



TribalNet Newsletter



Volume 3, Issue 2

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Sycuan Casino- Positive PR for IT proves beneficial

Sycuan CASINO For IT leader's in the Native American industry, each day brings a new challenge and at times, a new reward. Josh Carley, MIS Director for the Sycuan Casino in El Cajon, California, has his own leadership style that encompasses the "big picture". For him, promoting his IT department to their customers is what he finds the most challenging and at the same time, the most rewarding part of his job.

"We continuously have to remember that we are in a customer-service based industry, which is not always the label that an MIS department receives," said Josh. "The challenge comes with promoting our department and upholding the image that we are a resource focused on the customer. The reward comes when you receive feedback that proves you've done it."

Josh joined the Sycuan Casino in 2001 with a diverse background in technology. In January of 2007, he was promoted to MIS Director and he immediately kicked off the New Year with a goal of reevaluating the way his department did business. "In the director role I have been less hands-on and more focused on proactive planning for the department," he said. "Our responsibility as an IT department is to help our customers do their job better. We focus on understanding our customer's needs and in turn, lay out all the options and our recommendations so that together, we can select the best process that will not only align with the strategic plan of the IT department but the tribe as a whole." The two main projects that are already underway that were approved for 2008 include (cont. on p. 2)

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Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe in final stages of acquiring multi-million dollar Rimrock Technologies



The Las Vegas TribalNet conference in 2004 was the meeting place for a new relationship that began between the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe and Rimrock Technologies, a leading Avaya supplier. Soon after connecting at the TribalNet exhibit, Rimrock was selected as the new Avaya business partner for the tribe. After several years of developing their client/supplier relationship they recently have taken their bond to a whole a new level, with the announcement that the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribe is in the final stages of purchasing Rimrock Technologies in a multi-million dollar acquisition.

Erica Whitecloud, Executive Director of the Department of Administration and Michael Wood, IT Director are both from the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribe and play a significant role in the success of this opportunity. Together with their tribal council, they wanted to diversify the tribe's revenue streams and elevate their economy to a new level with this purchase. "The more we learned about Rimrock, the more we realized that this was a business that could potentially bring in revenue for us for years to come," said Michael. Patrick Foley, President and CEO of Rimrock Technologies couldn't agree more. "Erica approached me one day and simply said 'how would you like to be tribally owned?'. From there, as they say, the rest is history," said Patrick.



What will being tribally owned mean for Rimrock?

Rimrock Technologies currently services several different markets across the U.S. and once they become tribally owned, projected for the summer of 2008, they anticipate their market share to expand even further. "We are already preparing for the new opportunities that may arise from the new ownership status," said Patrick. "We are currently developing an 'Indian Country' team that will focus on developing better services and support specific and unique to Native American organizations." Both interested parties believe that with the financial backing of the tribe and the experience of Patrick and his team, they can provide tremendous opportunities for the industry. "Being tribally owned gives the opportunity to forge new relationships at many different levels as well as create new jobs in several communities as we already have offices in Utah, California, Oregon and now Oklahoma," Patrick continued. Once the purchase is complete, the organization intends to pursue becoming 8a certified, which will open a wealth of opportunities that they otherwise would be unable to boast. Personally for Patrick seeing this business grow has been an amazing journey and he sees endless possibilities for the future, as does Erica and Michael.

What is IT doing outside of the acquisition?

In addition to Michael's involvement in this project, as the IT Director for the tribe he also oversees a staff of eight that (cont. on p. 3)



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Sycuan Casino (cont.)



(cont. from p. 1) an upgrade to Ethernet cabling for their slot floor and the purchase and implementation of a new SANS storage solution.

The Ethernet cabling upgrade will allow the casino to be ahead of the curve in the industry and is a priority job for Josh's department. "Marketing capabilities are the #1 reason that this is a main focus for us," said Josh. "This upgrade will also allow us to be prepared for the future of the gaming industry." The casino currently operates 2,000 slots and run the Aristocrat Oasis slot system. With the gaming floor infrastructure upgrade they will be able to push out marketing events, promotions, bonuses and more directly to the slot machines. Where this project is driven by marketing, the backup and storage solution project is driven strictly by technology.

"With the purchase of the new SANS storage solution and the use of virtualization for our servers, we will have a complete redundant system by the end of this summer," said Josh. "If we want to do an upgrade it can essentially be seamless." Although a substantial up front investment, these processes are necessary for an efficient backbone which will be time and money savers in the long-term. "We are lucky to have a tribe that understands the value of technology," he said. "In this case, if a project is worth investing, we should be able to show the return."

In addition to the Sycuan Casino, the tribe also owns a hotel, located three miles from the casino property. There are three IT departments' separated between the casino, tribe and hotel with the largest of the three IT departments' being the Casino IT team of 21. "The casino is one of many business opportunities for the tribe," Josh states. "The IT arena is sure to be kept busy with the potential for expansions in the tribe's many business opportunities."

Several tribes across the United States are becoming more destination-oriented, increasing market competition. The Sycuan Casino is located just 30 minutes East of San Diego and with more land on their current property to expand, they are sure to continue growing to keep up with their competitors.

Although there are more than 50 tribal casinos in California alone, many of the IT leaders from this region have built solid relationships between each other. TribalNet is proud to be a part of this relationship building and networking. "I have been to TribalNet conferences and first and foremost it is a close knit community," said Josh. "We all share common issues and it's great to meet face to face and find out what other people are doing in the industry." Networking and problem solving is what it's all about. "If there is something we may be considering but don't really know all the problems that may come along with it, we can discuss that with other IT leaders at the conference and then year-round once those relationships are made," said Josh. "It's a great meeting place for our industry."

Josh also looks outside the gaming industry for ideas to improve his department. "There are a lot of good businesses outside the gaming industry using some great technologies we can bring in and apply to the gaming environment," he said. "Systems and theories work for a reason. We sometimes just need to remove ourselves a bit so we don't miss sight on cool new technologies that may be useful to us as well. It's all a big circle of learning and you have to be willing to take it all in and learn as much as you can so you are able to make the most informed decisions possible."

We commend Josh for his "big picture" leadership style and we look forward to seeing the positive growth that is surely in the future of their organization.

Josh welcomes your questions and comments and can be reached via email at jcarley@sycuan.com

CASINO CORE TECHNOLOGY:

Desktops- **HP**
Network Hardware- **Cisco**
Telecom- **Inter-Tel**
Acct./Payroll/HR- **Infinium**

Slot Accounting- **Aristocrat Oasis**
Player Tracking- **Aristocrat**
POS- **Agilysys formerly InfoGenesis**
Purchasing- **Agilysys**



**The TribalNet 9th annual conference will be held at a tribally owned property this year!
9/29/08-10/2/08: The Radisson Fort McDowell Resort & Casino in Scottsdale, AZ**



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What's new with TribalNet?

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CA acquisition (cont.)



(cont. from p. 1) provide IT support to the tribal government programs and operations in two main districts across the western part of Oklahoma. The tribe also owns four casino properties which are a separate entity all together when it comes to IT structure. The government IT team is striving to meet their #1 2008 goal: "being accountable". "This goal not only means being accountable to our customers by better understanding their needs, but also being accountable for our expenses in technology," said Michael. "When we purchase equipment or software, we want to be sure that our team is properly trained to support these systems, and we also are working to ensure that the users are properly trained so we are getting the most out of our investments."

There are several programs the tribe has developed in order to benefit the 12,000+ tribal members. The IT department is involved with supporting the infrastructure and systems for several of them, some of the programs or divisions include; tribal government, judicial systems, communications/media, social services, and eldercare. Nine buildings make up the tribal campus and are all connected through a fiber optic network provided by AT&T. The tribe was able to negotiate their contract once they had the support from Rimrock to develop their infrastructure. "Our previous network was unreliable. We were looking for a scalable network infrastructure that would provide us years of use," Michael comments, "Our department in conjunction with Rimrock was able to make that happen." As many other tribes are continuously and diligently working to create a solid disaster recovery plan and redundant network, the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe is following suit. They are currently bringing a new disaster recovery system online and recycling their old system as their redundant network. They will also be utilizing VMWare to bring virtualization to their server environment.

Looking ahead

We commend this tribe for recognizing not only how important technology is for the core of their organization, but also how profitable it can be as a business venture. The ability for Michael to be involved in the business side of the tribe as well as a leader for technology bridges a divide that at times can be a struggle for many IT leaders specifically at tribal organizations. We are looking forward to following the success of this tribe and we hope that our readers will as well.

Both Michael and Patrick welcome your questions and comments and can be reached via email at: mwood@c-a-tribes.org, and patrickf@rimrocktechnologies.com.

TRIBE CORE TECHNOLOGY:

PC's- Dell
Laptops – **Lenovo Thinkpads**
Network Hardware- Cisco
Servers– Dell

Telecom- Avaya
Membership Tracking- **TDR: Progeny**
Help-Desk- **Inter-Tribal Software Consultants: E-vision**
Accounting/Payroll- **Sage: MIP Fund Accounting**