Cisco Unified Communications, go to:
http://www.cisco.com/web/HK/solutions/unified_index.html

To find out more about Cisco Wireless Solutions, go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/web/HK/products/wireless.html#~solutions>

To find out more about Cisco Security Solutions, go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/hw/vpndevc/index.html>

To find out more about Cisco Unified Computing System, go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps10265/index.html>

To find out more about Cisco Digital Media Suite, go to:
http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/ps9339/Products_Sub_Category_Home.html



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Printed in USA

C36-685362-00 09/11