



## ▶ Jackpot!

*Emtec network project pays off for casino group.*

Consolidation has been the name of the game in the casino industry over the past several years, with numerous gaming companies choosing to expand through the acquisition of other hotel and casino properties. Such deals invariably up the ante for the acquiring group's IT department.

As with any type of business expansion, mergers and acquisitions within the casino industry intensify the challenges of managing an increasingly dispersed IT infrastructure. That was the situation facing one gaming company recently after it struck a deal to acquire four casinos.

From a networking standpoint, the IT department was dealt a decidedly mixed hand. The company now had multiple properties in four states. There were four separate networks comprising two different e-mail platforms and hundreds of domains, along with multiple servers providing authentication, file, print, Web, and application services to thousands of clients using desktops and laptops running a variety of different operating systems.

The company quickly recognized it needed to create a standardized environment in order to unify business efforts, improve collaboration and drive down support costs. A project of such magnitude would obviously put a strain on internal IT staff, so the company sought help from an outside source. They drew an ace with Emtec, Inc.

### Raising the Stakes:

What began as a simple consulting engagement rapidly escalated into a major network design and implementation project. Over the span of just a few weeks, Emtec was able to implement a Windows Server 2003 network coupled with Active Directory and an Exchange 2003 e-mail platform.

*"An important aspect of the project was the need for flexibility,"* said Cecelia Lupton, Emtec Account Manager. *"There was a very specific cutoff date that had to be met,*

*and most of the work had to begin at midnight and be completed before the following workday so we didn't interrupt their normal business processes. We had to have multiple people at multiple sites to coordinate all of this."*

In addition, Emtec had to upgrade all of the gaming organization's Microsoft software and update the licensing. Emtec also built, installed and configured several servers for all domains and re-imaged thousands of desktops to standardize on the Windows 2000 operating system.

*"It went from the server down to the desktop,"* said Lupton. *"Several desktops and servers were wiped out and rebuilt from scratch. It was a valiant effort by our deployment team."*

### Wild Card:

The Active Directory implementation was perhaps the central piece of the entire project. Active Directory stores information about users and resources, and allows that information to be accessed and manipulated. By melding several services and tools that previously functioned separately, it allows centralize management of all elements of a network — including computers, groups, users, domains and any type of user-defined objects.

Active Directory also serves as the center of network management and security. Where directories were once merely lists of e-mail addresses and user preferences, they now contain passwords, code keys, and other user information that is tied into almost every network application. As services are added to the network,

including public key infrastructure (PKI) authentication services, firewall security and virtual private network (VPN) access, the need for control and management of network objects makes Active Directory more important than ever.

In addition to helping users find and use network resources across the enterprise and simplifying Enterprise network administration, Active Directory enables single sign-on (SSO) of users to authorized network objects — a valuable capability. As the name implies, SSO gives each employee a single user name and password to remember. Instead of logging into various network resources individually, the enduser logs into the SSO system once and gains access to all the files and applications they are authorized to use.

### A Safe Bet

More than just relief for forgetful end-users, SSO greatly enhances network security since passwords are generally the first line of defense for applications and data. Just as most burglars get in through the front door, many hackers will first try to guess a password to gain entry into the network. It doesn't take technical knowledge to access sensitive information if the password is written on a sticky note and posted to the monitor.

SSO can result in an immediate improvement in security for sensitive applications and data. With a single password to remember, end-users are more likely to choose one that's difficult to crack, and change it frequently. SSO also benefits organizations facing increasing regulatory scrutiny regarding their security practices by helping to ensure that password policies are followed.

*"Single sign-on was a key issue," said Joe Simuro, Emtec's VP for Professional Services. "Active Directory allowed us to implement a network with a singular domain as opposed to individual domains for each property. It also tied into the e-mail system, which started out as a combination of two different platforms that were merged into one."*

Emtec designed and implemented a migration of all of the company's facilities to a common e-mail platform — Microsoft Exchange — in a project that is far more complex than simply upgrading mailboxes. Not only does an Exchange migration touch every e-mail user in an organization, it also relies upon tight integration with Active Directory.

Exchange communicates with Active Directory to provide user authentication and mailbox security. E-mail addresses and mailboxes become part of the user identity stored in Active Directory. In addition, Active Directory is the vehicle for building distribution groups and contacts, and it provides the search mechanism so users can locate recipients in the address book.

### The Payoff:

Just a few months ago, employees of the casino group were burdened with a system that required them to have a variety of user names and passwords to log on to different networks. Each property had its own directory system, so information was difficult to find. Communication within and among the properties was inconvenient and sometimes impossible. Users had difficulty opening e-mail attachments, and formatting glitches sometimes made even reading e-mail difficult.

With Emtec's help, the organization hit the jackpot with an IT infrastructure that is fast, reliable, secure and easy to access and manage. The new infrastructure makes it easy for employees to share information and resources while allowing the company to streamline administration and reduce support costs.

*"Emtec won the opportunity to work on the project because of our experience, our flexibility and our knowledge," said Lupton. "There was a tremendous amount of focus, effort and talent contributed by our engineering team."*

**About Emtec:** Established in 1964, Emtec, Inc. is a systems integrator that provides IT services and products to the federal, state, local, education and commercial markets. Our market leading value-based management methods, coupled with best-in-class IT technology, consulting and development services, address a wide range of specific client needs, as well as support broader IT transformation initiatives. Emtec's service capabilities span the United States, Canada and countries around the globe.