FOXWOODS RESORT CASINO

MORE THAN JUST THE LARGEST CASINO IN THE UNITED STATES

The largest casino in the United States, the Foxwoods resort complex covers 4.7 million square feet of Connecticut real estate, comprising more than 8,000 slot machines, 460 gaming tables, more than 20 restaurants, nearly 30 retail outlets, 2,241 guest rooms and suites, 160,000 square feet of premium meeting space and two golf courses. More than 40,000 guests visit Foxwoods every day.

GAINING INSIGHT INTO WHAT PATRONS WANT

Like all casinos, Foxwoods has long been collecting data on the gaming activities of its patrons. However, the organization lacked information about patrons' non-gaming activities—hotel stays, shows, dining, leisurely pursuits—and whether or how that data correlated with the gaming.

"The way you do that is by getting data to a data warehouse and using the tools that are out there to compile and analyze that data," says Mike Kutia, Director of Hospitality Systems. "We wanted to gather data on visitor activity outside of gaming including reservations, ticketing, point of sales, etc."

The primary IT environment used by the hospitality systems division runs on an AIX UNIX platform with SAS business analytics software and a Netezza data warehouse appliance as a data warehouse solution; however, a challenge arose that threatened to prevent extension of the BI initiative beyond its initial scope.

"A lot of the other additional data sources that we planned to access going forward are in Microsoft SQL Server," explains Bonnie Laudig, Senior Database Administrator at Foxwoods. "For instance, retail sales and food and beverage—there are a bunch of them. The SAS technology provides us with connectivity with Netezza and other UNIX databases. But we lacked an ODBC driver to connect from SAS to the Windows-based data sources."

SAS-CERTIFIED, THIRD-PARTY ODBC CONNECTIVITY

The first such project involved data from the MGM Grand at Foxwoods—a mega-entertainment venue showcasing major performing talents, concerts, sporting events, and popular off-Broadway shows.

"We needed to connect to the SQL Server database underpinning the MGM Grand at Foxwoods Web site in order to create entertainment package offers to our customers," Laudig says. "So we needed to read data from that database, decide what offers to make, then write the order reference back to the database."

CHALLENGE

Improve insight into the non-gaming activities and preferences of the resort's patrons

SOLUTION

Progress® DataDirect Connect® for ODBC—for near-immediate visibility into Windows-based data stores from a UNIX-based data warehouse platform

BENEFIT

Improved understanding of how to serve the needs and desires of patrons

Because plans were to connect to Windows-based data sources for a variety of applications, seeking a third-party ODBC connectivity vendor seemed the best approach. SAS recommended Progress® DataDirect® as its preferred driver for data access.

"Additional research revealed that DataDirect has a solid reputation as a good source of connectivity software and proven technologies," Laudig recalls. "The fact that SAS had certified and worked with Progress DataDirect in the past really reduced the risk for us."

THE RESULTS: INSTANTANEOUS GO-LIVE DATE

On the strength of industry reputation and the recommendation of SAS, the Foxwoods Hospitality Systems team decided to implement Progress® DataDirect Connect® *for* ODBC for UNIX to SQL Server.

"Our go-live date was instantaneous," Laudig quips. "We were desperate to get the driver in place; as soon as it was installed and the initial configuration resolved, we were using it in actual production."

Laudig adds that the key benefit the DataDirect Connect *for* ODBC driver brings to the team is nearly immediate visibility into a wide spectrum of the resort's data sources.

"It's opened up all these other options for us," she says.

Because the wire protocol design of the Connect drivers eliminates the need to install shared libraries on the client side, deployment is a matter of configuration. And the broad support for various versions of operating systems and database platforms ensures that the connectivity will work without a hitch. Kutia reports that the team was initially concerned that conditions such as different flavors of SQL Server or different service packs on the machines would cause issues.

"It was quite a pleasant surprise to ask for a connection to a given SQL Server data source, and in a very short time I'm up and running and looking at the database," he says.

The team has been inspired enough by the performance of the projects thus far that—aside from the additional data sources Bonnie Laudig has described as planned from the beginning—they have proposed more creative extensions of SQL Server-based data warehousing and BI capabilities into areas not originally envisioned: ticketing data, for example, and detailed information on slot machine usage patterns. They look to the future confident that Progress will back their data connectivity requirements.

"As the techie who does the installs and configurations," Laudig says, "I appreciate the ability of DataDirect to provide help immediately and make it a matter of just a few days that we're up and on our way."

"With DataDirect, new options for data analysis and guest preferences are available to us"

Bonnie Laudig
Senior Database Administrator
Foxwoods Resort Casino

www.progress.com