

Onward and upward

HCL Technologies' strategies evolve as technology changes, paving the way for continuously divergent capabilities

By Steven Marlin

With casino operations becoming more technology-focused, HCL Technologies, an IT services company with a long history in gaming, is looking to fill the need for deploying and managing a state-of-the-art IT infrastructure capable of linking systems for table and slots management, property management, point of sale and business analytics.

HCL's IT service offerings for gaming operators and technology providers are aimed to bring a multiplier effect in business through cost optimization, innovation and faster time to market. Its gaming practice has a strong work

force of more than 400 professionals including functional, technical and domain experts focused on



Anil Ganjoo
 —Vice President
 of Media and
 Entertainment,
 HCL Inc.

VENDOR PROFILE

providing solutions to gaming industry customers. HCL has been addressing the gaming domain since 1998 and has rich experience in systems integration, service delivery, product development, testing and quality assurance. In the past nine years, its customers have achieved cost benefits and have profited in terms of higher market reach and shorter turn-around in deliveries.

It has forged partnerships with game manufacturers and casinos alike. Its services span the entire gaming spectrum, including casino gaming, online lottery, console gaming, instant lottery and mobile gaming.

"HCL is not selling—or interested in selling—any product in the gaming space," said Anil Ganjoo, vice president of Media and Entertainment for HCL. "We are a services company providing IT services." These services include product engineering, application development and maintenance, custom and enterprise applications, application portfolio optimization, as well as testing and validation.

With product engineering expertise and extensive infrastructure capabilities, coupled with more than nine years of experience in the gaming market, HCL provides robust IT services and complete lifecycle management of gaming product development, testing and maintenance, he added.

Aiding forward growth

HCL is leveraging its enterprise software expertise to help casinos manage legacy applications. One client, a leading global casino operator, was saddled with a home-grown, 15-year-old casino management system for

player tracking, bonusing and marketing promotions; the management system had evolved over the years with little or no documentation, making it difficult to maintain. HCL applied automated tools to reverse engineer the system to yield complete documentation, including business processes, interfaces and data models.

Another client, also a leading casino operator, had rolled out an integrated content management system that provides a platform for seamless collaboration of large-scale activities for a major development project, including procurement, contract management and construction accounting. HCL provided on-site support for the system, including administration and coordination with end users and the project team.

HCL is also leveraging its experience in helping companies deploy service-oriented architecture, in which reusable chunks of application code communicate with each other using standard, Web-based protocols, instead of proprietary ones. Its Gaming Business Solutions Group acts as a center of excellence for improving methodologies, creating new frameworks and reusable components, as well as maintaining knowledge repositories.

Many casinos want to deploy service-oriented architecture but are finding it difficult because so much of their legacy systems are written for IBM AS400 servers, and the programmers who wrote the code have moved on.

"They want to implement [service-oriented architecture], but are unable to track the code in which their systems are written. We can use our experience with [AS400] to reverse engineer their IT applications and make them into [service-oriented architecture]," Ganjoo said.

Focusing on all aspects

Gaming is a "microvertical" within HCL's Media and Entertainment sector. "We're investing in understanding everything about this industry, what clients are doing and typical pain

HCL Inc. at a glance

HCL America Inc.
 Corporate headquarters
 330 Potrero Avenue
 Sunnyvale, Calif. 94085
 Tel: (408) 733-0480
 Fax: (408) 733-0482

**HCL Technologies
 and HCL Infosystems Ltd.**
 E-4, 5 & 6, Sector 11,
 NOIDA 201 301, UP
 India

Web site:
www.hcl.in

Founded:
 1976 in India
 1989 in America

Additional offices located in:

- Australia
- New Zealand
- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Singapore
- China
- Europe
- Malaysia

Major markets:

- R&D and technology services
- Enterprise and applications consulting
- Remote infrastructure management
- BPO services
- IT hardware
- Systems integration
- Distribution of technology and telecom products in India

points," Ganjoo said.

HCL is focusing on helping gaming companies move from an environment where systems "are run in silos toward multichannel server-based gaming, which is a next generation casino management system," he said.

HCL is also working to help casinos get their arms around server-based gaming, the much ballyhooed technology by which game content is downloaded by a central server to the machine; the game is then played on the machine, and the result is determined by the machine. In the server-based gaming world, if the server or network were to go down, play can still continue because the random number generator used to generate payouts is residing on the machine. Downloading eliminates the need for swapping out on the floor, and also paves the way for real-time player marketing through the machine—for example, offering qualified players concert tickets, meal comps or other marketing incentives.

HCL is heavily involved in helping the gaming industry incorporate standard protocols that allow machines and servers to communicate; i.e., the Gaming Standards Association's Game to System (G2S) protocol, which allows machines to communicate with a central network console, and System to System (S2S) protocol, which allows a server-based gaming system to communicate with systems for slot accounting and player management.

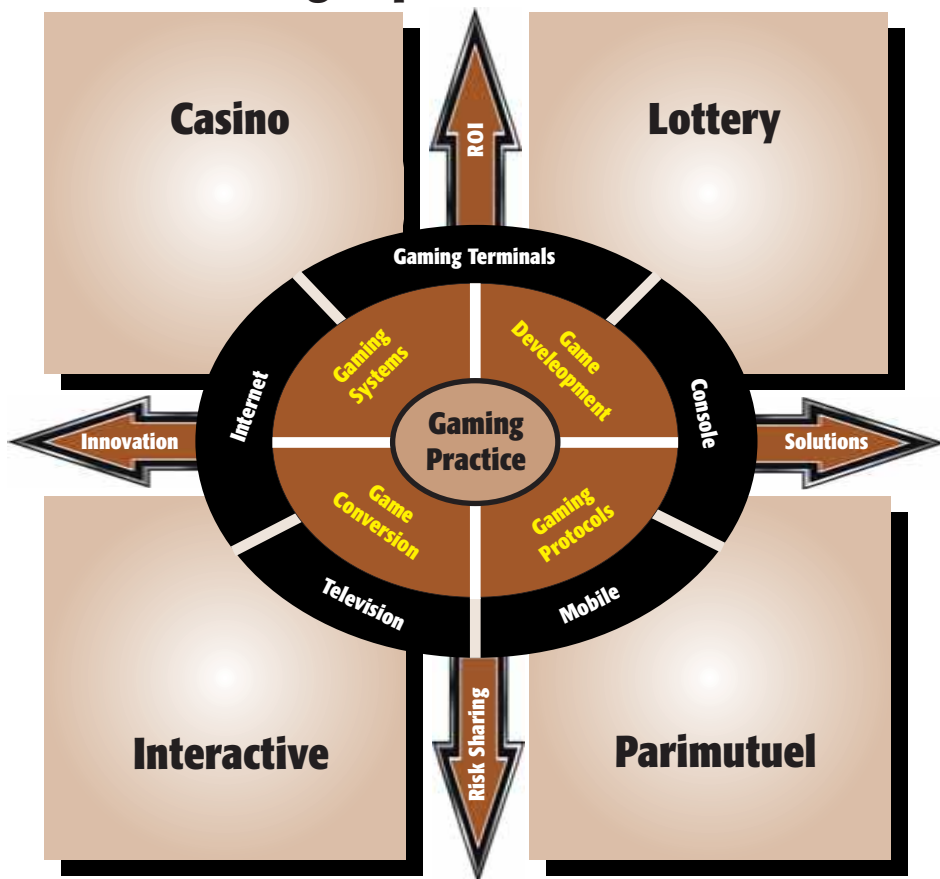
To support the transition to server-based gaming, HCL has conceptualized a framework for targeting the right customers with the right games. The framework provides the necessary functions for downloading new games, changing themes, denominations, etc., from a centralized location.

Serving the wagers

HCL has introduced two solution accelerators, or prototypes, that support downloadable server-based gaming. Gaming Protocol Converter is a platform-independent networking tool that converts proprietary protocols from one vendor or multiple vendors to the industry-standard G2S protocol. The converter reduces costs for supporting new protocols and reduces overall time to market for new gaming network-dependent products by using reusable components.

The second solution accelerator is Multi-Channel Server Based Gaming

HCL's Gaming Expertise



(MCSBG), which combines server-based gaming with "multichannel delivery, including lottery, video slots, mobile and handheld devices, Internet, standard consoles and PCs," Ganjoo said.

It allows casinos to increase the number of wagering positions on the floor, provides interoperability with existing product components and legacy systems and distributes content over multiple channels.

HCL's GamEdge loyalty management platform is a full suite of player management and CRM applications, including patron management and loyalty administration, a patron activity tracker using RFID and biometrics, as well as predictive analytics and transactional dashboards.

"As in any industry, the customer continues to call the shots, and this is even more so in the gaming sector where there are multiple customer touch points, and hence, superior customer service expectations spans the value chain, growing manifold year over year," Ganjoo said. "Pleasant experience and recognition at the hotel, preferential

treatment at the resort, priority seating at the casino and personalized attention at the restaurants—all these have become minimum expectations of patrons, and the challenge that confronts gaming organizations is how to stitch all this together to provide consistent and repeatable service levels to manage and retain customers."

HCL has set its sights on serving the broader gaming market, including console gaming and online lotteries as well as casinos, both in the U.S. and abroad. For one client that supplies or operates lotteries in more than 50 countries, HCL has provided system integration, service delivery, product development, testing and quality assurance, 24-hour, seven-day-a-week support and product maintenance.

"Casinos have lots of capital for expansion," Ganjoo said. "The explosion of new markets in the Asia/Pacific region, coupled with the growth of racinos and Indian gaming in the United States, means that the gaming industry's needs for IT services will expand dramatically in the years ahead." **CJ**