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## New casino takes thin-client tack

Story by April Jacobs

NOVEMBER 18, 1998 - LAS VEGAS -- Bellagio, the newest, and some would argue most lavish, hotel and casino in Las Vegas cost \$1.7 billion and took five years to build. It boasts a fine art gallery and an Italian Renaissance atmosphere. It is also a bastion of thin-client architecture.

That's because in addition to its goal to be a first-class resort, the casino is an around-the-clock technology operation. Underpinning the hotel and casino is a complex, \$25 million information technology infrastructure that supports everything from gambling pits to restaurants and serves thousands of guests and employees.

When it came time to figure out a way to minimize the IT support costs and ensure continuous uptime, Glenn Bonner, CIO at Bellagio parent Mirage Resorts Inc., decided to eliminate what he viewed as a potential hurdle: the PC.

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"Imagine a pit boss calling and saying that their PC is down. In five minutes, your whole guest service model flies out the window," Bonner said.

He added that the need for continuous uptime brought the company to the conclusion that a centralized application and server model that uses thin clients was the way to go. The "bricks," as IT refers to the clients, rarely break, and any service or troubleshooting can be done from a central location.

The simple client theory also carried over to the company's servers. Bellagio focused on ways to eliminate potential problems, one of which was making sure typical failure points were minimized.

"We are always very concerned about footprint and pieces dying," Bonner said. He noted that careful attention was paid to typical points of failure such as power supplies and fans on the servers.

Bellagio uses about 50 Intel Corp.-based servers from Dell Computer Corp in Round Rock, Texas. Among the servers' chores are supporting about 2,000 thin clients, 1,200 of which are actually Windows-based terminals. The rest are PCs that function like thin clients -- running their applications from the servers.

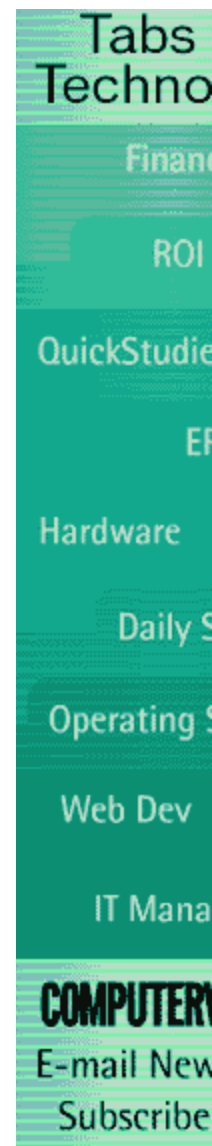
Bellagio went with Dell servers over ones from Houston-based Compaq Computer Corp. because the Dell line was able to deliver on Intel's latest processor, the four-way Xeon.

But moving to the new line was a "tough leap of faith," Bonner said. That's because it was new and because the hotel and casino company already uses Compaq servers at its other properties, including The Mirage and Treasure Island hotels.

"Timing is everything," Bonner said.

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