

# Raving

Raving's Strategic Solutions Magazine



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Jeff Gorovitz, Raving Partner  
& Vice President and Director  
of Operations, Kaleidoscope

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Dear Ravers,

It's only a month or so until we convene [Raving's 18th Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference](#) on January 25-27, 2016, at Harrah's Resort Southern California, near San Diego. It's the Raving team's favorite event, as well as the one that I personally find the most gratifying. I have often wondered why that is – certainly Raving has been involved in hundreds of events over its 18-year history – celebrations, conferences, seminars, webinars, networking parties, awards programs, fundraisers – you name it, we've done it.

So, why does the Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference stand out from all the rest?

First of all, I think that if you put your name on something and then do it 18 times, you'd better be “all in” and it better be good. So I think we're INVESTED.

Next, if people support what you do and like it, and tell you how much they learned and how GRATEFUL they are to you for doing it, and come back YEAR AFTER YEAR for more of it, I think that makes us COMMITTED.

And if something is just a little different, and tries to experiment, and injects a whole lot of fun with the learning, and stays really on top of the PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE, well I think that is not only INNOVATIVE, but uncommonly CUSTOMER-FOCUSED.

So add all of this together – INVESTED, COMMITTED, INNOVATIVE, and CUSTOMER-FOCUSED – and I think you can see our love affair with Raving's Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference. And then add one more ingredient – PURPOSE.

This event serves Indian tribes and their people. It makes them more successful business owners. It makes their executives better managers and strategic thinkers. It gives their marketing programs fresh doses of “new thinking.”

But, most importantly, it connects Raving with tribal sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency, and even in a tiny way, addresses some of the wrongs experienced by Native Americans for so many generations.

So I hope to see you on January 25-27 in San Diego at [Raving's 18th Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference](#). I guarantee you'll not only learn, but you'll contribute to something pretty cool.

Sincerely,



Dennis Conrad

Proud to Be Pro-Native



*Cover model:* Raving Partner Jeff Gorovitz shown with sons Hayden and Ryan and wife Kris. When he's not working hard for Kaleidoscope, he's spending time with his family and watching his Arizona Wildcats play his wife's Sun Devils. Catch Jeff's article on page 7.

# Five Ways to Move the Needle

*It's not too late for revenue-generating tactics in your advertising and marketing*

By [Mark Astone](#)



First of all, Happy New Year! By the time this is published, you will have made it through the holidays, and your first quarter is officially underway. Your promotions and budget are set, and you are ready to start a brand new year! January sets the tone for your first quarter, so here's hoping that you start off with a bang!

But in the event that your year starts slow, and you need to jump in with some quick, revenue-generating tactics to ensure your month ends on a high note, we are here to help. We've got five ways to quickly and easily move the needle, retrieve some revenue, and get you back on track, fast. Even if you aren't behind and things are going great, these suggestions are a great way to propel your property even farther ahead of your goals and competition!

### 1. Eblasts

You may or may not be taking advantage of this quick and affordable means of communication. If you aren't, do it now. Send out an eblast about your big promotion, pump up that weekly slot tournament and offer 50 bonus entries if the player comes in on a designated day. This doesn't cost you a thing, but it drives players through the door and strengthens engagement in the big promotion. Use this tactic to push players to a midweek day, or even Saturday if you want to "peak the peak" on your weekend and have a really high redemption on this offer. The key is not to have too much content in the eblast; two to three items is recommended. Remember, eblasts are far more effective at driving traffic by using an offer, and not just straight advertising.

Some of you may be thinking ... hey, I'm already using email. However, maybe you are ready to supercharge your email program. By incorporating variable data into your emails, you can personalize what you are sending to your players. Speak one-to-one with your players. Call them by name, include only those offers they will like (e.g., tell the slot player about the slot tournament and not about the blackjack tournament), and include imagery that represents what they love to

do at your property (e.g., show images of your spa and seafood buffet because your player is a frequent visitor to both of these). It all comes down to using your data. You've been collecting all this information, now put it to work and personalize your eblasts. Odds are that you will see offer redemption increase.

Sending out an eblast every week to your ENTIRE database will not only keep players in the loop about what is happening at your property, but it will keep your casino top-of-mind when they are thinking about where to go and what to do. What an easy way to reach out to your guests, and the best part is, it doesn't cost a thing!

### 2. Bonus Postcard

Your players may have holiday fatigue and budget issues after buying gifts for everyone and their mother ... literally. Why not give them a little present of their own? Mail out a postcard to qualified guests for a free gift or free play offer, and give them incentive to visit on a designated day. Measure results carefully, try new offers, and hone your "quick drop" postcard plans for maximum ROI. The key here is to design a branded (standard-size) postcard "shell," and print enough to keep an inventory at your mail house. The mail side of the postcard is blank, which allows you to have the mail house print a personalized message that includes variable offers for free play, gifts, a garage sale, point multipliers, promo entry multipliers, two-for-ones, or whatever tactic you'd like to use to drive traffic quickly. Then your reaction or "pro-action" time is as quick as pulling a list and getting it approved by your regulatory body. Then boom – mail Monday, people through the doors on Thursday. This strategy is especially helpful if your email database is significantly smaller than your mail database.

### 3. Social Media Push

A quick and easy way to reach your target audience is through your property's social media. Social posts about specials, events, packages and promotions on your page will give your followers a reason to visit. But don't make the mistake of thinking that all of your fans will see your posts organically, because Facebook's current algorithm only allows 4% of your followers to

see a post on your page. The way to instantly increase the reach of your social message is to give your post a little boost. For as little as \$50-\$100, you can spread your message farther out into the Facebook world. It is absolutely worth every penny, because you can send your posts out to specific audiences, even target your competitor's Facebook fans, and you can target by age, location and interests. Facebook is a useful and affordable marketing tool when you want to reach people NOW.

#### 4. Bonus Points Mailer

With that "quick drop" postcard shell you now have ready and waiting to spring into action, you can offer bonus points or point multipliers to your qualified guests on specified days! Make it fun, make it frenzied, create a sense of urgency with your offer tactics. Real players understand the value of points and use them for free play, dining, hotel, merchandise, etc. A quick, easy, affordable way to drive traffic! Combine a point multiplier promotion with a "point challenge" contest. Use that data and target your higher end players who can cycle a lot of coin in and are competitive enough to spike your revenue. Offer a prize for the most points earned in a day or a weekend; you can even do a prize per card level to make winning accessible to everyone.

#### 5. Partner with Local Businesses

The winter months can be a difficult time for some properties. To get visitors to flock to your property, you have to really woo them during this time of year. Pair up with a local business for some amazing deals! Is there a ski resort close by? Link up with them for a ski and play promotion! Offer guests a discount when they book a room and show their lift ticket or season pass. Maybe even offer them some free play! Is your property in a warm area? A local spa would be the perfect place for your guests to melt their holiday tensions away. Despite your location, finding a local business to partner up with can do wonders, and extend the amenities that your property may not have at this time. These types of partnerships are a win-win for your players!

These five strategic tactics are simple and quick ways to

get players to your property. Pay close attention to your daily flash reports and keep a steady stream of communication with your gaming directors to get a couple days ahead of opportunities for increased revenue to ensure that you have a super first quarter! Here's to a fantastic 2016!

*Mark will be presenting "Launch an Integrated Marketing Strategy NOW: Your HOW-TO GUIDE to evolve your marketing mix into the new landscape" at Raving's 18<sup>th</sup> Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference, January 25-27, 2016. Register today.*



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# What We Can All Learn from Mom Leadership

*And how it applies to all managers out there who NEED to lead by example*

By [Toby O'Brien](#)



Nicole, showing me photos, exclaimed, "My kids are so hyperactive ... they're driving me nuts! It's exhausting."

Which prompted me to write this column about *leading by example*.

For quite a number of years, I traveled with [Nicole Barker](#), Raving Partner. I think we

made an interesting team ... her focusing on the math and science of marketing, and me working in tandem, from the perspective of the art and design of marketing ... together formulating strategic marketing plans with our casino clients. After a two-year break while I took on executive marketing positions at a few properties, I returned to consulting. A few months ago, I found myself back on the road with Nicole.



I laughed when she shared her exasperation about her children's energy. I laughed because I've watched Nicole direct the activities of her daughter (now 11) and son (now 4). Once she supported Aly's efforts to have her first lemonade stand on their street in the suburbs of Denver, Colorado. Let's just say that there was a spreadsheet listing all expenses and income. Flyers distributed

to neighbors pre-announcing the sale, along with samples of brownies and other treats that would be offered. And a follow-up meeting (mother and daughter) to review the financial results. Aly was 9.

Last year, her son celebrated his birthday with a pirate party. This included a pirate ship constructed in the backyard, sword-fights, walking the plank, and more ... lots more. With LOTS of little kids.

Then, when Aly turned 10, the celebration theme was a private, at-home Renaissance Festival, including jousting, target shooting, and homemade costumes (by Nicole) for ALL the participating girls. I think there were eight of them.

This year, for Aly's 11th birthday on 11/11, four girls made a trip around the world at Nicole's house, visiting 11 countries, complete with cultural, cooking, and/or art activities in each, culminating in personal passports with photos of their travels as stamps.



The kids are hyperactive? Have too much energy? Show no fear? Gee, you're kidding me. Wonder where they got THAT from?!

Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it." This is the heart of leading by example. Nicole's children are learning to get the most out of everything they do, because she puts everything into it and that's what they experience. Her mothering style (Mom Leadership) excites her kids' imaginations, intrigues them with ideas and opportunities, engages them (and their friends), and ultimately leads them to say, "Let's do it!"

And now I ask you ... what kind of leader are you? Do you lead by example?

Years ago, in an article I wrote on the qualities of outstanding managers, one of the criteria was being a good leader. An excerpt: *"Do as I say, not as I do; is one of the most poorly crafted behavior models for getting people on board. Don't be afraid to lead by example, spend time on the floor with customers; include weekends and evenings in your schedule when most guests visit and the casino is busy. Be on time, respect co-workers at every level, and treat everyone fairly."*

**In the "transformational leadership" model, proposed by James MacGregor Burns and developed by Bernard Bass, these are the characteristics of a good leader's behavior:**

1. Creates an inspiring vision of the future.
2. Motivates and inspires people to engage with that vision.
3. Manages delivery of the vision.
4. Coaches and builds a team so it is more effective at achieving the vision.

**So, I ask again, what kind of leader are you?**

- Do you help your employees *get the picture* by communicating the objectives?
- Do they get to see the efforts *you're* making to reach the goals?
- Do you challenge them to take educated risks, and recognize *their participation* in the company's successes?
- Do you *share the results*?

Being the kind of leader who motivates and excites staff members doesn't come easy. It requires attention, effort and consistency. It requires creativity, compassion and dedication. But the pay-off ... scores of employees who are quick to say, "Let's do it!"... can mean the difference between struggle and success.

*For some tips on putting this process in action, join us at Raving's 18th Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference in San Diego this month. My session during the opening [One-Day Seminar on Promotions](#) is entitled, "They Never Tell Me What's Going On" – How to Get Your Frontline Team Members Not Just Aware, But EXCITED About Your Casino Promotions. (Yes, the 23-word title is Dennis Conrad's brainchild). There will be all kinds of hints about engaging your employees in selling promotions to your guests, and ways to lead them to WANT to participate. Hmmm, I might even invite Nicole to share her enthusiasm. Or maybe, her kids.*

## Get More at Raving Online

We've got an enormous library online, on just about every topic that marketers and operators face in their day-to-day business. Even we forget the depth of information our team has gathered since 1998!

**Drop by [www.ravingconsulting.com](http://www.ravingconsulting.com) to find out about:**



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Advertising Research: 5 tips to boost ad effectiveness

Looking for something in particular? Articles on host development, free play, service challenges, surveillance, players clubs? Just email Amy Hergenrother, [amy@ravingconsulting.com](mailto:amy@ravingconsulting.com), and she'll find it!

# The Next Hottest Trends in Gaming?

## *Boomers, Millennials, Technology, and One-to-One Marketing*

By [Jeff Gorovitz](#)



Our industry is going to have to change in order to thrive, and most of us know that. Change is a fairly obtuse concept though when you think about all the possible components that may be needed, anywhere from a dusting off to a total rebuild.

There are some clear-cut paths that will likely apply to all

casino properties, because of the prevailing influences we will be facing in the not too distant future.

The most obvious of those influences is the imminent paradigm shift in customer demographics. I think by this time we all realize that the Silent generation (born 1920-1940) is just that ... silent. They are up in age, and the Baby Boomer generation, which was the anomaly to all birth rate precedents, is aging. As a result of the "Great Recession," we underwent a culling in the industry, as far as our gaming population was concerned.

We as an industry contributed to turning gamers away, as well as creating a monster – the games play so fast now with such high wagers that we have eroded time on device – the experience is not what it once was, and players feel it. [Click here](#) to read a frank discussion of the facts led by Dennis Conrad and Mike Meczka.

### The GOOD and NOT SO GOOD news:

- The good news is that there is a new and very unique generation on the horizon.
- The not so good news is that there is a new and VERY UNIQUE generation on the horizon – the Millennial generation.

So [what makes Millennials unique](#) as it relates to the casino business?

- They are officially the largest segment of our population.
- They have not adopted technology as we know it – they are the first generation to be *shaped by technology*.
- Because of their intuitive command of technology, they are able to filter and process media at an

unprecedented rate. They are accustomed to and expect immediate gratification.

- They have grown up in a foodie environment, and are accustomed to dining choices and craft beers.
- They tend to be brand loyal and more trusting of influencers in social media (reviews and opinions are a basis of their spending) than mainstream traditional marketing. They create a forceful market demand that we have to learn how to supply.
- Although many of this generation were entering the job market at the worst time in our history since the Great Depression, they are characterized as a group that knows what they want, and are not afraid to spend money in pursuit of their desires.

### SO, TO THE POINT:

- It is incumbent upon the casino industry to find out what makes them tick – and what they want.
- It is equally important to better understand what our current core gambler wants and what makes them tick.
- We have to market smarter. We have to market in a relevant manner that resonates with our patrons. We have to understand so much about our patrons that we send offers and communicate in a truly personal, one-to-one manner.
- We have to recommit to a service *culture* that rings of sincerity and commitment to a personal, elevated experience.

**Following are, in my opinion, some of the most important topics that need to be carefully weighed by operators, and my view of the starting point for true one-to-one marketing:**

#### **1. Integrate your entire facility's databases.**

As a casino consultant, I'm in a lot of casinos. One odd phenomenon to me is a seemingly consistent resistance on the part of operators to make the move to get the disparate databases talking together. Your property has spent \$\$\$\$ on Player Tracking systems, \$\$\$ on POS software and hardware, \$\$\$ on property management systems, \$\$ on kiosks and dispatch software, and so on. Each performs perfectly fine, but independent of one another, so at the end of the day, about all you know about your customers is their gaming consumption behaviors.



What is it worth to have you know a customer's full property spending experience? There are some very good business intelligence tools available and some very sharp integrators. Doesn't it make sense to pull all that rich information together? It's there – you've made the big part of the investment already.

## 2. Engage in a property-wide, statistically measurable service training and service culture reset.

There are some great programs available that use a variety of statistical metrics to measure changes in the service culture. If Las Vegas trends can be considered guidance to the non-Vegas casino world, then retail, room, food and beverage, and entertainment (as of 2014) outweighed gaming revenue by 60% to 40%. We are going to have to deliver on the marketing promise and learn to make these revenue departments contribute to the experience and the bottom line.

## 3. Fully embrace the online space as a means to communicate with your players.

In an effort to be clearly transparent, I want to say that my company is in the player portal business. That is how much I believe that a robust player interface, fully customized to your player, is of huge importance. Make sure to find the right vendor that offers a platform accessible from all devices – desktop, laptop, tablets and phones, and includes an app feature. Compare features and benefits. Be very careful about social gaming add-ons – make sure that your data and your brand remain intact, and are not remarketed.

So why is there resistance to finishing the job? You have spent millions, yet so many properties are reluctant to integrate their data and complete the loop. From what I know, "finishing the job" in this instance is a matter of a few thousand dollars every month, and the payback is unmeasurable. Would you take the ball 98 yards down the field, only to quit before you crossed the goal line?

In each case, be specific about your needs, and hold the vendor to a specific set of deliverables and a corresponding timeline.

What will casinos look like a few years from now? That is a topic for another time and place, and probably sub-

ject to much speculation. What is for sure though, is it is going to be a challenge to balance our branding efforts towards these most unique Millennials, while restarting our trust bond with our highly valued, more mature, aging segment. There is no better time to start knowing each customer at a personal level than here and now.

*Meet Jeff at Raving's 18th Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference and attend his workshop, "How to Create a Website That Drives Revenue: Player Portals, Social Gaming, and More." For more information, go to [www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming](http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming).*

**Crime is occurring  
every day on every shift  
in every department  
in your casino.**

### **Not at your casino?**

If your casino surveillance teams are reporting more procedural violations, like gum chewing or hawking the dice; guaranteed that you're not looking in the right place.

Contact Amy Hergenrother at 775-329-7864 or [amy@ravingconsulting.com](mailto:amy@ravingconsulting.com) for a free 30-minute consultation with Raving Partner Derk Boss.

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# How Every Executive, Manager, and Supervisor Needs to Prepare

*What will you do before emergency personnel arrive after a critical event at your casino?*

By [Derk Boss](#)



I had planned to submit an article about training for Table Games personnel. I decided against doing that on November 13. That was the day terrorists attacked and killed 129 (at this point), and injured many more innocent people in Paris, France. Many more lives will be changed forever. I know we all share in the grief of those who lost loved ones.

Our world has changed, again. We are no longer as safe as we used to be, anywhere.

While this terrible attack happened thousands of miles away, and we are safe for now, I can't help but think that if these same terrorists wanted to attack us, they could. I also think that gaming properties can be a target one day. And I believe it is my duty and responsibility as a security professional to share my concerns with others. So I decided to scrap the training article, and let you know what I think and what I think should be done.

### **Why our gaming properties are unprepared to protect our employees and guests**

As I watched the carnage unfold on TV yesterday, it was apparent to me that if one or more people attacked one of our casinos in the same way, we are unprepared to protect our employees and guests from harm or lead them in effective escape.

I realize that it is not our security department's duty to fight terrorists. It should not be. But if you watched what happened that terrible day, one thing stood out; it took time for police and other emergency personnel to respond, engage the terrorists, and stop the killing.

It will take time for our local law enforcement and emergency personnel to respond to our properties. During that time (five to seven minutes, at least), people may be dying. We must prepare to survive on our own until help arrives. I believe that we should do our utmost to protect our employees and guests. Ensuring your employees know what to do is key to that protection, and can save lives.

There are a number of things that can and should be done. I encourage you to obtain advice from professionals that

specialize in emergency planning and response to assist you. But there are things that you can do today to prepare your company for a critical event.

### **We must be prepared to lead our employees and guests to safety, or shelter them in place. To do so, consider the following:**

Pull out your Disaster/Emergency plan and read it. Each executive, manager, and supervisor should have a copy, as well as each department. (If you don't have one, you need one).

Update the plan. Many of these plans haven't been updated since they were created. Many were written before workplace violence, active shooter, or terrorism were the issues that they are today.

Ensure that those assigned duties and responsibilities within the plan (usually executives and other key individuals) know what those duties and responsibilities are, and that they're able to execute them.

Regularly train security, surveillance and other critical personnel for their duties and responsibilities in the event of an emergency. Security/Surveillance must be prepared!

Identify evacuation routes and staging areas for employees, guests, and emergency personnel. Make sure people know where to go and how to get out.

Identify and prepare secure (locked from the inside) areas where employees and guests can shelter in place and stop attackers from getting in.

Practice your plan. Your Emergency Response Team (all of them) should conduct, at least quarterly, table top exercises to discuss, plan, and practice their response to various emergency scenarios. The better prepared this team is, the better and more effective your response will be.

Train each of your employees to properly evacuate their areas and lead others, including guests, to safety. (Remember, our guests don't know where to go and must be assisted).

Appoint employees in each area to lead the employees and guests in evacuation or taking shelter.

Regularly drill personnel in what should be done in an emergency event. There are ways to do this without

disrupting business to a large extent. Personally, I think our guests like to see that we are doing our best to protect them and feel safer.

Start today!

In closing, I wouldn't bring this up to you if I didn't think it was necessary, and that some of us may need it in the future. Please take the time to see where you stand in terms of your response to an emergency event, and get ready.

*Meet Derk at Raving's 18th Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference, January 25-27, 2016, in Southern California. He'll also be presenting the workshop, What Every Marketing Director and GM Needs to Know: Why Marketing Programs Are Always Getting Ripped Off.*

## Contributors

**Mark Astone** — Raving Partner, Branding, Advertising and Media Services, is the Owner and CEO of Catalyst Marketing Company. He has spent many years studying and working within the casino industry and understands what it takes to drive gamers to increase a casino's bottom line.

**Nicole Barker** — In partnership with Raving Consulting Company, she works with casinos across the country to harvest potential from patron databases in order to fine-tune the segmentation, messaging, and programming of multimedia and multi-channel campaigns.

**Derk Boss** — Raving Partner, Security and Surveillance, has served as a senior casino executive in surveillance, security, loss prevention and compliance for over thirty years with major gaming companies. The surveillance teams trained and led by Derk have a proven track record of continued success in the detection of cheating at gaming, advantage play, and internal and external theft and fraud.

**Dennis Conrad** — President and Chief Strategist of Raving, Dennis has nearly 40 years of casino experience, including keno writer, bartender, dealer,

floorperson, gaming instructor, special events manager, casino marketing director, gaming institute director, and corporate vice president of employee training and development.

**Christine Motta Faria** — Raving's VP of Marketing has been the company's core marketing writer since 2001. Chris has a lifelong passion for finding and sharing unique stories of people and places through her travels, business and daily life.

**Jeff Gorovitz** — Raving Partner, is the "voice" of Kaleidoscope — a personalized web/mobile portal and app for casino players. He's been the Vice President and Director of Operations for Kaleidoscope's parent company, SMP Communications, for 15 years.

**Winnie Grand** — Winnie has studied the casino industry since the early 60s. With a Masters Degree in Psychology, she has been interested in the psychological aspects of gaming, along with the growth and development of the industry. She and her husband, a retired physician, travel to casino destinations for much of the year. She has written for Strictly Slots magazine and is an active participant in the gambling scene.

**Janet Hawk** — Raving Partner, Player Development and Marketing Janet Hawk, provides Raving clients with continued support and training in the practical skills of marketing, promotions, special events, entertainment, hotel, table games and player development.

**Deb Hilgeman, Ph.D.** — An experienced casino marketing executive & consultant, Deb was founding GM of Mississippi Gaming News until Hurricane Katrina devastated the state's casino industry in 2005. Deb developed and taught the first casino marketing course at Tulane University. She has an M.S. degree in International Relations and has currently completed her Ph.D.

**Kell Houston** — Raving has worked with Kell since 2001, and throughout the years, we have not only valued his friendship, but his integrity. That combined with his gaming savvy approach to utilizing entertainment as a tool to drive folks to the casino floor, makes him a perfect fit for Raving clients. Kell is the Owner/President of Houston Productions, with offices in Las Vegas, Minneapolis, Seattle & Vancouver, BC. Houston Productions is a proven industry leader in casino entertainment buying and consulting. Houston

has worked in all aspects of the entertainment industry over the past 30 years, focusing for the last 15 years on Indian Gaming.

**Dennis Khanh** — Raving Partner Dennis Khanh has helped both Tribal and Commercial casinos and hotels, optimize their food and beverage programs for the last forty years. In such a unique industry, Dennis recognizes that an experience at a casino's food outlet just might be the longest interaction that a guest has.

**Toby O'Brien** — Raving Partner, Marketing and President of Toby Talks Marketing. After 21 years in the gaming business, Toby O'Brien has launched her own company, Toby Talks Marketing. As a Raving Partner, reprising her nearly 12-year role as a Raving consultant, she will be assisting casinos in building strategies that engage employees, attract guests, and grow business.

**Adam Smithline** — is CEO of Opticity, a hosted casino marketing system that enables operators to harness the power trapped in player tracking systems. Opticity makes it easy to understand player value and drive effective campaigns, increasing gaming revenue while reducing inefficient player reinvestment.



# You CAN Track Your Branding Campaigns

*How smart marketers successfully track their branding and advertising campaigns*

By [Deb Hilgeman, Ph.D.](#)



As casino marketers, we often hear and use the word “branding,” but what exactly are we talking about? And what is the difference between marketing and branding?

In a nutshell, marketing is what you do and branding is what you are. Branding is the promise that you make to your customers. It tells them what they can

expect from your casino, and it differentiates you from your competitors. An effective brand strategy gives you a major edge in increasingly competitive markets, so we really can’t afford NOT to understand branding.

One way to measure how well your brand is performing is to conduct a brand tracking survey. This measures your brand’s health by asking how aware consumers are of your brand, what they feel about your brand, what they expect from you and your competitors, and whether they plan to spend money at your casino venues.

If you’re a casino marketer, you know it’s important to monitor your brand health so that you can stay competitive. Tracking your brand’s health can also help you measure how you do over time, as well as measure the impact of marketing and brand advertising campaigns.

### **How a brand tracking survey can help with advertising campaigns**

Let’s say that you’re planning to run an advertising campaign to attract more visitors from your secondary or tertiary market area. The ads will run on TV, radio, and you have a discount offer in your monthly mailer. To measure success, you can look at revenues and offer redemptions, but how did the campaign influence your target market? How do consumers feel about your brand as a result of the campaign?

When you conduct a brand tracking survey in conjunction with your advertising campaigns, you get a much better sense of the overall impact, and also get customer insights to help inform future campaigns. The key is to find out how consumers feel about your brand before you launch your ads, then reassess after. That way, you can see if (and how) your new brand strategy is affecting your target market.

If you want to create a comprehensive brand survey, make sure that you cover the following areas:

### **Brand awareness**

Brand awareness is how familiar consumers are with your brand. If, for example, someone is asked to recommend the best casino in your market, which casino will they suggest? Find out where you stand with consumers with brand awareness questions.

### **Brand usage**

How frequently do consumers visit your casino venues? Are they visiting your competitors more or less than they visit you? Understanding consumers’ brand usage will help you see where you stand in your market, and provide competitive analysis to help you find the right niche.

### **Brand attributes**

What do consumers think your brand should do for them? Are you meeting their expectations? What benefits and pitfalls do they associate with casinos in general? A part of the reason consumers may think positively of your brand is based on how well you fulfill their needs. Getting consumers’ opinions about your brand attributes can help you understand where you’re doing well, and what you need to do in order to improve your message.

### **Visitation intent**

Include questions that ask consumers whether or not they’re planning on visiting your casino in the future. Comparing visitation intent before and after an advertising campaign is a great way to see how you’re doing.

### **Brand usage**

With brand usage questions, you want to measure if people have visited your casino in the past, if they are current customers, and how frequently they visit your casino. You should also ask if they’re visiting other casino brands, and what is driving those visits.

### **Who to ask about your brand (and how often)**

Most consumer surveys today are conducted using online survey software, such as QuestionPro or Survey Monkey. These companies offer anonymous panels, which are people who have agreed to take surveys. You pay for each completed survey, and you can specify the

characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, geographic location, income, and preference for gaming. This allows you to go outside your database in measuring how consumers in your target market feel about your casino in relationship to your competitors.

If your casino is in a quickly changing market, you should run brand tracking surveys on a quarterly basis. If your market is stable, you should run brand surveys once or twice a year. Whichever interval you choose, stay on a consistent schedule so that you can accurately monitor positive and negative trends, and so that your next brand advertising campaign will reach the right people at the right time and with the right message.

*Want to know more? Conducting a brand tracking survey to measure the value of your branding and advertising campaigns is one tool that savvy marketers can use. Learn about other market research tools that are affordable and easy to use in determining how to plan, shape and track effectiveness of your ad campaigns at Raving's Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference in January. Sign up for Dr. Deb's workshop on using consumer research to help you fine-tune your advertising messages.*



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# What Does Your Casino Entertainment Program Look Like?

*Comparing small tertiary versus larger markets*

By [Kell Houston](#)



Entertainment is the X-factor in all casino business. A good entertainment program ties into your customer database, keeping your current customers coming back and creating new customers. A casino without a consistent and quality entertainment program is a casino that is missing the opportunity to stand out.

There are big casino properties out there that are spending a lot of money on their entertainment. From concerts two to three times or more a month, a serious lounge entertainment program with bands playing weekends and sometimes more, plus your added Players Club special events, floor entertainment, and special shows for the off days in the lounge. *This is a lot of entertainment, and it's expensive.*

At the other end of the scale, you have smaller properties that may do eight to ten shows a year, and have a small lounge/bar with local groups playing on the weekends.

*Where do you find yourself in this mix?* Probably somewhere in-between.

Your entertainment budget will dictate what you can do. A small budget for a smaller property may be in the \$300K - \$500K range. Some large properties spend two million or more on their entertainment. Your program has got to be based on your customer base, your regional demographic, and of course your budget. Here are a couple of examples:

### **CASINO A – Located in a small secondary/tertiary market.**

Primarily a locals casino market, typically blue collar. The casino has a small multi-purpose room that can seat around 800 people, and it has a smaller budget. The casino has determined that they will focus on providing concert entertainment once a month, except during the summer months, when local festivals, fairs and outdoor family events are more prevalent.

They are good community partners and help sponsor some of the local summer events. Their budget for concerts would reasonably top out around \$25-30K per

show. They are the center for entertainment in their small region. Reasonably speaking, each show they have is very important.

Is this your casino? Here's your **strategy**:

They need to focus on quality and be consistent. For your older country demographic, you might look at Ronnie Milsap, Tanya Tucker, John Anderson, Pam Tillis, Neal McCoy, Tracey Lawrence, BJ Thomas, while for the classic rock side, it might be Loverboy, Great White, Night Ranger, Skid Row, Grand Funk, Guess Who, etc.

Their customer looks forward to that special night out for a show and some fun. Typically in this kind of regional marketplace, classic country and classic rock are your go-to genres. Venturing too far from this kind of show can be a little adventurous, and not always successful. Your goal here is to provide a couple of shows for your older demographic, some rock shows for a younger demo, and some country shows for your average customer. Once your program is established, you can try some different kinds of shows. Always present new ideas carefully, keeping your brand and goals for your program in mind.

### **CASINO B – Located closer to a larger population base.**

The venue size may be anywhere from 1,500 – 2,500 seats. Generally this casino has numerous amenities – fine dining, a golf course, hotel, spa, and a variety of restaurant offerings. This is a getaway destination for customers. The entertainment program has a large budget, and needs to look at their month by month offerings.

Is this your casino? Here's your **strategy**:

Each concert tends to be geared towards a specific customer. For example, you may do an Asian show 3-4 times a year. In the Southwest, it would be adding a couple of strong Hispanic shows. You would look at classic country (Merle Haggard, Don Williams, Charley Pride, Loretta Lynn, etc.) for one demographic, and turn around and bring in young country (Frankie Ballard, Dustin Lynch, Scotty McCreery, Kelsea Ballerini, Cole Swindell, etc.) for your younger crowd.

Classic rock big names like Heart, Styx, REO, Doobie Brothers and Foreigner would play your venue, and for the younger generation – Collective Soul, Rachel Platten, Breaking Benjamin, Three Doors Down, Tesla, and Queensryche would be in the mix.

In addition to these kinds of groups, you would add in some R&B – Four Tops, Temptations, Spinners, Keith Sweat and Boyz II Men, etc. Comedy like Tim Allen, Bill Engvall, George Lopez, Rodney Carrington, Roseanne Barr, etc., would be in your mix as well. You would look at variety types of entertainment like Jack Hanna, Terry Factor, Cesar Milan, Price is Right Live, etc.


Your lounge program would feature top regional bands playing maybe as much as 3-4 days a week, instead of just weekends. You might consider running a regional type comedy show, like Laugh Catchers, midweek once a month. All of this is a fairly complicated mix of entertainment that has been planned out and tweaked year by year.

**The bottom line with any entertainment program is consistency.**

Too many casino properties struggle to put together a strong strategic plan and stick to it. Everyone is in a hurry to see results, but results take time to reveal themselves. A good, strong, reasonable strategy needs to be put in place and nurtured. Each show you do will give you insights on what you might change or do differently. For instance, a comedy program takes months to become established. Don't just give up after the first couple of shows. It takes time for your customers to adjust and believe in your entertainment. Too often, casinos drop programs before they have had a chance to succeed. This is frustrating for everyone, including your customer.

The entertainment program you put in place is your foundation to build off of. The research to understand the kind of program you need comes from your Players Club, your database, your knowledge of your region, and your people putting this program together. Then there is the reality check. Artists you are seeing on TV or hearing on the radio are typically going to cost you more than you can really spend. This is a tough issue for your team to understand. Typically speaking, an outside talent buyer has much more experience and understanding about the business than an inside person who wears a multitude of hats. This is especially true for smaller properties. A good team is important.

The wrong kind of program that is not tuned into your customer can cost you a lot of time and money. There is really no margin for mistakes today. It takes a long time to rebuild a program. It only takes a few bad decisions to undo things. So I recommend small steps, careful planning, and patience. Success leaves clues. The casino business in Las Vegas is constantly changing and tweaking. Look at what is happening all around you, and see how to apply that knowledge to your program.



The image shows a laptop and a smartphone displaying the Kaleidoscope Player Portal. The laptop screen features the Kaleidoscope logo at the top, followed by a navigation menu on the left and a main content area with various promotional banners and a table of player statistics. The smartphone displays a mobile version of the portal with a similar layout. Below the devices, the text reads: "The Ultimate Player Portal and App! A web based, player portal communication solution from player to casino and casino to player. Accessible from the player's device of choice, with a mobile app. Proven ROI!"

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# How Does Your Postforma Stack Up?

*Why measuring return on investment is so darn hard*

By [Adam Smithline](#)



Casinos sure do have it easy. Or do they? On the one hand, there are few other industries where consumers are so hungry to consume marketing messages. Can you imagine drivers checking the mail for the latest car ads in the same way that players keep an eye out for the latest casino offers? Or Taco Bell customers carefully keeping tabs on each other to make sure that they are getting the same, or better, offers than the other guys? These hallmarks of gaming are actually incredibly rare in the world of marketing.

On the other hand, this means that casinos must significantly invest in marketing in order to be competitive. This not only ties up capital, but it requires strategy and analysis, and careful oversight. Casinos that embark on player marketing without the necessary skills and discipline often end up regretting it. Or worse, they may lose money on marketing and not even know it.

As a casino marketer, the challenge is to apply the necessary discipline to maximize the profit associated with the investment that you make in your players every day. Fortunately, we are mostly talking about direct marketing here. And the innate measurability of direct marketing means that we can laugh at the old saying, "I know half of my advertising is losing money; I just don't know which half." Or can we?

Sadly, when it comes down to the practice of creating campaign postforma reports, many casinos find it challenging, if not impossible, to accurately measure marketing profitability. Most operators are familiar with the concept and basic methodology, so why is it so hard to execute? Well, the devil is in the details, so let's examine a few.

### What Constitutes a Response?

On the surface, it seems like the simplest of questions. You mail an offer. A player receives the offer and visits the property. What's so complicated about that?

Believe it or not, there is more than one way to measure response. You may have players that receive the offer and visit, but never redeem the offer. More common is the player who redeems the offer, but generates no theoretical win. In any event, there is more than one way to define responders. One solution is to develop a **postforma** that has two views, one for players with play, and another for players who redeemed. This approach gives you the greatest opportunity to understand player behavior.

### What Marketing Program Should Get Credit?

This may be the question that I hear most often from casino marketing professionals. Typically properties have multiple offers available to a single player at any time, so if a player visits and redeems multiple offers, how do you know which offer should get the credit for driving the visit?

Unfortunately, this poses a serious challenge that is sometimes overlooked in reports. One common idea is to spread the revenue across the redemptions. For example, if a player redeems a \$25 birthday offer and monthly mail offers worth \$75 during the same visit, you can allocate 25% of the play to the birthday offer and 75% to the monthly mailer.

### Which Reinvestment Costs Do We Include?

Perhaps the most common shortcoming found in campaign postforma reports is the case of the missing costs. Marketers (in all industries) love to make their programs look good, so it can be easy to overlook some elements that comprise the true cost of the campaign.

If we are going to give credit to the marketing promotion for driving the visit, then we also need to give credit where credit is due for the associated costs. Everything the player does during that visit that costs the casino money needs to be included in the cost column of the postforma, in addition to the actual mailing costs. This could include free play used, the cost of points redeemed, comps used, the turn cost or transfer cost of hotel rooms and other entertainment and amenities, etc.

The challenging questions mentioned above are just a few of the questions that every casino marketer needs to ask when developing a campaign postforma. Other questions worth asking include how to measure and account for tax, and how to include revenue from secondary guests. And of course, there will always more questions that we can and should ask in our quest to understand player marketing profitability as accurately as possible. The point is that no two casino postformas are the same, nor should they be, because no two player marketing programs are the same. Only by critically analyzing the data from a business perspective can you develop a campaign postforma that answers the right business questions for your property.

*Adam will be covering this topic in depth at Raving's Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference, January 25-27, at his workshop, Stop Gambling on ROI: How to Get Your Postforma Right. Visit [www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming](http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming) for more information.*

# Remedy the Rumpled Benefit

*How recasting your guests' journey in 2016 could be the competitive advantage that you're looking for*

By [Nicole Barker](#)



What is the nature of a benefit? In a world of loyalty programs, it's something additional. A player visits a casino. A player plays a slot machine. A player enjoys the thrill of her experience. Meanwhile, a player earns benefits for her play.

We tell our players that if they play, they will earn benefits. If they play more, they will earn more. If they earn more, they will get more. If they visit regularly, they will achieve a greater level of status with our company and will be showered with additional benefits, access to amenities, and recognition. We set expectations with the customer based upon an exchange of benefits for tracked play. We hope that the anticipation of greater rewards will engender more business.

And then we break our promises.

### When the promise of a benefit falls flat

"Congratulations! You have been placed on the First Class Upgrade List!" United texts and emails me this message the day before every departure from the Denver International Airport. This is a benefit of achieving their Premier Silver status. As I wait in line to board the plane, I eagerly scan the First Class Upgrade List. There are three pages of passengers awaiting an upgrade for eight available seats. I am on page three at number 34 on the list. Instead of a benefit, it is a laughable letdown. You're invited, but you're not welcome to the party.

United is a regular punching bag for my loyalty program frustrations. And yet, I cling to pursuing status because of the one or two benefits that mean something to me.

If you have introduced kiosks to your floor, you may be unwittingly dis-incentivizing your customers with similar promises.

**Answer this question.** If a player achieves a certain number of points, are they invited to play a game at the kiosk for a reward? This can be a great tool for players to play just a bit longer to earn that extra point for an additional chance to win. Here is where the program falls apart. If the chance to win one of the larger prizes

is based upon Tiered Card status, coin-in, or ADT, you have already sucked the life out of the incentive. Not so random randomness makes sense on paper, but will fail on the floor. You have Player Development to spoil your top players. You have Direct Marketing to engage the middle worth segments. You have the kiosk to thrill those who are too numerous to touch individually. Be wary of your kiosk strategy if you have structured the payback to only acknowledge "your best customers." Consider putting randomness back into the way you award your rewards. A High Trip/Low Worth guest is getting very little from your Direct Marketing program, and is an unlikely candidate for a Host. Can you imagine a player's delight when she receives an unexpected wind-fall? Take a second look at any offer of a chance to win where the player will stand in a line for a prize that they will never have a shot at.

And please tell United Airlines that they need to throw a bone to the lower Tiers once in a while. One flight segment in First Class will make my month, and I promise not to take my shoes off.

### When the expectation of more doesn't happen

It's a myth: "If you play more, you will get more." If you look at a trend analysis for ADT, what a player is willing to leave behind doesn't vary by much. Most players swim in the bandwidth between one monthly Free Play coupon value and the next. Some teeter on the threshold of getting \$5 more each week, but few will ever truly launch themselves permanently from one segment to the next. We could base our Direct Marketing valuations on the last few trips to make our coupons more recent. We could tie our coupons to our valuation and dole out each segment in \$1 increments. However, few marketers want to segment themselves into oblivion.

Instead of directing our customers' attention to the size of the Free Play coupon, it is better to underscore the number of Points that a player earns during a session of play. What will happen if the player accumulates more Points in a trip, a week, or a month? Will she achieve the next Tier? Will she get invited to a party? Will she earn more drawing tickets?



Free Play through the mailbox has too many factors that play out behind the scenes to place a player's hopes, dreams, and expectations on what will arrive in the next mailer. Points are real-time. Points are quantifiable. Just make sure that Points mean something along the way.

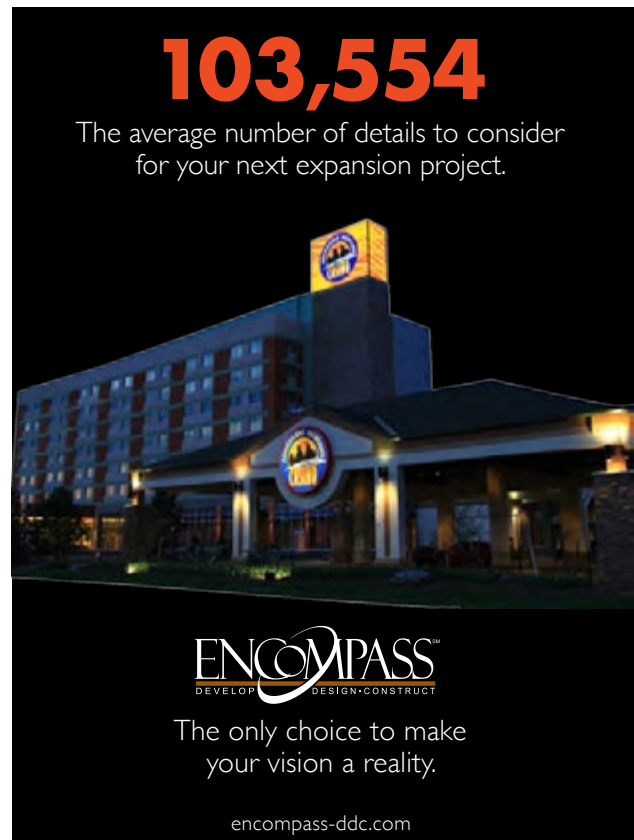
### When the next tier doesn't really mean anything

Are you willing to spend \$10,000 more in the next three months in order to get an additional 5% discount at the gift shop? The gap in benefits from one tier to the next is a chasm that few players want to cross. Instead of spending your marketing brain trust on enriching the list profiled in the club brochure, many programs would be better served by painting an experiential picture of what the next level of status might entail.

The path to the next tier is different for each player. Some players achieve their goals in record time. Others take the full earning period to claw their way to their target level. Walk the walk of the player to ensure that the journey is worthwhile. Change your perspective frequently to test your targets and your value proposition. Is there at least one benefit per tier that is worth bragging about? If a player achieves a level of status, is it worth holding on to? Is the time period to achieve the next tier reasonable? Look through the lens of a seasonal player, for example. Will a player earn his status while he is in town, only to enjoy his achievement when he is out of town?

Setting up the program requires data analysis, customer input, and an eye for detail. Minding the gaps is an art form. Recasting the journey in 2016 could be the competitive advantage that you are looking for.

*Catch Nicole's session, If ADT Does Not Measure A Player's Wallet, Then What Is It?, at Raving's Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference, January 25-27. Visit [www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming](http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming) for more information.*



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# Developing Your Player Development Team

*Three ways to keep enthusiasm from turning to frustration*

By [Janet Hawk](#)



*Note from Raving: A special welcome to Raving's newest Partner for Marketing and Player Development! Janet is our "coach on the ground" with the ability to provide your team with continued support in the practical skills of player development and marketing.*

Being a host isn't the easiest job in the world. Don't

get me wrong, in the many years that I have been in the business, I have met some of the best people, experienced some amazing things, and been a part of some really inspiring teams. But, being the liaison between the casino and the guest can be stressful.

Hosts are torn between taking care of the guest's needs while keeping the bosses happy (being profitable) – not always an easy task! From the outside, it appears that the hosts have it made! Give away "free" stuff, easy hours, appreciative guests, no stress, no pressure, right? Nothing could be further from the truth!

It takes a lot of time and effort to get to know your guests. We are in the entertainment business, and much like a trip to Disney, our guests want the show, but don't want to see the mechanics of how it works. They just wanna have fun, forget the troubles in their world, and connect with others. While the PD team is doing this for their guests, they are juggling the needs/wants/expectations of management. This can be a difficult and frustrating task.

**So, how can you help your PD team stay enthusiastic and focused? Below are three ways that I have found to be beneficial in achieving a positive, productive and effective team.**

### 1. Schedule Regular Meetings with Marketing

While Marketing and PD are related, many times they don't always communicate or collaborate. While the management of both departments may meet, it is essential that the hosts, those who have the most contact with your guests, be included in the process.

With the PD team being so close to your guests, this collaboration is important to having successful promotions and events. This is not only important as you plan your upcoming calendar, but crucial to post-event/promotion evaluation. What did the guests like about a particular

promotion, what didn't they like, what do they want to see in a promotion? This is valuable information! Marketing can also use this collaboration to help create host-specific events that help foster the relationship between the host and their guests. When the PD team has a voice in the planning of promotions and events, it makes the sales part of their job that much easier.

### 2. Utilize Specialized Reports

Depending on the size of the casino, the hosts may have a rather large book of business (guests coded to a particular host). It is so easy to get tied up with those guests who are more high maintenance or high frequency. A host can be so busy digging the ditch, so to speak, that they forget to look up and see where they are going or what they are missing. Specialized reports that focus on the four key strategies of Player Development (Acquisition, Retention, Growth and Reactivation) are extremely important to keeping hosts focused and productive. This is especially true for those casinos that aren't lucky enough to have access to a CRM system. Below are a few of the reports that I have found to be really helpful in achieving this goal:

- *Red Light, Green Light Report*

This is essentially a color-coded 30/60/90-day report of each host's list of coded guests. Guests in green have played within 30 days. Guests who have played from 31-90 days are listed in yellow. Finally, any guests who have not played in 91+ days will be listed in red. An updated list will be given each month as a tool for the host to use in order to keep up with those coded guests, with the focus being on those in the yellow and red zones.

- *New Member Report*

With new guests coming into the casino every day, it is difficult to always catch those who have the potential to be loyal to your facility and introduce them to your sales team. Most casinos have DM programs and promotions for new members, but most are impersonal. How awesome would it be for a new guest to receive a personal introduction letter or call from a host offering their services? Set the parameters in such a way that you capture not only the high-end players, but those in the meaty middle.

- *Development Report*

There is always a great deal of "low-hanging fruit" in any database. Those guests who are loyal, but not

heavy hitters. They usually fall in that area we call the “meaty middle,” which I referred to above. High frequency guests with a lower theo that are often overlooked. Perhaps they divide their wallet share between several casinos. A little attention can increase their play at your facility. Many times, they have no idea about everything that your casino has to offer, and a relationship with a host and their “insider information” can be key to increasing their loyalty to your facility!

### 3. Set Short and Long-Term Individual and Team Goals

Most employees are given a yearly evaluation, but far too often, there is little to no follow-up throughout the year to see if the goals are still pertinent or being achieved. It is far too easy to get lost in the day-to-day operations. Setting short-term and long-term goals for each host and for

the team is important in keeping your eye on the ball.

Using the reports mentioned above is another great tool for setting goals. You should be meeting monthly with each member of your team to ensure that they are staying on task and that the set goals are still suitable. You may find that adjustments are needed, and that is fine! Your team needs feedback as much as they need to be heard. Team goals are just as important as individual ones. For a team to be successful, they have to work together. This is not always easy to do when you have so many different personalities with different strengths. So, balancing the individual goals with a team goal should be the focus. The benefits will be amazing!

*Meet Janet at Raving's 18<sup>th</sup> Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference this January. To find out more, go to [www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming](http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming).*



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For more information on the conference go to [www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming](http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming) or to find out more about the Tribal Spirit of Giving Awards email Christine Faria at [chris@ravingconsulting.com](mailto:chris@ravingconsulting.com)



# Asking to Serve That Second Drink and Creating a Women's Lounge ...

*Tactics to address beverage trends and increase your resort's revenue*

By [Dennis Khanh](#)



Let's talk about a few current trends in adult beverage, and how to leverage your team's sales and marketing skills around them. Taking some necessary steps can increase beverage sales, as well as separate you from that "sea of sameness" in the adult beverage category.

**Men are twice as likely to visit a bar when compared to women. So how do you attract more female traffic to your bars?**

Change the channel. Let go of the Man Cave and create a Lady's Lounge.

Women need to not only feel welcome, but secure in your bar environment. So think about how you are staffing your bars.

Market inside your four walls with color and the right amount of point of purchase to market to your female crowd. Think about "Ladies' Night" with a wine feature like "Little Black Dress."

**Adults are planning on spending about the same as last year, with Millennials spending more.**

Continue to execute flawlessly, but take a good look at your strategy and how you market happy hour and late night activities. Focus on those key times of operation or whenever you happen to have the strongest crowds in your bars. In other words, "fish where the fish are."

Staff for success, not just to accommodate. I rarely, if ever, visit a bar and find the bar overstaffed with bartenders; it just doesn't happen today. Your staff will understand your strategy and why it's important to build sales, not simply maintain and accommodate.

Provide beverage menus that are simplistic, yet call out top features that will create interest in new items. Innovation is critical and paramount in today's age of mixology, but ensure that your target demographic really wants a vintage cocktail, for example.

**Let's take a look at the second beverage. We know from data that consumers would order one additional alcoholic beverage during an occasion if key tactics were utilized and executed. This list is arranged in order from most to least important, yet all are important.**

Recognize when guests are ready. Teach your servers and bartenders how and when to ask your guests when they are ready for their second beverage. Don't wait until ice is being chewed or their wine glass is bone dry, nor when they are only halfway through their first beverage. Timing is critical, and finding that sweet spot is key. Don't assume that your guest will only desire one drink. As an example, "Can I bring you another blackberry mojito to go with those awesome quesadillas?" can go a long way to make that second sale. Ensure your team members are armed with some key speaking points when it comes to second drink opportunities.

Offer better quality. Teaching team members to up-sell should be part of training and continued training. "Can I have a gin and tonic?" should have a response similar to, "That would be my pleasure. How about Hendrick's?" Turning a glass of house red wine into a premium or premium-plus selection requires little more than providing a few speaking points about wines with higher price points. Cocktails made with superior quality components can be called out on your menu, and you will likely win fans with healthy and local ingredients.

Provide faster drink service. Once again, staff to win, not to accommodate. Teach and execute against a time limit with respect to order and delivery of beverages. Have you set beverage delivery goals as part of your standard operating procedure? If not, consider doing so. Schedule runners if necessary on busy shifts; excellent build and delivery times will add multiple sales to these shifts. Of course, it goes without saying that all team members involved must adhere to alcohol awareness and your goal to support all legislation to keep guests, staff members, and the public safe.

After-dinner/dessert beverages. If you serve food at your bar, you are presented with an excellent opportunity to offer guests cognacs, aperitifs, and other after-dinner beverages that pair well with (or serve as) desserts. When I was behind the bar (a very, very long time ago),

## LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION

I would always offer a Sambuca to guests who ordered a coffee or espresso, and I would hit the mark about one-third of the time. Again, alcohol awareness, responsible serving and training are in play here.

Light and low-calorie, light beers, white wine and prosecco, as well as low calorie or “skinny” cocktails have proven to be popular and trendy with all age groups. Building drinks that traditionally call for champagne with prosecco provides budget and health-conscious guests a nice alternative, as one glass of prosecco is about 80 calories, much less than a glass of red wine or a mixed drink.

*Have questions about your F&B products and how to make the most of them? Dennis would love to meet you at Raving's 18th Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference, January 25-27, at Harrah's Resort Southern California. Find out more by going to [www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming](http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming). Dennis will be talking about non-gaming amenities on a panel with Raving Partners Kell Houston and John Stewart, titled, “Are Non-Gaming Amenities the Next Step for Retaining and Growing Your Customer Base?”*

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## CALIFORNIA

### Feather Falls Casino & Lodge (Oroville) – Check It Out!



In another example of its award-winning direct mail promotions, Feather Falls executed a “Check Us Out!” mailer. Sent to more than 3,800 players, the mailer followed a cosmetic makeover of Feather Falls’ casino floor. Checkbook covers filled with check-style coupons were mailed out, and the coupons offered free or discounted stays in the hotel, discounts in restaurants, free play on slot machines, and entry tickets in promotional drawings. Each personalized “check” had a date range to encourage multiple visits over the two-month promotion period and was coded for accountability. All employees wore bright orange promotional T-shirts every Friday during the promotion, creating a feeling of “fun” and “team.” Check Us Out produced an increase of 4% in Food and Beverage revenue and 8.6% in slot revenue for the target timeframe.

*“Feather Falls’ Check Us Out falls under the genre of ‘Passport’ casino promotions, whereby guests are given passports, checks, coupon books, or other packaged offers (I have even seen a deck of playing cards used to convey the multiple, timed offers), and encouraged to use multiple amenities and gaming offerings of the casino hotel. They are often used with casino openings, as a prospecting tool, when business has flattened, or in this case, to introduce a new casino floor environment. They can be tricky for a number of reasons:*

- 1. Many of the offers may not resonate with the targeted guests (e.g., a local may not want a hotel stay; a buffet eater may not eat in the steakhouse, even with a coupon; a table game player may not respond to slot free play, etc.).*
- 2. If you have too many offers across too many amenities, for too long of a redemption period, there is a*

*real chance that you won’t change behavior or drive visitation, but will just discount your product for visits that your guests would have made anyway.*

- 3. Setting up an operational framework for all those freebies, discounts, coupons and expiring offers can be an accounting nightmare.*
- 4. Your competitors may trump your “Around the World” offer with a simple but strong free play offer, which is what resonates with most of your players anyway.*
- 5. If not executed well and ‘sold’ to the employees as an important marketing activity, your Passport Promotion, no matter how cute or how themed, runs the risk of being met with cynicism by guest-facing team members. ‘Sure, I didn’t get a raise, but wow, I get to wear this ugly, orange T-shirt on Friday!’*

*“Feather Falls obviously overcame all of these issues and hurdles with Check Us Out. The promotion clearly drove revenue. It was themed, colorful, and seemed like fun. But Feather Falls, with numerous winning examples over the years, has proven that it knows its customers in its rural Northern California market, and is fiercely devoted to providing them with a memorable experience. And that might be the single biggest lesson from Check Us Out. If your guests love cruising with you, they’ll be open to getting all of the ‘passport stamps’ that they can at your property!” – D.C.*

## KANSAS

### Prairie Band Casino & Resort (Mayetta) – Smoke Stacks of Cash!





# PROMOTION ANALYSIS GAMING AND NON-GAMING

Prairie Band Casino & Resort became the first Kansas casino to tie gaming and barbeque together with its Smoke Stacks of Prairie Cash casino-wide promotion. Partnering with Topeka-area organizations, like Great American Barbeque, Kansas City Barbeque Society and Patio, Pool & Fireside, there was on-air and live broadcast support for the combination casino promotion/barbeque contest. This partnering allowed Prairie Band to offer top-of-the-line themed promotion prizes, and to expand its customer base and reach potential customers who may not have ever visited the casino. Promotion participants were required to have players club cards, which allowed for daily kiosk swipes and entries in twice-weekly cash drawings. There were also “Play and Get” Elvis bobblehead prizes for earning a minimum of 1,000 points. Smoke Stacks of Prairie Cash produced 2,823 new players club sign-ups, 59,000 total kiosk swipes, and an impressive 33.7% increase in gaming profits for this 6-week promotion.

*“This is another good example of where a savvy casino knows who its customers are, or could be, and in this case, the crossover between barbeque lovers and casino goers is a strong one. And many casinos may do effective ‘swipe and win’ kiosk promotions, but too few will combine them with community partnerships, barbeque contests, Elvis bobblehead giveaways, or local media opportunities, like Prairie Band did.*

*While the revenue results from this promotion were impressive, the interesting aspect of the whole thing for me was the focus on, and the achievement of, many new players club sign-ups. This can be extremely challenging for casinos in maturing markets that have been open for 10 years or more, as Prairie Band has. Sure, you can offer a ‘must-have’ prize for new sign-ups with no, or minimal amounts of casino play required to receive it. But from my experience, many guests will do the sign-up dance to get the prize, but you never see them again without the offer of such a cool incentive. So the challenge, of course, is turning these ‘triers’ into ‘regulars,’ which is not always an easy task.*

*“In that regard, here are some suggestions for getting new players club sign-ups to become active players in your database:*

1. *Focus on the first day of play of these new sign-ups. It is not a bad idea to give these new players ‘first day point thresholds,’ whereby they earn special first day of play prizes, but it is even better to craft a special on-floor experience for these newbies. Barona has a ‘#1 Button’ that it ‘pins’ on new sign-ups daily, and while that might earn them some promotional opportunities, the main thing it does is give Barona*

*employees an opportunity to say ‘welcome’ to each new player. This does take a lot of training, inspection and repetition, as most employees are pretty good with ‘regulars,’ but shy around newcomers.*

2. *Have a quick and targeted bounceback offer to these first-timers after their first visit. I know you have your ‘reinvestment levels,’ but going a little stronger or a little more targeted (e.g., a table game offer to an evidenced table game player) in the first bounceback offer to a new sign-up may very well pay off in conversion rates and increase long-term new customer revenue.*
3. *Keep it simple. Some customers will ‘jump through hoops’ for an attractive new member offer, but more will participate and more will return if you keep the first-time casino experience simple, quick and rewarding.*

*“Smoke Stacks of Prairie Cash proves that you can mix the old and the new customers to drive revenue. Just be sure it involves something that appeals to both and gives both groups good reason to return, even without some smokin’ hot ribs!” – D.C.*

## NEW YORK

### Hamburg Gaming (Hamburg) – Charity Chicken



Hamburg Gaming at the Fairgrounds, a racino near Buffalo, NY, held a charity event to promote its upcoming Chick-Tac-Toe casino promotion. Dubbed the Celebrity Charity Chicken Challenge (nice alliteration!), it involved local celebrities being the first to play Tic-Tac-Toe against a live chicken, with guaranteed prize money going to their charity of choice. Each celebrity was guaranteed \$2,000 for their favorite charity, and the amount doubled if they actually beat the chicken. Ironically, local Buffalo personality, Drew Cerza, “The Wing King” and promoter of the Buffalo Wing Festival, did beat the chicken

at tic-tac-toe and won \$4,000 for “Meals on Wheels of Western New York.” Other charities benefitting (\$2,000 each) were the Rueben Brown Foundation, the Buffalo Animal Shelter, and the Erie County Agricultural Society Scholarship Fund. The charity event, held on the casino floor, yielded a 26% increase in gaming revenue over an average Monday, as many players came to watch the Celebrity Challenge and then take their turn to play the Chicken Challenge afterward. Also, the celebrity event generated over \$12,000 worth of newspaper, video and TV coverage in the Buffalo area, with hundreds of thousands of mass impressions.

*“I am always amazed at the staying power of the Chicken-Tac-Toe promotion, and it continues to pop up at casinos around North America. Quite simply, guests get to play a game of tic-tac-toe against a live chicken, which pecks at the tic-tac-toe board to make his electronic selection and receives a little chicken feed reinforcement. Of course, the tic-tac-toe game is a random number generator that can allow the player to ‘beat’ the chicken as often as you want (randomly, of course) to meet your promotional prize budget and commensurate top prize amount when*

*a player does win. It really is extremely entertaining and unique!*

*“There are lots of ways to announce the arrival of ‘Chicken-Tac-Toe’ at a casino or gaming property, and Hamburg Gaming was wise to choose such a high-profile and impactful one. The charity angle, with local celebrities, always seems to work at generating interest, especially in local casinos. In this case, the celebrities were only a few, but well-known. The prize amounts were substantial for the celebrities’ favorite charities, thus ensuring their interest and avid participation. And there was a bonus for even beating the chicken in the Chicken-Tac-Toe game. The revenue numbers speak for themselves for that day, and laid a strong groundwork for the ‘Customer Chick-Tac-Toe’ that followed over the ensuing weeks.*

*“I have never seen a casino lay an egg with the Chicken Challenge. In fact, most were clucking all the way to the bank to count their scratch!” – D.C.*

## Raving Recommended Reading Review

By [Dennis Conrad](#)

Blog: Stiffs and Georges, by David McKee ([dmckee.lvablog.com](http://dmckee.lvablog.com))

As a gaming consultant, I sift through a lot of information sources – Pechanga.net, AGA Smart Brief, Vince Manfredi's Slot Market Monitor, The Norton Reports, and a variety of other gaming information feeds. But my favorite, by far, is David McKee's blog for the Las Vegas Advisor, entitled Stiffs and Georges.

David McKee is a freelance writer for the gaming industry, and has been for a long time. He is a past writer and editor for *Casino Executive* and *Casino Journal* magazines. In full disclosure, David is a good friend of mine, and has interviewed me many times for many stories. I am one of his biggest fans.

David's "Stiffs and Georges" (a really cool, gaming-themed name) appears most weekdays under the auspices of the Las Vegas Advisor, which is a publication for gambling consumers (mainly). But McKee's S&G is anything but a consumer publication. It is for industry leaders, gaming executives, political types, investors, and just anyone with a deep interest in what's really going on in this unique industry. But don't read Stiffs and Georges if you want anything other than smart, honest, opinionated, hard-hitting reporting and commentary on the worldwide gambling industry.

McKee is not afraid to call a spade a spade, or dig past the usual fluff. He is as likely to call out, as he is to praise, the heavyweights in the gaming biz and their daily maneuvers. He can be bemused, frustrated, intrigued, and angered by regulatory and political types, sometimes all at the same time. His writing style is crisp, candid, and often humorous.

Some may not need to know gaming as in-depth or as unvarnished as David McKee presents it. But no matter your level of interest in this crazy industry, Stiffs and Georges will leave you smarter, savvier, and more entertained than you were before you discovered this online gem. And that is McKee's magic.

Dennis' Rating:





# SAVE THE DATE

## Raving Conferences & Events Schedule



### Dennis Conrad's Casino Promotions Learning and Sharing Event for Highly Motivated Indian Gaming Casino Executives ONE-DAY SEMINAR

Harrah's Resort Southern California, Valley Center, CA, January 25, 2016

<http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming/>



### Raving's 18th Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference

Harrah's Resort Southern California, Valley Center, CA, January 25-27, 2016

<http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming/>



### The Tribal Spirit of Giving Awards Luncheon

Harrah's Resort Southern California, Valley Center, CA, January 27, 2016

<http://www.ravingconsulting.com/indian-gaming/>



### Raving @ NIGA

Phoenix Convention Center, March 13 - 16, 2016

<http://www.indiangamingtradeshow.com/Content/778.htm>



### Specialty Security and Surveillance Training 2016 - Emergency Response, Complete Craps Protection, Proactive Security Tactics and Expert Claims Investigation Skills

Silver Legacy Resort Casino, March 29-30, 2016

Produced by DJ Boss Associates

[www.djbossassociates.com](http://www.djbossassociates.com)



### Raving @ WIGA - Northwest Indian Gaming Conference & Expo

Tulalip Resort Casino, WA, June 2016 (TBA)

<http://www.washingtonindiangaming.org/>



### Raving's Host Development Conference

Paris Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV, July 11-13, 2016

Produced by Raving Consulting Company for BNP Media

<http://www.casinomarketingconf.com/>



### Raving @ Casino Marketing & Technology

Paris Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV, July 12-15, 2016

Produced by BNP Media Gaming Group

<http://www.casinomarketingconf.com/>



### Raving @ OIGA Conference and Trade Show

Cox Center, Oklahoma City, OK, July 2016

<http://oiga.org>



### Cutting Edge Table Games Conference

Las Vegas, NV, 2016

Produced by BNP Media

<http://www.tablegamesconf.com>

# Customer and Employee Interaction

*Why keeping the focus on the guest experience is paramount*

by Winnie Grand, Raving's High-Roller Contributor



First, let me emphasize that I think it is very important to take good care of your employees. They should have a safe and secure environment, and management should emphasize all the values that make them happy to come to work each day. That having been said, taking good care of your employees and taking good care of your customers is not the same thing, and the two should not be confused.

I recently had a couple of experiences that illustrate a problem I see in many businesses. These were in the casino industry, but the same issues are a problem in other venues.

I was staying at a casino and enjoying a leisurely morning. When I woke up, I had ordered room service and was informed that it would be delivered in about 30 minutes. That was just perfect, and as promised, the food arrived on time. That's when the problem began!

When the server finished setting the food out, he began to tell me that they were having a scavenger hunt and wanted to know if I could help. He read off a list of items he had to find. I had two of them: a hairbrush and gum, but had to go to my purse and suitcase so that he could see them. He then proceeded to take a picture. Meanwhile, I was looking longingly at my breakfast that was rapidly cooling. Finally, I was able to sign and he left.

The second incident happened while I was at the casino playing in the high limit area. This particular casino has some fun machines, and I always enjoy settling into my little nest and playing. Sometimes I don't enjoy it so much because the money keeps going the wrong way, but it still seems like my little territory.

I began to notice that there were some loud conversations nearby. I'm used to noise in a casino, and am hardly aware of all the bells and whistles going off around me. However, this was different, and I realized that these loud conversations were coming from a cluster of three or four employees who were gathered around their station.

I tried to ignore it, but grew very weary of hearing about their car visits to the mechanic and the latest gossip about who was seeing whom. The political discussions were the most annoying, as I get enough of that on my television! To make matters worse, I was on a long, losing slide and wasn't feeling particularly social. Then there was the laughter! You would have thought they all

had a drink in hand at the local bar!

This went on almost constantly during a long day. Finally, I asked them if they could keep the noise down. I'm sure that didn't make me any friends, but I was desperate for some peace and quiet! What made it even worse was that the laughter and loud talk went on even after I complained.

These two examples show how employee satisfaction and customer service can get confused. It also illustrates how customer service can suffer if a business is not properly managed. Neither of these situations was necessary, as they could easily have been avoided.

First, there should not be employee events that involve the customers. The customers become unwilling and unhappy participants in these events. Most of us don't complain, but we really are unwilling participants. It should be easy to find fun events for the employees that don't require them to bring the guests into the happenings.

Next, the employees should be expected to keep their personal lives off of the casino floor. Certainly, you want your employees to be friends, but they should keep their personal interactions behind the scenes.

Over the years, I have noticed this happen at other casinos. It is always in the high limit area, as this is a more isolated situation. I like many of these employees, since they are assigned the same area and do a good job. Most of them are so busy that they don't have time to gather together to gossip and party!

The major thought that I had that day was that the casino seemed to have too many employees with nothing to do. I also wondered who was in charge, since this situation wasn't corrected after a customer complaint.

Being a good manager requires many skills, not the least of which is being aware of what is happening with the employees under your supervision. If employees have too much downtime, they should be moved to an area that needs more help. If there is a complaint, it should be addressed, as it will affect future business.

It is a balancing act to keep employees happy and customers happy, but it can be done! The main thing to remember is to keep the two separate, and not keep one satisfied at the expense of another.



475 Hill Street, Suite G  
Reno, NV 89501

775.329.7864 phone 775.329.4947 fax

newsletters@ravingconsulting.com | ravingconsulting.com

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Christine Faria, Editor, Raving Solutions Magazine

[chris@ravingconsulting.com](mailto:chris@ravingconsulting.com)