

Nokia and Idokorro mobile management solution gives nights and weekends back to Palace Entertainment's IT staff

Customer:	Palace Entertainment
Industry:	Family recreation
Challenge:	Give IT staff tools for managing the company's network beyond regular working hours, which is when the company does the bulk of its business and issues are most likely to arise.
Solution:	Idokorro Products' Mobile Admin remote management software running on Nokia 9500 Communicator smartphones.
Benefits:	IT staff can perform network management tasks during off-hours without returning to their offices or constantly carrying laptops.

"The Nokia 9500 Communicator is a like a small laptop I don't have to plug in. I can carry it wherever I go, and with the Mobile Admin software can do anything I need to, right up to creating a new account for a general manager."

*Matt Schwenke
Senior Systems Administrator
Palace Entertainment*

At any given moment in the United States, families are careening down water slides, playing laser tag, riding go-carts and enjoying dozens of other diversions at a Palace Entertainment facility. The Newport Beach, California-based Palace is the America's largest operator of family amusement centers and water parks. Created in 1998 by investors who acquired and merged four independently owned family entertainment companies, Palace now attracts 10 million visitors annually to 32 facilities in eight states from New Hampshire to California.

Behind the batting cages and the arcade games, Palace is a business that uses a widely distributed computer network to run operations. Every day the company's facilities report financials, wage and timeclock information for as many as 3,000 employees during peak season. Sales staffs use the network to retrieve information from the company's central database. The main office communicates to local management over email. Employees enroll for health and

retirement benefits. A frame relay network links servers and sub-networks at the 32 sites with the main office in Newport Beach. Because Palace was created from a merger and grows by acquisition, the four-person IT staff inherited a polyglot network that includes Novell, Citrix, Windows NT and SQL and Exchange servers. Palace runs Microsoft Outlook email, SalesLogix customer relationship management, and ADP payroll software, in addition to desktop applications that work through the Citrix environment.

The large variety of technologies in Palace's infrastructure keeps the IT staff busy with maintenance, troubleshooting and routine tasks like intruder prevention and building PCs. But they also have a challenge beyond that. The nature of Palace's business means that the 32 facilities are busiest after regular working hours – evenings and weekends. Service calls during those times took a toll on the IT staff's personal lives, because it often meant dropping what they were doing to return to their home office.

The Solution

Palace Entertainment implemented Idokorro Products' Mobile Admin remote management and monitoring software to give the IT staff all the functionality through a mobile device that they had on their desktops. Mobile Admin runs natively on the Nokia 9500 Communicator, a smartphone that combines voice and data functionality in a device that fits easily in a jacket pocket.

The Benefits

Mobile Admin running on the Nokia 9500 Communicator enables the IT staff to perform network management tasks such as rebooting servers, changing a password or creating a new user account from virtually any location with cellular service.

"We're only four people managing a fairly large, widespread company," said Senior Systems Administrator Matt Schwenke. "For example, if the sales staff at one of the parks is using SalesLogix through Citrix to access the corporate database and it hangs up, we have to reset the server regardless of how late in the evening it is, or whether I'm out to dinner with my wife or at my son's baseball game. I get a call like that at least once a week."

In addition to making the IT staff's work more manageable,, the Nokia and Idokorro solution enables them to respond faster, keeping the business side of Palace Entertainment's operations running smoothly during peak hours.

How it works

Schwenke launches Mobile Admin on his Nokia 9500 Communicator. The Mobile Admin interface displays management options for whichever technology Schwenke is troubleshooting – Microsoft SQL Server, for example. The communicator connects with Palace's network over any

available cellular service. He enters commands through the Mobile Admin interface, and the network responds as though he was sitting at his desk.

"The Nokia 9500 Communicator is like a small laptop I don't have to plug in. I can carry it wherever I go, and with the Mobile Admin software can do anything I need to, right up to creating a new account for a general manager," Schwenke said. "It's easier to type on the communicator's keyboard, and the screen is large enough to display a Web page or the whole Mobile Admin interface without scrolling around."

Key features

Full alphanumeric keyboard enables faster typing than devices that rely on shift keys for toggling between numbers and letters.

Compact form gives IT staff more flexibility and mobility than a laptop.

Company:	Palace Entertainment
Headquarters:	Newport Beach, Calif.
Founded:	1998
Telephone:	(working)
URL:	www.palaceentertainment.com
Primary business:	Family-oriented amusement and water parks