

Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objective

- Upgrade the casino's network infrastructure to include more powerful switches, the ability to configure virtual LANs (VLANs), and improved security
- Increase bandwidth in the network core and backbone to 10 Gigabit fiber and Gigabit Ethernet to all desktops

Solution

- FastIron SuperX Series switch delivers
- 10-Gigabit Ethernet in the network core
- FastIron GS Series switches support Gigabit Ethernet to the desktops
- IronView Network Manager helps the IT team monitor the network

Results

- Brocade infrastructure improved network bandwidth from 100 Mbps to 10-Gigabit fiber in the core and backbone and Gigabit Ethernet to each desktop
- Casino has achieved network reliability and 99.999% uptime
- IronView Network Manager delivers campus-wide view of network activity

Iowa Casino and Hotel Ups the Network Ante with Brocade

The Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel in Tama, Iowa, is the largest full-service casino in the Midwest. It boasts more than 400 hotel rooms and offers a variety of gaming options such as slots, poker, craps, roulette, keno, a racebook and bingo. Located in the heart of Iowa, the Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel is within driving distance of a number of major cities, including St. Louis, Kansas City, and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Summary

With 1,200 employees, Internet access to more than 400 hotel rooms, and wireless connectivity throughout the casino property, Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel needed a robust network to handle a variety of traffic and to give the casino the flexibility to grow and add new technologies in the future.

Objective

The aging Meskwaki network was in sore need of an upgrade. For the last 10 years, the casino had been adding networking infrastructure arbitrarily whenever a bottleneck appeared in the network. The resulting LAN was a mish-mash of products from multiple vendors that consistently experienced performance issues—and kept the 10-person IT team constantly busy.

Simple jobs, such as running network usage reports, would take 30 or 45 minutes to complete, and the toll on the network was huge. "Files would freeze

when users tried to save them," says Doug Kranig, MIS Director. "Email was painfully slow, and downloading drivers and patches was time-consuming."

The hotel's network was also vulnerable to spam, and there was even one incident of someone spoofing its IP address.

Meskwaki needed a complete network overhaul, and Kranig chose Brocade® to introduce advanced networking technology throughout the casino property. Kranig and his team wanted to beef up security, address traffic bottlenecks and performance issues, and streamline their switches.

Solution

Meskwaki selected Brocade based on the equipment's rich feature set. Kranig was impressed with the switches' Power over Ethernet, availability, scalability, and advanced virtual LANs (VLANs) features. Price point and the company's excellent service and support also weighed heavily in the decision-making process.

Meskwaki deployed a Brocade FastIron® SuperX switch in the core, 24 FastIron GS Series switches at the network edge, and IronView® Network Manager (INM). Meskwaki Casino is using INM to monitor network usage and to look at traps to make sure viruses and other malware cannot infiltrate the network.

For the first time, the casino has wiring closets, fiber, network monitoring tools, and more—all provided through the Brocade-based network. The casino network handles traffic loads from numerous applications, such as office productivity software like email, human resources, and financial software to specialized gaming and casino management applications, which absolutely have to be running 24/7, 365 days a year.

“Our gaming applications must store lots of transactions, so they can never be down. Brocade gives us the network uptime and reliability we require,” Kranig says.

Results

Meskwaki Casino has greatly improved its network performance by moving from 10/100 Mbps to multi-gigabit speeds. “Our maximum bandwidth was 100 Mbps,” Kranig says. “Now we have 10-Gigabit fiber backbones and Gigabit Ethernet out to every desktop.”

Previously, the casino had only four wiring closets; now it has 12. “We are able to give the user community considerably more bandwidth by breaking up the traffic and assigning fewer users to each fiber strand,” Kranig says.

The performance issues have disappeared. Standard business applications—creating reports, sending email, and saving files that had been giving users fits—are now functioning as expected. “We hear lots of favorable comments from the user community, especially from those people creating reports,” says Kranig.

Since installing the Brocade switches, Meskwaki Casino has improved its security by adding VLANs. “We have Internet access and wireless in public areas. The VLANs bring the connection back to our firewalls and split the public network from the private one,” he says.

INM also helps protect the network from rogue users or devices. “We monitor the network for unauthorized devices,” explains Kranig. “We don’t want someone to park a laptop in their room and start spamming. Now we have the tools to shut down that kind of abuse completely. We can catch attacks before they are a problem.”

With Brocade in the network, the IT team has greatly reduced the time it spent troubleshooting network problems.

“Port-related issues to the network are almost nonexistent,” says Kranig. “We went from three or four calls a week about infrastructure problems to one a month. That means we are saving three or four hours per week. We’re having a lot more productivity on the support side and user side.”

Now that the IT team spends fewer hours troubleshooting the network, they can concentrate on deploying new applications, such as Voice over IP and a wireless LAN for employees. The FastIron GS Series switches include Power over Ethernet (PoE), so Meskwaki can easily deploy these powerful applications in the future.

As Meskwaki Casino expands its high-performance network, Brocade will continue to be a trusted partner. Brocade has played an integral role in bringing advanced networking technology to the casino, and Kranig credits Brocade’s support and technical assistance.

“We received everything—training, installation, and configuration information—well in advance of our deadlines,” he says. “We saved at least two weeks’ worth of time deploying the new network because Brocade was with us on-site. We didn’t have to read manuals or guess; they were here to answer questions. Their support has been fantastic, and we expect to work closely with them for many years to come.”

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