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September 01, 2004

MGM Mirage CIO Braces For New Acquisition

By Tony Kontzer

Courtesy of [InformationWeek](#)

Glenn Bonner is no stranger to big IT integration projects, and he'll draw upon his experience in tackling the next such challenge on his plate. The CIO of MGM Mirage is bracing himself for the company's pending \$7.9 billion acquisition of rival Mandalay Resort Group, announced in June. If approved, the deal--which faces scrutiny from federal and state regulators before its expected completion next spring--will come about five years after Bonner oversaw a similarly large-scale merger when MGM Grand Inc. acquired Mirage Resorts Inc. in May 2000.

At the time, Bonner was CIO of Mirage, and his IT organization was selected to absorb MGM's technology operations. Mirage had opened a couple of resorts in the 18 months prior to the acquisition, and those openings allowed him to refresh the company's IT infrastructure with centralized E-mail, Gigabit Ethernet connecting the company's portfolio of resorts, and standardized finance, human-resources, and payroll systems. In fact, Bonner had centralized the operation in part to prepare for more expansion. Those preparations put him in a good position to take the integration lead once MGM came calling.

Mirage extended its newly standardized environment throughout MGM Grand's properties, and the resulting IT infrastructure let him centralize the merged companies' hotel, casino, and back-office systems. Bonner says there's no reason he won't be able to do the same thing in absorbing Mandalay. "Our goal would be to achieve the same kind of synergies," he told *InformationWeek*.

In the meantime, Bonner is continuing to modernize MGM Mirage's back-end systems. His staff has engineered a flexible, low-cost infrastructure that features an application layer running on a Web services blade-server architecture, as well as a data warehouse with 130 database applications running on one SQL server. He plans to rid the company of remaining stale technologies by early next year, making the company more flexible with integration technologies such as Microsoft's BizTalk Server.

He has long referred to the management of IT in the casino business as an archaeological pursuit because of the aging systems most casinos continue to run. As mammoth round-the-clock operations, casinos don't have a whole lot of great opportunities to do massive system upgrades, so Bonner takes advantage of whatever chances he gets. "The whole objective for me is to get out of the archaeology business, and into the technology business."

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