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## Case Study

### Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa

Hotel/Casino Enhances Operational Efficiency, Business Intelligence; Saves U.S.\$400,000

Posted: 06/16/2004

*Borgata, the first hotel and casino to open in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 13 years, chose Microsoft SQL Server 2000 over DB2 as the database to support its Web-based recruiting and hiring system. Now, SQL Server is the relational database software on which Borgata runs most of its business, including 15 applications and 50 databases throughout the organization. SQL Server is helping Borgata to realize operational efficiencies—for example, Borgata can adjust restaurant staffing to match anticipated hotel occupancy rates. It is also building a business intelligence solution on SQL Server to better understand every aspect of its business—such as customer relationship management—and use that understanding to improve the bottom line. Borgata has already saved U.S.\$400,000 by choosing SQL Server and it expects to save another \$130,000 per year over five years in reduced maintenance.*

#### Situation

Borgata is a joint venture of Boyd Gaming Corporation (NYSE: BYD) and MGM MIRAGE (NYSE: MGG). Located at Renaissance Pointe in Atlantic City, it features 2,002 guest rooms and suites, 125,000 square feet of gaming, 163 gaming tables, 3,600 slot machines, 11 destination restaurants, 11 retail boutiques, a 50,000 square foot spa, 70,000 square feet of event space, and parking for 7,100 cars. It opened in July 2003 with 5,000 employees.

Among the many challenges that Borgata faced in the months leading up to its opening was the task of hiring those 5,000 employees. Hiring 5,000 people within months would have been a challenge under any circumstances, but not only did Borgata not have a physical employee center in Atlantic City, it was hosting its development-phase data center 100 miles away and wanted to complete the hiring completely over the Web.

"Our demands for the hiring solution were stiff," says John Forelli, Director of IT Administrative Systems at Borgata. "We needed a powerful and reliable database both because of the

critical nature of the application and because we knew that publicity about the opening would generate a lot of concurrent users. But that was only the start of our requirements."

Top management was concerned that some people—including competitors—would use the Web site application process to gain information about Borgata's operation without actually completing a full application. So management issued a directive that marketing information to potential employees should only be provided to those who did complete such applications. Moreover, they should only receive information relevant to the area of their application—for example, an applicant for the job of executive chef would receive only information about catering facilities.



“ SQL Server will enable us to understand our operational decisions better, understand our customer decisions better, and translate that understanding into an even better bottom line.

**David Farlin**  
Borgata VP of IT and Chief Information Officer



be customized to show them only the information relevant to their applications. Moreover, this passing back and forth would be seamless to the users.

The solution had to be highly reliable and available. Borgata desired that the database of choice not only fit within its small selection of standards but also be complementary to the other applications and databases it required to run its business. With a small development staff, the ability to integrate the HR database with other solutions had to be fast and relatively easy to perform. Moreover, the initial investment and ongoing costs to support the solution had to fit within Borgata's budget.

Because PeopleSoft—Borgata's human resources (HR) solution—didn't have the ability to meet these needs out of the box, Forelli and his colleagues wanted to tie the PeopleSoft database and application to a second Web application and database that could provide the necessary levels of content management.

The plan was that a link on the facility's main Web site would take visitors to the HR application to apply for or express their interest in a job. Then, the visitors would be sent back to the enterprise portal, and the personalized information they submitted with their application would travel with them. As a result, their view of the portal would



**SQL Server in the Enterprise**

**Solution**

**Availability**

99.999 percent

With just weeks

<b>Total databases</b>	50
<b>Total applications</b>	15
<b>Total managed data</b>	130GB
<b>Total users</b>	5,000
<b>DTS loads/month</b>	1,000

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considered a proposal to switch from DB2 to Microsoft® SQL Server™ 2000 Enterprise Edition, which is part of the Microsoft Windows Server System™ integrated server software.

"We were overwhelmed with the professionalism and presentations by the Microsoft team," says David Farlin, Vice President of Information Technology at Borgata. "The information we were given and the improvements we saw in the reliability and performance of the product were enough to change our minds."

The team was impressed by scalability benchmark tests performed by independent organizations that showed SQL Server could outperform both Oracle and DB2. For example, of the 15 results from the Transaction Processing Council, SQL Server was deemed the best performer in 9 categories, beating both Oracle and DB2, regardless of operating system or hardware. In particular, the Borgata team noted that Microsoft and PeopleSoft had announced record performance benchmarks for PeopleSoft 8 CRM on SQL Server 2000.

### Five-Nines Reliability

On the reliability issue, the team noted that the Microsoft Windows® operating system could support failover clustering to up to eight machines and could achieve up to 99.999 percent ("five-nines") reliability. (This level of availability is dependent on many factors outside of the operating system, including other hardware and software technologies, mission-critical operational processes, and professional services.)

Beyond issues of performance and reliability, the team also projected that switching to SQL Server would save the company several hundred thousand dollars annually in reduced licensing and maintenance costs.

## Solution Overview

<http://www.theborgata.com>

**Customer Size:** 250 employees

### Organization Profile

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa is the first hotel and casino to open in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 13 years.

### Business Situation

Borgata needed sophisticated database software to manage an online recruiting site to quickly hire 5,000 employees. It was concerned about performance, reliability, and its ability to integrate.

### Solution

Stored procedures and triggers in Microsoft® SQL Server™ 2000 enabled PeopleSoft to pass custom information to an enterprise portal, providing custom views of the site.

### Benefits

- One-time savings of U.S. \$400,000
- Projected additional savings of \$153,000 over five years
- Lower staffing requirements
- Business intelligence to boost customer satisfaction
- Operational efficiencies throughout facility

### Hardware

IBM X440 quad-processor servers

## Deploying SQL Server for HR

Borgata made the switch and deployed its PeopleSoft solution on SQL Server 2000 running on the Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 Enterprise Edition operating system. The database portion of the HR solution runs on a two-server active-active cluster on IBM X440 quad-processor servers. The active-active clusters enable each pair of servers to run multiple database instances and support various database applications.

SQL Server stored procedures and triggers were central to the success of the solution, according to Forelli. "SQL Server stored procedures and triggers are the key to ensuring that applicant data passes between our HR and content management applications," he says. "That was huge. We wouldn't have been able to do it as well, or as quickly, with any of the alternative databases we considered."

## SQL Server Across the Enterprise

As the number of Borgata's data-intensive applications have grown, so has the company's use of SQL Server. Since rolling out SQL Server, the Borgata has added two clusters of two-server SQL Server pairs to handle an additional 14 applications, including wardrobe management for employees, call center operations, risk management, table games management, point of sale, time and attendance, and property liability incidents. The SQL Server software and commercially available applications run on Windows Server 2003. Users access many of them through Borgata's employee portal.

### Services

Feature: Failover Clustering

Feature: OLAP Services

Feature: Reporting Services

Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003

Microsoft Operations Manager 2000

Microsoft SQL Server 2000

Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition

Scenarios: Business Intelligence / Decision Support System

Scenarios: Quantitative ROI

Scenarios: Quantitative TCO

### Vertical Industries

Recreation

These applications run on 50

### Country/Region

United States



“ Microsoft software and SQL Server in particular are enabling us to build a business intelligence solution that every manager can use. ”

databases

that have a total of approximately 130 gigabytes (GB) of data and are growing at a rate of 1.5 GB monthly. Tables in the financial application have more than 5 million rows and are likewise growin rapidly. Borgata maintains a daily financial ledge of every expense in detail—an undertaking so enormous that select reports were taking up to two minutes to return a value, which was an unacceptable delay. The team used SQL Server

**John Forelli**  
Borgata Director of IT  
Administrative  
Systems



has had 100 percent uptime as measured by the company's implementation of Microsoft Operations Manager 2002, according to Rich Rudzinski, Director of IT Technology Services at Borgata. "We deployed SQL Server, and it just runs," he says. "We couldn't ask the servers to be more rock-solid. SQL Server has been perfect."

As Borgata expands its use of SQL Server, another key technology is SQL Server Data Transformation Services (DTS). For example, Borgata is using DTS to bring data from its IBM iSeries-based purchasing system into the SQL Server environment. Borgata also uses DTS to import data from its medical insurance carrier into the HR system. Using an alternative data transfer technology, that process was taking one hour and 45 minutes to load 200,000 records monthly. DTS cuts that process to just three minutes.

### **Collaborating with Microsoft Services**

One key factor in the successful deployment of SQL Server, according to Rudzinski, is Borgata's collaboration with Microsoft Services. Borgata turned to Microsoft Consulting Services to help implement its SQL Server deployment. Now, it subscribes to Microsoft Services Premier Support to facilitate maintenance.

"We receive excellent, absolutely excellent, support from Microsoft Services," says Rudzinski. "The Microsoft support team is extremely knowledgeable, and we get quick, effective responses from them. We know that when we open tickets, they'll help us solve our issues quickly. And we're always learning from Microsoft Services, as well. A two-day workshop they conducted here on Windows Server clustering and SQL Server clustering really gave us the information we needed to ensure our clustered environment is working effectively."

### **Better Data for Better Decision Making**

"SQL Server is the data backbone for Borgata," says Forelli. "As we broaden its use to encompass more aspects of our operations, we find increasingly powerful ways to use it to boost operational efficiency."

For example, hotels typically open with relatively high numbers of service workers to ensure an ample staff to meet customer needs. After a few months, they refine staffing levels to boost cost-efficiency. The biweekly payroll showed Borgata and its managers what they were spending for staff. However, information delivered once every two weeks was too infrequent to be useful for fine-tuning staff levels—Borgata managers needed information no older than 24 hours.

By using DTS and SQL Server transformations, the Borgata could integrate its time-and-attendance with its payroll data to provide up-to-date information, then push the data to supervisors, giving them 12-day "snapshots" of their overtime use. As a result, the Borgata was able to reduce payroll expenses significantly while maintaining high-quality customer service.

Similarly, integrating reservations with staffing data enables restaurant managers at the hotel to anticipate changes in the hotel's occupancy rates—and adjust their

restaurant staffing appropriately.

Using Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003 and the Active Directory® service in Windows Server 2003, Borgata will be able to send that analysis automatically to the personalized portals of the appropriate employees. Users will access and manipulate the data using their familiar Microsoft Office Excel software. Forelli anticipates that this functionality will be far more useful than sending a flurry of e-mail messages with attachments.

"A lot of business intelligence projects fail because the only people who can use the tools are IT technicians," says Forelli. "Microsoft software and SQL Server in particular are enabling us to build a business intelligence solution that every manager can use. Everyone knows Microsoft Excel. Everyone knows Microsoft Office."



“ If we weren't using SQL Server, our DBA would easily spend 70 percent of his time on server maintenance. ”

**Rich Rudzinski**  
Borgata Director of IT  
Administrative  
Systems



Server solution came through for us. For most jobs we had a seven-to-one ratio of job seekers to job openings. After opening, we continue to gain tremendous operational efficiencies through the use of both Employee Self Service and Manager Self Service."

As the company's use of SQL Server has grown, the software has become an increasingly strategic asset for enabling operational efficiency throughout Borgata. Borgata is now planning to expand its use of SQL Server to provide true business intelligence information and drive better decision making.

"SQL Server is working so well for us that we're continuing to invest in the platform and plan to develop a solution to drive near real-time business intelligence through the use of Reporting Services and Analysis Services," says Farlin. "SQL Server will enable us to understand our operational decisions better, understand our customer decisions better, and translate that understanding into an even better bottom line."

For example, Borgata is building a data mart that will integrate data on customers from its reservations and casino management applications, enabling Borgata to identify its best customers and create targeted marketing programs to enhance its relationships with them. With online analytical processing (OLAP) cubes and SQL Server Reporting Services, Borgata can conduct what-if analyses in real time to understand the financial impact of various incentive and marketing programs on each category of customer.

## Benefits

Thanks to its use of SQL Server, Borgata is seeing significant increases in operational efficiency and major cost savings. It expects to gain additional benefit as it expands its SQL Server use to include near real-time business intelligence.

## Strategic Asset for Operational Efficiency

Borgata originally chose SQL Server to facilitate its rapid acquisition of staff. SQL Server served that function successfully, enabling Borgata to open on time with its full complement of staff.

"One of our greatest risk factors at opening was staffing," says Lori Loveland, Director of Talent Services at Borgata. "The Peoplesoft eRecruit/SC

## Initial Savings of U.S.\$400,000

In addition to providing the scalability, performance, and availability that Borgata needs, SQL Server has also proved to be a highly cost-effective choice. The use of SQL Server instead of DB2 for the initial PeopleSoft deployment saved Borgata \$400,000 in lower software licensing and hardware costs. In addition, Borgata anticipates that over the next five years, it will save another \$130,000 in reduced maintenance, compared to the anticipated costs of the DB2 solution.

There are other savings as well, "We have one database administrator for SQL Server, and he spends about 15 percent of his time on maintenance," says Rudzinski. "When I was technology director at a company that used PeopleSoft on Oracle, we needed our DBA to spend all of his time on database maintenance, and he was assisted by two helpers. If we weren't using SQL Server, our DBA would easily spend 70 percent of his time on server maintenance."

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