Lucky Accident Extends Casinos' Winning Streak

Last August the *Advantage* ran a story describing how Zetron paging terminals were being used in most of the major casinos in Atlantic City. The terminal at the center of that story, the Model 2200, is rapidly becoming the standard for the gaming industry. Recently, the *Advantage* came across another casino-related application for the Model 2200, this time in the gaming capital of the universe, Las Vegas, Nevada.

A touch of "gay Paree" in the desert:

The Paris Las Vegas is one of the newest casinos to open, and brings some of the savoir-faire of the French Capital to the Nevada desert. In addition to its 85,000 square foot casino, the Paris features many replicas of famous French landmarks including a 50-story half-scale Eiffel Tower that rises from the top of the casino, as well as reproductions of the Paris Opera House, the Louvre, and the Arc de Triomphe. The Paris and Ballys are both owned by Park Place Entertainment, the gaming division of Hilton.

Like most major casinos, the Paris Las Vegas runs a sophisticated computer system to monitor the activities of its thousands of slot machines. Ballys has its own proprietary SDS®/6000 Slot Data System that performs a variety of functions from detecting slot machine malfunctions, to counting money, to rewarding players for length of play. In order to communicate this information to casino hosts and maintenance staff, the SDS system is tied into a paging terminal.

Canyon Ridge Communications is a Vegas-based Kenwood dealer and is also one of the largest refurbished pager dealers in the southwest. Canyon has a working relationship with many of the Vegas Casinos (it recently installed a trunking system for both Ballys and the Paris Las Vegas), and knew that the casino's existing paging terminal (a 25-year old

Commonwealth) had just about reached the end of its useful life.

"We'd already replaced the power supply once, but the Commonwealth was still on its way out," said Canyon Ridge Communication's general manager, Karen Fingl. "We budgeted for a Zetron Model 2200 Paging Terminal for the next year's capital."

Fingl contacted Zetron and filled out a P.O. for the Model 2200, to be held until the customer gave the order to replace the Commonwealth. As fate would have it, the Zetron salesperson that filled out the purchase order went out sick and the Model 2200 was shipped out to Canyon Ridge Communications somewhat prematurely. When the salesperson returned from sick leave, the error was discovered and Zetron began arrangements to ship the Model 2200 back.

Luck be a lady:

Ironically, the faux pas turned out to be a lucky accident, because the day Karen Fingl was going to ship the Model 2200 back, Ballys old Commonwealth terminal died of natural causes. Obviously, it was a critical situation, as without its paging terminal the flow of information so vital to the efficient running of this casino would come to a sudden and abrupt halt.

"The manager of Ballys called me and said 'How soon can you get me a new paging terminal?" Fingl recalled. "I told him, fax me the P.O. I'll put the Model 2200 in my truck and we'll be on our way. The same day their system crashed we were in there performing the install and loading the database."

The databases are loaded:

After the database was loaded, Canyon Ridge Communications next had to interface the SDS slot system to the Model 2200. One unforeseen circumstance was the fact that the Paris Las Vegas had just opened, and a flood of pages quickly swamped the system.

"Because of the volume of business they did, one pager received 14,000 pages over a three-day period," Fingl said. "That tied the system up until we found out they were not sending the correct level of information to the Model 2200. We got them to cut back to just the things they wanted to be alarmed on, such as jackpots, illegal entry and that kind of thing."

Keeping high rollers happy:

Currently, the Paris Las Vegas has 2,020 slot machines interfaced to the Model 2200 through the SDS system. Approximately 800 pagers are on the system, as just about everyone on the casino staff, from vice-presidents, to slot hosts, to housekeeping carries a pager.

As Fingl explained, the paging system is vital to the day-to-day running of the casino. That said, one of its most important uses is when a High Roller calls the casino and wants to speak to his or her slot host. High Rollers are gamblers whose credit limit can be anywhere from $500,000 and up. The job of the slot host is to provide the very best in hospitality to these big spenders,

including everything from arranging for a flight to Vegas, to dinner, a movie, and anything else they might want. High Rollers do not like to be kept waiting on the line, so if they are not connected to a slot host pronto, chances are they will hang up and speed-dial the next casino on their list. With potentially thousands of gaming dollars at stake, the speed of the Model 2200 is important, since it can send out a page in less than 4 seconds.

Covering three casinos:

The Model 2200 is located in the PBX room at Ballys. Using a transmitter on the 26th floor, the Model 2200 can cover Ballys, the Paris Las Vegas, and the nearby Flamingo Hotel & Casino. Fingl added that pages can even penetrate all the way down into the basements of those establishments.

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"I really love the Model 2200 system, " Fingl said. "It's very easy to use. We were able to train the PBX operators to maintain their own system because the software is so simple. We still sell them the pagers, but they load and delete pagers themselves.

I planned ahead and ordered the Model 2200 with the serial port so they were able to hook it up and put the TNPP protocol in there."