

BOOSTING SALES AT THE BOX OFFICE

In the competitive movie theater business, Goodrich Quality Theaters relies on the star power of the Dell point-of-sale (POS) system to keep business booming and customers applauding



GOODRICH QUALITY THEATERS

» **CHALLENGE** Build a standardized, highly available IT infrastructure and point-of-sale (POS) system to help speed up box office receipts and data transfers among 33 nationwide theaters and corporate headquarters

» **SOLUTION** Deploy Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers running the Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 operating system and Microsoft SQL Server™ database software; Dell PowerConnect™ switches with Gigabit Ethernet technology; and Dell OptiPlex™ GX270 PCs running Microsoft Windows® XP Professional as POS systems in theaters

» **BENEFIT** Box office results calculated in almost real time, allowing management to increase showings and respond to demand; faster concession and ticket sales transactions; faster backup times; remote IT support capability, helping to minimize support costs and downtime

Customer Spotlight

When an anticipated film opens on a Friday night, even before customers recline and crunch popcorn, the owner of Goodrich Quality Theaters wants to know one thing: Does he have a hit on his hands? A hot movie means big business. But if customers have to leave long concession lines to make the opening credits or, even worse, are turned away at the ticket counter because a show is sold out or they do not have enough cash—profits can end up on the cutting room floor.

To stay competitive and keep customers loyal, movie theaters must be able to make quick directorial calls to bolster box office receipts, while speeding up transactions to get people in their seats and revenue on the books. In this environment, Michigan-based Goodrich Quality Theaters decided that IT would be key to increasing the success of its 33 theaters throughout the Midwest. The company needed a reliable point-of-sale (POS) system with more real-time reporting features. When it came to selecting a

vendor for the part, Dell led in terms of price, reliability, and support.

“With the new Dell POS system, theaters replicate their databases back to the corporate office every 15 minutes. So Bob Goodrich can sit here on a Friday night and literally watch the returns come in,” says Vance Bowers, IT manager at Goodrich. “If a show is doing significantly better than expected, Bob can proactively make a call to add more showings, which can really have a big dollar impact on the bottom line.”

Goodrich Theaters: The way they were

Five years ago, IT operations at Goodrich Quality Theaters were a very different story. The corporate office and theaters were disconnected. Throughout the company, employees used generic white boxes—non-branded PCs assembled by resellers using parts from multiple manufacturers—as desktops and even as servers. The white-box PCs and servers were not reliable or standardized and crashed



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frequently—and they were not connected to a data backup system.

Customers also could not quickly pay for concessions with credit cards. Although they could charge tickets, the manual transactions that required dial-up authorization took about two minutes to complete. And box office receipts often were compiled manually. Individual theaters sent spreadsheets to headquarters via fax each night, and by about 4 P.M. the next day, the company would know how well each theater and movie had done. At that point, it was too late to respond to market demand by, for instance, offering more showings of a blockbuster.

A major turning point for Goodrich came just before the release of *Stars Wars Episode I*. A 16-screen theater in Chicago had a failure of a white-box server, and the hardware vendor could not fix it after three days of troubleshooting. That is when Goodrich bought its first Dell PowerEdge server. “These problems always seem to occur when something big is happening in

the theater,” Bowers says. “Now, if problems arise, Dell addresses them quickly. That makes us happy.”

With a new POS system, a star is born

On the heels of the server buy, Goodrich set out to modernize its entire POS system and IT network. It was critical that the POS hardware be compatible with Microsoft Windows XP Professional and Microsoft SQL Server. Goodrich was standardizing on that operating system for POS terminals and on SQL Server database software throughout the company to help control costs, allow remote support, and improve efficiency and reliable backups. To create a stable, easy-to-support POS architecture, Goodrich used Dell OptiPlex PCs.

The POS PCs, some of which have wireless technology, are now connected to headquarters with Dell PowerConnect switches, while Intel® Gigabit¹ Ethernet networking technology is used on the corporate side. The system enables automated backups and provides the framework for Internet ticketing. When the rollout is complete, Goodrich will have nearly 300 Dell POS terminals and more than 30 servers.

Thanks to its new architecture, Goodrich is raking in the returns. Not only can Bob Goodrich add needed show times on the fly, but the Dell POS systems have a credit-card swipe capability, which helps to complete ticket sales in just two to five seconds. That means customers

can get in the snack line faster—where they also can use credit cards. “Concessions are what keep our doors open, so this is a big deal,” Bowers says. “Some of our theater managers—especially in college towns—expect to see as much as a 30 percent increase in concession sales because of this capability.”

The POS system also can process magnetic-strip gift cards that are easier to track than paper vouchers. Gift cards can be programmed with movie-rating restrictions for minors, so parents can remotely prohibit the box office from selling their kids tickets to certain movies.

Collaboration on the set

Not only has Goodrich been able to strengthen its business, but along the way the IT department has also become a big fan of Dell. With just a three-person staff, Goodrich IT relies on Dell support teams throughout the country for servers and PCs. “I like the fact that our Dell-Goodrich team has stayed together. Continuity is really important,” Bowers says. “This whole platform and partnership with Dell has had a real impact on how we run our business. With all of the services we can offer today, such as credit card processing and magnetic-strip gift cards, I think the system is really going to pay for itself.” ■

¹ This term does not connote an actual operating speed of 1 Gbps. For high-speed transmission, connection to a Gigabit Ethernet server and network infrastructure is required.