

Case Study: Chickasaw Nation

Double-Take® Software Customer Profile

Company: Chickasaw Nation - www.chickasaw.net

Business: The Commerce Division of the Chickasaw Nation operates more than 50 businesses including: entertainment venues, hotels, radio and newspaper properties, trading posts, travel plazas, restaurants and manufacturing facilities.

Needs: Zero Downtime with Real-Time Recovery

Business

As a Fortune 1000 company with a core competency in the gaming industry, Chickasaw Nation operates as a sovereign nation within 13 counties inside the borders of Oklahoma. In August of 2005, after running their operations in an IT environment that couldn't keep up with customer demand, CIO Rob Jacks decided to embark on a strategic IT plan that could be directly tied to revenue growth for the business. As part of the overhaul, they created an entirely new IT department and built two new data centers to support the back-end of their gaming operations.

Customer Challenge

Like most industries, the casino/hospitality industry requires that IT departments maintain 24/7 reliability because on average, a large casino loses \$1M per hour in play volume when systems are down. Jacks focused on a way to create revenue in a technology-stable environment while guaranteeing an excellent experience for casino guests. The end goal was to positively impact customer service, sales and marketing – both internally and externally – through the IT department.

By creating a system that allows casinos to operate with reduced risk from a technology aspect, more emphasis could be placed on providing an unbeatable customer experience that would entice guests to spend more time on the floor, ultimately leading to greater revenue. His 3-step approach for the foundation started from the ground-up and included:

- Stabilizing the IT infrastructure
- Creating a disaster recovery solution to ensure zero data loss
- Guaranteeing casino guests are never impacted by a technology failure

Comprehensive Disaster Recovery

Jacks and Chickasaw designed their new center of operations to be fully redundant and to ensure that all critical systems in their Ada, Oklahoma facility have a primary server, as well as a secondary high availability server. Chickasaw Nation utilizes Double-Take® Software's GeoCluster to provide high availability within their Microsoft Clusters within the Ada facility and then uses Double-Take to replicate the data offsite to their disaster recovery location in Norman, Oklahoma.

Chickasaw Nation must keep their data within their sovereign realm and therefore the Nation has its own disaster recovery (DR) data center in Norman, Oklahoma. Currently, they use GeoCluster to replicate their financial systems to the DR site and Double-Take to replicate the HR/Payroll system. They test their DR plan semi-annually and have successfully tested the financial systems without a problem and zero data loss. It takes less than 5 minutes to fail from the primary cluster in Ada to the DR server in Norman. They are also able to fail back their primary cluster with zero data loss.

Zero Downtime Leads to Happy Customers

Jacks leads this initiative to create stability in the foundation of the IT infrastructure to guarantee zero downtime – which ties directly to business revenue. When choosing a high availability and disaster recovery software suite, Chickasaw would not tolerate any downtime or data loss. And these choices have paid off:

- Very recently, Chickasaw had an issue with their primary cluster database server. This cluster is made up of 2 IBM LS21 blades with 6 instances of SQL Server running. When the primary server failed, they were able to initiate a failover with little or no interruption to users. Within 10 minutes, they were completely operational on their secondary database server with 0 data loss.
- All server maintenance happens seamlessly with guests never knowing the difference. The IT staff swaps servers at their convenience with no downtime and more importantly, no lost revenue.
- servers are never taken off line to do a tape backup. Instead, tape backups are made from the high number of available servers that aren't running in production.

Additionally, the solutions from Double-Take Software have resulted in direct business revenue and have allowed the Nation to enhance the overall guest experience. One example of this is the integration of Bally Technologies, Inc.'s iView which is a secondary component on the slot machine that provides an interactive experience for each guest. Using the touch screen-enabled iView, guests can see their reward points, learn about casino promotions, order drinks, read restaurant reviews or buy show tickets. The screen can also broadcast television so guests can watch sporting events or other high demand entertainment without leaving their slot machine. This customer experience is cutting edge and is dependant on a stable IT infrastructure. Without Jacks' initiative to upgrade the Nation's technology, the casino would not have been able to adopt the iView technology.

Forward Thinking IT Allows for Solid Growth

One of the most critical results of Jacks' initiative is Chickasaw's current expansion plan. The Nation is currently developing what will be one of the largest casinos in the world. Before the Nation could begin developing this plan, they needed to ensure their IT infrastructure could support a single casino with 6000 slot machines (in addition to the Nation's current 17 other casinos with 8000 slots). Jacks' forward thinking in investment in an entirely new storage infrastructure has not only made this expansion possible, but has positively impacted the Nation's overall revenue generation. In a little more than two-and-a-half years, the organization has built a storage foundation that guarantees complete high availability, zero data loss, and which allows the IT department to participate in the Nation's overall revenue growth.

In the span of 30 months, The Commerce Division opened the largest casino in Oklahoma, added 2000 employees to their work force, and drove incremental per gaming machine dollars by 23%. Because of their stable IT foundation, the business is free to grow unencumbered by technical constraints. Their systems are scalable to the nth degree demonstrated by their continued growth.

With the opening of one of the largest casinos in the world planned for the summer of 2008, and the Chickasaws will add another 1000 employees to their organization. This business growth is accommodated with the addition of 10 IT FTE and \$500K in Hardware and Software costs. The new gaming expansion is expected to generate several million dollars in additional revenue for The Chickasaw Nation. The total IT investment over the past 30 months is running about \$30 million while the business is seeing double digit growth.

Because of the vision and leadership of The Chickasaw Nation, the IT model created has the ability to deliver solutions in a rapid and low total cost of ownership manner. This is truly an anomaly today's information technology space.

About Double-Take® Software

Headquartered in Southborough, Massachusetts, Double-Take® Software (Nasdaq: DBTK) is a leading provider of affordable software for recoverability, including continuous data replication, application availability and system state protection. Double-Take Software products and services enable customers to protect and recover business-critical data and applications such as Microsoft Exchange, SQL, and SharePoint in both physical and virtual environments. With its unparalleled partner programs, technical support, and professional services, Double-Take Software is the solution of choice for more than ten thousand customers worldwide, from SMEs to the Fortune 500. Information about Double-Take Software's products and services can be found at www.doubletake.com.

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