

Raving

Raving's Strategic Solutions Magazine

GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH

**ANNUAL INDIAN
GAMING SURVEY
RELEASED** — PAGE 18

**LAUGHTER
FOR A CAUSE**

**THE COMEDY SLAM IS BACK!
ARE YOU IN?** — PAGE 20

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Ravers,

After nearly twenty years in the same office, Raving has a new home! This simple announcement underplays the time and effort given to making this transition on time and “somewhat” on budget. The process of selecting our new space began with a team “needs assessment.” Yes, everyone on the team had the opportunity to submit an office “wish list.” This may seem indulgent, but it actually helped shape the size, needs, and ultimate location of the new space. In addition to the standard elements (number of offices, a conference room, dedicated breakroom, etc.), the list included items like: windows, two restrooms, a special order grey paint for our creative director’s space, a sound system, and an outdoor gathering space for a barbecue. To some, this list may seem frivolous or unnecessary, but is it?

For me, this input became the foundation of how we would work together for years to come. Remember that we spend more hours in our office than we do at our homes. We toured numerous potential locations with no luck. You see, we needed a “thumbs-up” from the entire team. It took nearly one year, but we finally did it. The process might have been easier if I had just picked a space and said, “live with it.” And it might have been easier if I hadn’t been driving the moving truck (let’s just say, I met one of our new neighbors when I broke the bad news about their taillight). This process reminded me that persistence pays off and together we can do amazing work.

Persistence. Growth. Expansion. We’re moving forward and have more to share with you including the introduction of our new Raving Mindful Leadership Program. This intensive leadership curriculum is not for those properties wanting to check off the “training box.” It is designed for those who truly plan on leading in their market. I am pleased to welcome our facilitator for this program, Paula Allen. She is passionate about what she does, and will make you rethink what is important in your organization. Another new partner I’d like to introduce you to is Tyler Moore of Face Rock Enterprises, a Native American owned company that specializes in helping tribes getting a handle on benefit expenses and so much more. Look for articles from these new partners in future magazines.



Deana Scott, Raving CEO
deana@ravingconsulting.com

PS – Our new address is: 5470 Louie Lane #102, Reno, NV 89511. The next time that you are in Reno, we welcome you to stop by our new home. If you give us some notice, we might even fire up the barbecue.



Cover: Read a letter from Brady Scott, Raving CFO, inviting you to join us at the 4th Annual Native Strong Comedy Slam this April on [page 20](#).

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Getting Through to Your Guests

How to avoid the dreaded appearance of “telemarketing” or “spam” calls

By [Daniel Wood](#), Strategic Raving Partner, Phone-Based Marketing Solutions and VP of Business Development at [Engagex](#)

A good friend of mine recently told me, “I never answer my home phone, since now I’m afraid that it’s just a spam call. And right now, there are probably five new calls on my phone, cleared from last week, and they’re most likely Google wanting to confirm my listing. Don’t even get me started about election time; the calls during elections are relentless. I don’t even check my home phone anymore, because it’s almost always a spam call!”

Do you run into this same attitude with your casino clients? It’s highly unlikely that your Host team ever has anyone complain about their Host calling them! That’s because the Host team likely has a personal relationship with the guest, and the guest welcomes those calls and any offers or special invites that are associated with those calls. According to Pew Research Center, “about three-quarters of U.S. adults (77%) say they own a smartphone, up from 35% in 2011,” making the smartphone one of the most quickly adopted consumer technologies in recent history. So my response to my good friend was, “Why the heck do you still have a home phone?” Gone are the days of walking into your kitchen after being away from home for the day and checking your voicemail recordings. Even the most basic cell phone has voicemail capabilities.

What about your non-hosted guests? Chances are, if you have started to call your non-hosted guests, your callers have likely heard comments such as: “Who is this?” “Why are you calling me?” “How do I know that you are calling from my favorite casino?” “This sounds like a spam call!”

Here are four ways that you can avoid the doom and gloom of “telemarketing” or being labeled a spam call:

1. Make the calls personal – Be aware that calls to home phones will often display the caller ID, but most cell phones will not, unless they pay for that service or have downloaded a caller ID app. This can be a challenge when making calls to guests if they do not recognize the number. Make sure that your Players Club terms and conditions protect your property by getting the guest’s permission to call them on their mobile phone.

2. Have a meaningful purpose for the call – Develop a purpose for each call. Create call lists that will have the same message delivered. Make sure that the callers have rehearsed the purpose and are familiar with terminology that is personal and that the guest is familiar with. Make good word choices and don’t refer to your guest as

HOST AND PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

“inactive,” that’s like insulting them or calling them a bad name. Be aware of how you communicate, and avoid telling the guest that “because they haven’t been back in a while, they have lost their VIP status,” etc. Choose key words that will motivate the guest to engage your callers while on the phone.

3. Don’t be afraid to leave a message – If the guest doesn’t answer on the first call, leave them a short message that explains the purpose for the call and leave a number for them to call you back. A short message that can be listened to by your guest can create excitement and a yearning to know what else your property has to offer them. Many times, those guests will call you back in order to get all the details that were not left on your message.

4. Be consistent – Once you start calling your non-VIP guests, it’s important to be consistent in order to build loyalty with each guest. If you’re consistent, your guests will get to the point where they will anticipate the phone call and look forward to the personal engagement with your property. Make sure that you have the processes in place to keep up with any changes that the guests have for their personal information. It’s an easy process to verify and/or update the guest’s contact information while on the call.

In an article published May 17, 2017, “Technology Use Among Seniors,” Pew Research Center indicates that “four-in-ten seniors now own smartphones, more than double the share that did so in 2013.” Be aware of what type of

phone number your guest is providing you. Is it a home number, cell number or office number? For the longest time, it was believed that you could reference the area code of a telephone number and know where that guest resides. That’s not the case anymore. Cell phone users move out of state, but don’t change their cell phone number because they don’t have to. The number isn’t connected to a landline like it used to be. It’s possible to have a New York cell phone area code and live in California.

Hopefully this article will help you avoid the dreaded appearance of “telemarketing” or “spam” calls from your property. Be personable, have meaning behind the calls you make, leave a message every now and then, and be consistent with your calls. Doing so builds loyalty with your guests, which can increase trip frequency and incremental revenue. Check out fellow Raving Partner Janet Hawk’s article about how to be even more successful with your host calls on [page 14](#).



Daniel works with casinos to show how personalized phone calls have the power to increase their players’ ADT, win back inactive players, and drive same-month revenue when used to deliver a promotional offer. He assists Raving clients in engaging with several tiers of guests to create repeat business, greater retention, and higher guest lifetime value through the phone.

A Player Engagement Campaign ... On Steroids

How Engagex Helped a Casino Achieve a 12.3% RSVP Response Rate

Regardless of how many mailers or emails you send, what is the best response you can hope for? 4-5%, if you’re lucky? Recently, a casino client of Engagex had a huge event and wanted a large portion of their player data base to attend. They had a hefty goal to achieve a 10% response rate. After some discussion, it was

clear that direct mail or email alone would not be able to hit this goal. With three weeks until the event, Engagex helped this casino develop an RSVP program that made their response rate explode. Here are the details:

Campaign Details

- Send Direct Mail Event Announcement to Player Database
- Collect InBound RSVPs via Telephone
- Make OutBound Dials to Non-Responders
- Send Updated RSVP List to Print Event Certificates
- Make Personalized Reminder Calls 48 Hours Before Event

Results



Next time you are running a promotion or event and want an exception response, contact Engagex. We have the tools, experience, and know-how to turn your promotion into a success.

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The Raving Engagement Laboratory: The Results Are In!

How a casino-specific gamification promotion was adapted to an industry conference, and what marketers can learn from that

By [Jerry Epstein](#), Raving Partner and CEO, [Engaged Nation](#)

In the months leading up to [Raving's 20th National Indian Gaming Analytics & Marketing Conference](#) and [Raving NEXT](#) this past January, the team here at Engaged Nation had been noticing a trend developing, based on our conversations with current and potential casino clients. Many small or mid-sized regional tribal casinos were experiencing greater difficulty generating awareness, interest and participation in their monthly on-floor promotions. And feedback from casino marketers indicated that using traditional methodologies, like single touchpoint emails and direct mail, were becoming less effective. Our suspicion that this situation wasn't limited to just our smaller sample size was resoundingly confirmed at some of the sessions and from speaking with countless casino marketers who attended the Raving conference. Like our current clients, casino marketing teams are beginning to understand that ongoing, direct digital engagement with their players can serve to reverse this trend and/or increase the return of promotions that have historically been successful.

Obviously, this growing realization is very exciting for us, since our award-winning REACH System and field-proven [REACH 30](#) product were developed to directly address this challenge. We describe REACH 30 as a 4-6 week customized "online to on-floor engagement sprint" that is specifically

designed to drive awareness, participation, and ultimately visits to a property. How? With customized "edutaining" activities that produce engagement and excitement 24/7 during the entire promotional period. The results below from one 6-week promotion generated this property's most successful online to on-floor conversion ever and their most successful Sunday in more than six months with:

- 20,000+ unique online participants
- \$1.6 million in net revenue
- 16,000+ on property visits during the 6-week online event
- More than 2,000 incremental visits for the property grand finale event
- \$200,000 in net revenue lift during the grand finale on-property event

We're sure that you'll recognize how impressive those numbers are, but you may be wondering what this has to do with the Raving conference and our participation as a sponsor. Let's take a look.

As a strategic partner with Raving, we began brainstorming with them many months before the conference about how we could enhance the experience of all the conference attendees and take it to another level. What became

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY & GAMES

clear was that a hybrid version of our aforementioned REACH 30 would be an ideal way to raise awareness and excitement for everything going on at Raving NEXT and, more importantly, drive online to onsite participation for a conference-ending prize event – just like we do for a casino and its players. It was from this that *Raving Play* was born.

In the same way that we initially engage with a casino's player database, registrants of the conference were invited to participate in *Raving Play* online via a gamified email. When they reached the customized site, participants were greeted with information about the conference, including links to the keynote speakers, presentations, workshops, conference registration, sponsor logos, a floor map of the booths, and much more.

In addition, players were able to earn virtual currency, called *eBucks*, and drawing entries for the *\$10,000 Raving Riches* grand finale event by playing all the same types of games and activities that we use for casino players. In a similar fashion, participants were able to redeem their *eBucks* for discounts on products, services, and other prizes provided by the conference vendors.

The content for the games and activities was created by using key conference information whenever possible. We even used headshots of the keynote speakers and sponsor logos for our "edutaining" *Match 3* and *Memory Match* games. We also created and beta-tested a number of new activities. One, called *Blackout Bingo*, required conference attendees to visit all the vendor booths for a code that checked off a square on their bingo card when it was entered in *Raving Play*. This same game is now being used to drive players to different areas of our clients' properties.

But the biggest challenge for the Engaged Nation team was not building the platform, creating the finale drawing contest, or even adapting content for the various daily earning methods from the typical casino-specific to an industry conference. It was modifying our REACH 30 platform from a 4 to 6-week engagement "sprint" to essentially a 3-day conference engagement "100 yard dash" with the Bonus Code Networking program. This was truly a beta test for us that we were excited to undertake.

As is the case whenever there is a beta test, there were a few technical glitches here and there along the way. At the same time, those of us on the Engaged Nation and Raving teams were thrilled with the results generated by *Raving Play*. Here are just a few:

- 307 unique participants
- 4.36 sessions per participant
- 12,975 games and activities played
- 9 minutes and 12 seconds average session duration

But the one that really defied typical behavior was the participation level for the *\$10,000 Raving Riches* drawing. More than 100 industry professionals – who, just like you,

clearly know how these on-floor promos work – showed up for the drawing. Even more impressive was the fact that we held the drawing as the LAST event late in the afternoon on the LAST day of the conference. And while nobody won the \$10,000 prize, it was clear that the conversion from the digital program to the final event turned out a record number.

Because of the success of the *Raving Play* beta-test, we are already working with our strategic partners at Raving to improve and enhance *Raving Play* as an ongoing key element of their marketing efforts. We're excited for new elements that will be incorporated in the future.

We'll leave you with this final thought: If our REACH 30 platform can draw one-third of all the online participants at an industry conference to a grand finale on-floor promotion, imagine how successful we can be for you and your property's on-floor campaigns.



Jerry is a recognized leader in marketing communications management and development with over three decades of experience in branding, new product launches, and digital marketing. As CEO of Engaged Nation, Jerry and his team assist Raving clients by offering interactive products and tools to convert online traffic into revenue generating property visits.

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Make the Transition from Linear Marketing to Loyalty 360

Why fly fishing is the answer to embarking on this new adventure

By [Nicole Barker](#), Senior Raving Partner, Database & Loyalty Marketing

There is a difference between linear marketing and managing the customer experience.

Linear marketing is a means of designing an offer path for the customer. In Acquisition mode, we sign the customer up for a loyalty card. We guide the customer towards Retention strategies with bounceback offers. If trips or spend should wane or disappear, we Recapture loyalty with more offers.

Linear marketing keeps us in transactional mode. The customer spends. We reply with an offer. We dangle more benefits. We sell our loyalty program. We discount. And then we feverishly hope our reinvestment doesn't sink our margins.

There is a new frontier for marketing.

Are we ready? We depart from linear concepts that hook loyalty with offers. We, in turn, set the stage for managing the customer experience. It's an omni-channel strategy to

engage the customer. It's a planned means of surprise and delight that is not weighted by entitlement. This is the arena of Loyalty 360. It is fueled by data and delivered with heart.

There is a movie that illustrates the leap from linear marketing to the dynamic environment of marketing per Loyalty 360 principles. In this movie, only the beauty of Montana can upstage the good looks of Brad Pitt. In my illustration, only the strength of a good analogy can set the stage for reconfiguring how we recognize and reward customers within a loyalty program.

What movie is this? Perhaps one of the most beautiful pieces of cinema ever made.

A River Runs Through It is based upon the equally beautiful book by Norman Maclean. It's a movie about fly fishing. Sure, it's about other things too. But twenty-six years later, I remember the fly fishing and am awaiting the spring melt to put on my waders, grab my reel, and cast.

PLAYER REINVESTMENT & FREE PLAY ANALYSIS

Loyalty 360 is like fly-fishing. And I'll tell you why.

As a marketer, I live in a stream of data. I have siloed sources of data:

- My CRM system
- My Gaming Management system
- My Hotel Management system
- My POS system

These are the top powerhouses.

Then I have smaller wells of information: Keno, Bingo, Spa, Bowling, and the list goes on.

None of these silos play nicely along the banks together. And yet, a river runs through it. Data is constantly streaming through; we net it, we warehouse it, we cube it, and we pluck it (if we're lucky and our systems are configured that way). As a marketer, I cast my questions into the stream. Loyalty 360 is the finesse with which I ask the right questions, read the environment, and net my take.

As Steve Browne says, "In gaming and hospitality, we never close the sale." Likewise, Loyalty 360 is a rhythm of catch and release. We catch and release the data. We catch and release the customers as they make their journey through the river bottoms that we call home.

Loyalty360isaboutrecognizingandreinforcingtotalcustomer value. It's about creating sustained personal engagement with customers throughout every step of their brand journeys. We can no longer afford to buy the business. We can no longer compete by using rational exchanges based upon points and tiers. We can no longer entitle our customers with Free Play and discounts. We must transcend the transactional and engage the customer with better connections to the activities that bring them joy and excitement.

This ain't bait fishing, my friend. Bait fishermen throw their worm in, letting the fish choose to take it or leave it. For bait fishermen, the size of the Free Play matters.

No, this is fly fishing. If you cast poorly, you don't eat. You feed the line. You mend the line. You keep the fly in the zone for as long as you can. It's a sport of finesse. Mending takes finesse. What is mending? It's the art of the cast and the way that the fly lands in the water in an effort to match nature. You want the speed of the fly to match the speed of the current. You want the fish to be drawn to the fly as if it were sustenance, not something attached to a line, a pole, your net, and ultimately, your belly. Mending as you cast allows the fly to hit the water organically, naturally, following the path of a fly.

As you wade into Loyalty 360 waters, you must enter with the goal of bringing all spend under one customer ID. Only then can you read the river. Then you must explore

the passions that drive the customer upstream. Do not discount the passions, enliven them. What can you do with your incentives, your communications, and your style to connect with those drivers? Concentrate on your cast and not the bait. Fly fishermen spend a lifetime perfecting their choice for the perfect fly. What flies does the local environment produce? At what stage from larvae to pupae do the conditions merit? What are the fish biting? Rarely does marketing spend the time to better understand the dynamics of each amenity at the property to perfect its touchpoints.

Half of it is reading the river.

Half of it is reading the fish.

All of it is tuning what you do to coincide with how the fish hunts for food.



Nicole 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.



HOSPITALITY (HOTEL & FOOD & BEVERAGE)



The International Language? Hospitality!

Guest service around the globe

By [Brett L. Magnan](#), Raving Partner, Hospitality

I have been fortunate enough to be able to travel overseas and throughout the United States this last year, and I have discovered that there is a common language we all share and understand. It is simply in the way that we give and receive hospitality. No matter if I was ordering gelato in Italy, tea in London, a pizza in Chicago, a latte in Vancouver, Canada, or barramundi in Sydney, Australia, I received more than food or beverage. I received service. Hospitality service!

A month prior to my trip to Rome, I began learning basic Italian on a phone app touting that you can learn the language in six weeks. As I was only staying a week, I felt that my crash course would be enough to get me by. Politely asking for a glass of wine and ordering my meal was an important skill that I needed to master. Being able to then ask where the bathroom is, quickly became the

second most important question I learned to ask in Italian.

Flying into London on a return to Seattle, I was far more confident that I could master the important questions to get me through this very international city. Although I quickly realized that English was not the same as American, and I needed to learn the nuances of ordering food in England as well.

Even in Chicago, where my binge-watching of *The Sopranos* couldn't get me fully versed in the local language, but I figured out how to order the best pizza in the world, unless you are in New York. Fugettaboutit!

Even between the Commonwealth countries of Canada and Australia, English has its own local flair, and unless you finish with an "Eh" in Vancouver or start with a

HOSPITALITY (HOTEL & FOOD & BEVERAGE)

“G’day” on the Gold Coast, you will certainly be labeled as a visitor in both.

But what I found to be the most common and understood of all was the hospitality that I received in each place. Good or bad, it is the same throughout the world. Great service is met with a smile and a welcome, and finished with a thank you and invitation to return. No matter how uncomfortable I felt as a tourist (who really didn’t understand the local language or customs), the restaurants, as well as the hotels, travel desks, grocery stores and entertainment venues that were exceptional all knew that the product was not the only thing I purchased.

Each venue knew that I was in their “home,” and for that brief period of time, it didn’t matter that I was from another country. They were going to make me feel welcome and like I was the most important person at that very moment. Providing great food and beverages from professionals in the service industry can be understood and appreciated without ever learning the language. It simply is great hospitality.

As this world becomes smaller and smaller, traveling to other countries or having visitors from around the world come to your property, brush up on the most important language you can ... hospitality.

Three areas for properties to focus on:

1. **Know your guest.** Even if you don’t cater to their specific palate, understand that visitors from other parts of the United States or from another country are looking to you to feed their needs with great food, beverages and service. Try incenting your team to anticipate what your guests might want, and give them some freedom to go the extra yard for the benefit of hospitality.

2. **Make it easy.** Menu descriptions and pictures can assist in helping out-of-towners with ordering and feeling comfortable at your property. Have options where guests who are less comfortable can just “grab and go” with packaged items. Consider having customizable menus in certain venues to accommodate specific needs of guests. Dietary needs are only one option; others include catering to younger or older diners where certain types of food are needed. Learn where your guests are from and try to adapt menu items if possible.
3. **Smile.** The power of a smile makes all the difference when making guests feel comfortable. It is the simplest of skills that makes a significant difference in a hospitality environment, but the one that is often missed the most. A warm welcome and a sincere thank you at the end – always with a smile. This must be a part of the uniform requirement for all team members. Clean shirt, name tag, smile.



Brett brings a wealth of experience operating high-quality hotels, casino resorts, spas, and food and beverage facilities. He is known for his planning and opening of new properties, and is a trusted resource in the gaming industry with his reputation for hard work, innovation, teamwork, honesty, and integrity. For more information on Hotel or F&B 360 reviews, contact Amy Hergenrother at amy@ravingconsulting.com.

Language conversions:

American	English	Canadian	Italian	Australian
Good morning	Tops	Eh	Buongiorno	G’day
Please	Please	Please eh	Per Favore	Please
Thanks	Thank you	Thanks eh	Grazie	Ta
Bye	Cheerio	See ya eh	Addio	Seeya Mate
Bathroom	Lew	Lew eh	Bagno	Toot
Smile	Smile	Smile	Smile	Smile



How to Design Happiness (Part III)

Creating a memorable guest experience

By [John Stewart](#), Strategic Raving Partner and Owner/CEO/President at [Encompass Develop, Design & Construct, LLC](#)

We've all had that experience where our nose picks up a familiar scent and we're instantly flooded with emotions and memories that take us back to that exact moment in time. Just from the simple smell of something from our past, we are immediately transported there – an ex-girlfriend's perfume, your grandmother's lasagna, the ocean breeze – it's like a nasal time machine. Now think how powerful it could be if we could create lasting memories as part of our guest experience? In my [last two installments on "designing happy,"](#) I discussed how building on guests' anticipation and engagement are part of the recipe for a happy experience. In this last installment, we're going to look at how we can create lasting memories for our guests to complete their happiness journey.

Our guests' experience, from beginning to end: "Experiencing Self vs. Remembering Self"

Think about an experience, a vacation for instance – after we've returned home, unpacked the bags, after we've settled back in our routines and our suntans have faded – all we're left with is our memory of the vacation. Daniel Kahneman, Nobel laureate and founder of behavioral economics, talks about two selves within the context of happiness – our "experiencing selves" and our "remembering selves."

Believe it or not, these two selves can have two very different perceptions of the same experience based on a variable of factors. One of the most powerful of those variables is how the experience ended. For example, Kahneman refers to a story of a person enjoying a beautiful symphony. He spoke of how much he was enjoying the gorgeous sounds of the symphony until it ended with a terrible screeching sound. "It ruined the entire experience!" he told Kahneman. Well, not really – his "experiencing self" enjoyed the symphony for 19 minutes and 58 seconds out of the 20-minute experience. However, the "remembering self" looks back at the whole experience as not being enjoyable, which is important because it's actually the remembering self that makes all future decisions – like whether to listen to the symphony again or where to book their next vacation. So it's crucial that we guide the story of our guests' experiences from beginning to end, so that their experiencing selves and their remembering selves are both pleased.

Engaging the senses

Neuroscience plays a huge role in not only how we experience, but also how we remember a given experience. Our senses are direct pathways to access the areas of the brain related to experience and our emotional memory. So

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

it's essential in thinking of designing a happy experience that we engage all the senses. For instance, studies have found that incorporating nature in design has multiple positive benefits, including lower blood pressure, raised productivity, improved well-being, and positive perception of the space. One study shows that hotels that used biophilic design (design that incorporates natural materials, light and greenery) in their lobbies showed an 11% increase in use-rate compared to that of conventional hotel lobbies. They also found that some of the active users weren't hotel guests, but were in fact passersby coming to use the hotels' coffee shops or other revenue-generating services. One Hotel in Brooklyn relied heavily on the senses to inform their design by installing tactile walls that guests are encouraged to touch and feel, incorporating greenery and artwork, attracting birds to sing by the doorway, and partnering with chefs to prepare "unfussy" food. They also installed triple-filtered water dispensers and a water-collection system. Signs in the rooms assure guests that they have an unlimited supply of natural water, and are reminded that they are helping reduce plastic waste and minimize water usage.

As our most powerful memory sense, our sense of smell is an easy way to trigger our hippocampus and file away a pleasant experience. Our CEO, Tom O'Donnell, recently visited the Historic Hotel Bethlehem in Bethlehem, PA. Tom admittedly is not one who typically notices the frilly and fussy kinds of details, but even weeks after his trip, he couldn't stop talking about the signature scent that is piped throughout the hotel. It left such an impression on him that he has since ordered four bottles of the spray that they offer online. Creating a custom signature scent is a great opportunity to implant a lasting memory and entice brand loyalty.

Memories involving taste can often be very vivid because they really involve all five senses. The way the food looks, the sound it makes when you take a bite, the way it feels in your mouth, and of course the taste. When you combine this with the context of the experience itself, taste becomes a complex emotional sense memory. We all have happy childhood food memories, or perhaps negative food poisoning memories, which can have lasting impacts (and which is why fried clams are no longer my friend). Psychologist and neuroscientist Hadley Bergstrom explains, "The idea of nostalgia is that the sauce [for example] is associated not only with yummy pasta, but also with grandma and her home — that's because food is so reinforcing. All of this stimuli in the environment become associated with the reinforcing properties of that yummy pasta sauce." That's why DoubleTree by Hilton offers a warm chocolate chip cookie to every guest upon check-in. The gesture suggests warmth and caring, and reinforces the brand. Offering a fresh treat upon arrival or a complimentary glass of champagne can achieve the same effect.

Our body's largest organ, our skin, contains a network of nerves and touch receptors that report sensations to our brains. Our sense of touch is tightly involved in our perception of comfort and luxury. The smooth feel of a sleek door handle, the weight of a towel and the plush "give" in a sumptuous carpet are all ways that the sense of touch informs the mind and leaves an impression.

Nationwide is on your side. You just sang that sentence, didn't you? Sound is another powerful and sneaky tool in creating memories and influencing perceptions. Think of the sound that a luxury car door makes when you close it, or the sound of water hitting a hammered copper sink. These sounds inform us of a certain extravagance or indulgence, but also seep into our subconscious. Hard Rock Hotels asks VIPs to fill out a questionnaire before their stay, including what their favorite bands and songs are. When the guest enters their room, they hear their favorite music, creating instant happiness and nostalgia.

End on a high note

As mentioned earlier, the end of any given experience is just as, if not more, important than any other part, because it dictates how the experience is remembered and whether or not one chooses to do it again. A recent study found that waiters who gave mints with the bill received on average, 21% higher tips. What can you offer experientially to your guests to leave them with a lasting, pleasant memory? I recently purchased a record player online as a gift for a friend. Not knowing much about record players, I used the chat function for help with choosing the right one. The customer service representative, Travis, was very knowledgeable and guided me through the technical stuff so that I felt confident about my final choice. At the end of the purchase process, I was sent an email to rate my chat with Travis. I rated him a deserving five out of five stars. For his excellent service, I was then given an option to reward Travis with my choice of coffee, lunch or a product. I happily selected the product offering and felt great about it. Not only did I get the joy of giving something to Travis, but I was also left with the impression that this company really cares for their employees and the customer service that they offer to their guests. My remembering self will definitely be ordering from them again and telling others about my positive experience. So, what's your mint?



John is an award winning registered architect, licensed contractor, and licensed authority in the gaming industry across the country. John's experience includes project development in industries including gaming and hospitality, restaurant and food service, retail, healthcare, religious, and manufacturing.



How to Stop Being Afraid of the Phone!

Tips to improve your tele-selling process

By [Janet Hawk](#), Raving Partner, Player Development and Marketing

There is such angst, anxiety and apprehension when it comes to calling guests, both from management and from hosts. The first thing that management often does is hand the hosts their list and say, “call ‘em.” Sometimes they count the calls or come up with a random number that the host is expected to achieve in an allotted time period ... no strategy or purpose other than “call them and they will come.” The hosts then focus on just making as many calls as possible to achieve the number given to them; again, no strategy or purpose other than meeting that number. The approach is more like a used car salesman or the dreaded telemarketer that we all hate, completely devoid of any type of relationship building or personalized service.

It's not cold calling; it's tele-selling

This is why we have adopted the name of tele-selling. Tele-selling is another way of reaching out and touching our guests. As the mantra goes, “the more touches/contact you make, the more revenue/Theo you generate!” Simply put,

it is picking up the phone and getting to know our guests, thereby creating a more personalized experience for them!

Let's take some of the anxiety out of the phone call. The most important thing to remember: when our guests signed up to get a players card, they told us they wanted to be contacted and how! This isn't the hard sell, arm-twisting telemarketing call that no one wants. This is relationship marketing. The better you know your guest, the better you can help make their experiences at your property more memorable. That knowledge alone should alleviate some of the fear! Once you have begun the relationship, the fear completely disappears because you have a good foundation.

Now, let's look at a few more tips:

Plan and preparation

This is the MOST overlooked process and, really, one of the most important. Before you even pick up the phone, you need to do some research.

HOST AND PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

- Who are you talking to? Look them up in the system! What does the information in the system tell you?
 - Are they local? Drive-in? Fly-in?
 - How long have they been a member?
 - Age?
 - Marital status?
 - What is their game of choice?
- Use different techniques depending on the initial information that you get about the guest.
 - Use analysis to help determine priorities.
 - Is there a big player who frequented your casino often who has fallen off the radar?
 - Someone with a big loss?
 - Upcoming birthday or anniversary?
- Your strategy will determine the direction of your call tasks.
 - Acquisition – new player introduction
 - Retention – just checking in
 - Growth – high value, low trip player who might like some attention
 - Inactive – you are missed!

Listen, learn and lead

We need better conversations to know our guests. Conversations that include honesty, brevity, clarity, and a huge amount of listening! Talking is the easy part ... listening is hard! So, the big question is: are you “actively listening” or listening only to respond?

So many times we’ve been told that to show you are listening, you should nod and look at the other person. Well, I can nod, look and NOT be listening! How about you? Celeste Headlee did a wonderful [TED Talk](#) on better communication, and some of her points work wonderfully for PD.

When in a conversation with your guest, try to follow these basic rules:

- Don’t multitask.
- Don’t pontificate.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Go with the flow.
- It’s okay to say that you don’t know something.
- Don’t equate your experience with theirs.
- Be brief.
- TAKE NOTES!

Time management and follow-up

This is an important part of the process that often gets either overlooked or bypassed because of the unexpected that pop up in the day-to-day activities of a host team. Managing your time and proper organizational skills will help you not only stay on top of things, but allow you

the continued follow-up that is crucial to building and maintaining relationships with your guests.

- Know your goals.
- Make sure you’re engaging in activities that support your goals and your team’s goals, both short and long-term. Don’t get so busy digging the ditch or stomping out brush fires that you lose sight of the big picture.
- As mentioned previously, prioritize wisely.
- I’ve said it before, but you can’t eat an elephant in one bite. Determine what needs to be done first, and properly schedule your time to deal with what should follow.
- Avoid time-suckers! You have to learn how to say no to people (players and teammates) who are eating up too much of your time.
- Control the conversation. We all have those people who can talk without taking a breath. You must take the lead and be able to put an end to a conversation. Most players know that their host has other duties and will respect the fact that you have to go. Be honest!
- Your time is a priority! Limit the one-on-one time you spend with your guests. You can get just as much accomplished with a cup of coffee and dessert as you can with a four-course meal.
- Planning is everything!
- Stop flying by the seat of your pants and map out your day, week, month and quarter. Then adjust as needed, which will be every day!
- Eliminate distractions: close the office door when necessary! Especially when on a call. Nothing ruins the flow of a conversation like when someone comes running into your office and you’re on the phone.

Don’t be afraid of the phone! It is the quickest and most effective way (other than face-to-face) to get to know someone. How can you help them and amplify their experience without knowing them? Once you know them, the rest is easy. Who ya gonna call? For more information on utilizing the phone for generating revenue, read fellow Raving Partner Daniel Wood’s article on not getting caught in the “bad telemarketer” loop on [page 4](#).



Janet provides Raving clients with continued support and training in the practical skills of marketing, promotions, special events, entertainment, hotel, table games and player development.



Four Things to Consider Before You Consider Consultation Help

How to manage this outside resource to your benefit

By [Kevin Huddleston, CPA, CGMA, CFE](#), Strategic Raving Partner, Accounting and Auditing, and Partner, [Finley & Cook](#)

Have you ever tried to complete a really difficult puzzle? One that has an area that does not really have a picture, and it's just a big section of the same color? Sometimes, operating a casino may have the same feel. There may be an area or two that you know is an important part of the puzzle, but you just can't get all the pieces to fit exactly like they are supposed to, because that area of the puzzle just isn't very clear to you. When completing an actual puzzle, sometimes it helps to bring in another set of eyes to focus just on that section. In a casino operation, this may mean bringing in consultant help ... individuals who are skilled

in a specific area to help you complete your metaphorical puzzle in the most efficient way possible. This is not an uncommon practice in the industry.

As important as it is to complete the operational puzzle, here are four things to consider when evaluating potential consultation help:

1. **Notify the regulatory entity** – For Tribal casinos, the Tribal Gaming Regulatory Authority is considered the primary regulator of the casino operation. Using the puzzle example, the TGRA is looking at the whole

EXECUTIVE COACHING & MENTORING

picture and making sure that the puzzle does not have pieces that don't belong, that there are no missing pieces, and that there are not pieces in one section that clearly do not belong. When a consulting agreement is in place, someone new will be working on the puzzle. Notifying the TGRA keeps everyone on the same page and allows effective regulation to occur. The TGRA can ensure the assets of the Tribe and the integrity of the gaming continue to be protected while the operation gets those pieces of the puzzle put together efficiently. There is probably already a process established for this. Know this process and communicate it to the consultant! It will make life easier for everyone.

- 2. Define the role of the consultant(s)** – This is beneficial for both the consultant and the operation. Consulting groups cannot – and should not – manage any part of the casino. There are regulations specifically prohibiting this and several examples where regulatory entities have made notice of it, even when it was only the appearance of management. The casino's management team should welcome this definition. They don't want consultants doing their job for them! Outlining the role early in the relationship will give the consultant clear boundaries for their part of the puzzle, avoiding them potentially messing up parts that are already put together. Consultants will also embrace the defined role, as it should define the scope of their project and add clarity to the operation's expectations.
- 3. Perform a cost-benefit analysis** – To be fair, a cost-benefit analysis can mean a plethora of things. For some, this means hours of crunching numbers, manipulating data, and analyzing countless variables. Typically, those in-depth analyses yield great results that shouldn't be taken for granted. However, it may not be necessary. Almost any decision maker can do a cost-benefit analysis. Sure, there will be some assumptions made and the science might not be exact, but it's likely that no one knows your operation better than you do. Even if it is a simple pros and cons list, take the time to think about what you're investing in and what you expect the results to be. If you expect your consultant to help you increase revenue by 10%, know what that dollar amount looks like. Compare that to what you're paying the consultant. If you're paying more than what you're getting back, you may need to reconsider. Again, it doesn't have to be complicated. You know what the puzzle should look like; make sure that the consultant knows your vision before you get started.
- 4. Create a policy** – These are painful words for some folks. Sometimes it feels like we just write policies to say that we have one. And sometimes that may be true. But a good policy that is implemented and maintained adds internal control. Frankly, that is never a bad thing.

When you document how you are going to allow people to help you with your puzzle, this process gets much simpler. Start with the three items mentioned above, then build on them. Utilize forms and templates to standardize the process. Try creating the policy when you are NOT considering consultation help. This will keep you from being jaded.

You can find a consultant for just about anything in the gaming industry. This is actually a good thing. As you work to put your puzzle together, you always have resources should things start to become difficult. If it hasn't happened to you yet, you can be almost certain that it will. When the time comes, be ready! Consultants want to help you, but at the end of the day, it is still your puzzle.



Kevin, a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, provides outsourced accounting and consulting services for Native American tribes and casino clients. Through his nearly three decades of working within the gaming industry, he is an expert in integrating the many financial systems unique to the gaming industry.

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Raving's 2nd Annual Indian Gaming National Marketing Survey

Key findings indicate promotions and digital spending will increase; email at status quo

By [Deb Hilgeman, Ph.D.](#), Senior Raving Partner, Market Research

In January, Raving released the second annual casino marketing study based on data from more than 80 U.S. casinos nationwide, and First Nations casino properties in two Canadian provinces. Some of the casinos that participated in the study have fewer than 250 slot machines; others are mega-resorts with thousands of machines. Whether you're with a tribal or commercial casino, the results from this study are designed as a tool to help and inform you.

Data for this study is collected via an online survey for several weeks in November and December. Findings are released at [Raving's National Indian Gaming Analytics & Marketing Conference](#) held annually at the end of January. The survey is designed to be completed by a senior marketing or management representative who is knowledgeable about the property.

Before finalizing the survey content and sending it, Raving reaches out to field practitioners for input: How useful was last year's study? What information can we change or add that would make the content more valuable? Based on that input, this year's study added questions about gaming revenues, competition, capital projects, players club processes, and job satisfaction. The average time to complete the survey was 19 minutes.

Last year, 69 casinos started the survey, and 53 casinos completed the survey. This year, 90 casinos started the survey and 59 casinos completed it. Some of the 90 casinos that started the survey answered varying amounts of questions before dropping out. Data from all respondents was used in the analyses.

In this article, we'll look at some of the key findings in just three areas from this year's study:

Key Finding #1: Casinos are planning major increases in promotions, free play, and direct mail in 2018.

26% of casinos are planning to increase promotions this year, compared to 13% last year. 72% of casinos plan on doing the same amount of promotions this year as they did last year, not a single casino said it was going to do less promotions, and 2% were not sure.

As if that's not enough to get marketers worried about what the competition will be doing, 29% of casinos said they're going to be increasing free play this year. That's more than

double the 13% of casinos last year who said they would be increasing free play.

And finally, 44% of responding casinos said they are increasing direct mail this year.

These planned major increases in promotions, free play and direct mail mean that competition in your market is likely to be more intense than last year. Review what you're doing to monitor your competition's promotions and mail offers. Be sure you're analyzing all your marketing programs and running as efficiently as possible.

Key Finding #2: Digital messaging becoming more effective, increased spending planned.

What are casino marketers going to do differently in advertising and communications in 2018? The majority of casino marketers are planning increases in electronic channels – 64% of casinos will increase Social Media and 61% are increasing Digital/Internet.

The survey asked Respondents to rank the effectiveness of 11 different communication mediums. This year, the effectiveness ranking increased by more than 10% in Email, Social Media, Digital/Internet and Mobile Marketing. As casino marketers gain experience in using these mediums, and consumers trend more toward using them, effectiveness grows and spending increases. The biggest loss in the effectiveness ranking was TV, down 12% from last year.

It's often more difficult for smaller casinos to gain knowledge and experience with newer mediums. But, if you haven't started using these communication channels, you're falling further behind every year. There are agencies and companies that can help your casino develop these programs, and you also can identify training that you can invest in to get your marketing department up to speed.

Key Finding #3: Email is not advancing.

More than half of casinos (52%) are going to increase spending on email this year. This should be in conjunction with growing the number of email addresses associated with members in their database, but casinos are lagging at this. At the end of 2017, the majority of casinos (51%) had less than 40% of their database with associated email addresses. Only 11% of casinos had more than 60% of their database with emails.

% of Email Messaging	2016 % of Casinos	2017 % of Casinos
0%	13%	10%
1% - 24%	56%	55%
25% - 49%	19%	23%
50% - 74%	9%	10%
75% - 99%	2%	2%
100%	2%	0%

While many other industries are aggressively moving toward “paperless” communication, casinos are in a status quo. The majority of casinos (55%) are sending less than 25% of their communication via email, slightly down from last year (56%).

Since many casinos have not shown strong growth in increasing the percentage of email addresses for database members, it is not surprising that only 12% of casinos send at least half of their marketing communications via email.

For marketers, the challenge is in learning to successfully integrate email into your program. Raving has surveyed tens of thousands of casino customers and the growing trend is for people preferring communications via email. While this won't replace direct mail for most casinos any time soon, it is going to continue growing in importance. The balancing act for marketers to move forward in email communications is to identify which members of the database prefer email and to ensure that response rates are monitored and adjusted as you transition.

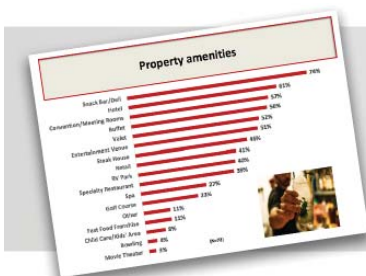
There is much more information in this survey report that is designed to help you determine how your marketing program and department compare with other casinos. If

your casino did not participate in this study, we warmly invite you and strongly encourage you to participate next year. The more data we have, the more valuable this annual research project will be.

If you'd like information about this survey, or how Raving can help fill your casino's research needs, contact Amy Hergenrother, Raving's VP of Business Development, at 775-329-7864 or email her at amy@ravingconsulting.com.



Deb uses her extensive research knowledge and qualifications, combined with her casino marketing management experience, to deliver superior market research to Raving clients. Deb works with properties to determine how market research can take their operations and profitability to the next level by removing the guesswork in decision-making.



Have you received the full report?
 Email gency@ravingconsulting.com for your complimentary copy!



Laughter for a Cause – Are You In?

The Native Strong Comedy Slam returns

A Message From [Brady Scott](#), Raving CFO

This year we are celebrating the **4th Annual Native Strong Comedy Slam** the evening of Thursday, April 19, at the stunning Smith Center in downtown Las Vegas.

When Deana and I purchased Raving last year, it was with great pleasure that we continue Raving's fundraising efforts on behalf of the [Notah Begay III Foundation](#) (NB3F). As a registered member of the Coquille Indian Tribe in Oregon, I was already familiar with the important work of NB3F. I have personally watched members of my own family suffer from this preventable disease. It's my hope through the NB3F partnership and events like the Comedy Slam we can raise awareness and money to eliminate this disease for our future generations. I know, at times, it can feel like we can't make a difference. However, that is not the case with childhood diabetes.

With that said, I'm reaching out to you to ask you for your support for this year's event taking place April 19 during NIGA. We're delighted to be hosting the Comedy Slam at the nationally-renowned Smith Center. With this new venue, as a sponsor, you can now choose from a variety of seating options with tables on the floor or balcony, perfect for your groups of four, six, eight or you could even reserve the entire balcony for a group of your personal clients, as well as individual tickets. Please visit our website for more information www.NativeStrongComedySlam.com. I think you'll like the setting as much as we do!

The evening begins at 6:30 pm with cocktails outdoors in the courtyard which is included in your ticket. And what I've enjoyed most attending this event, is the great

conversations and folks I've met even before the show starts! This year shouldn't be any different as we expect over 200 of Tribal gaming's industry leaders and supporters. The show begins at 9:00 pm inside Myron's Cabaret Jazz room. If you recall from last year, the event was packed, and we sold every single seat.

Our Native American comics are Ernie Tsoisie, headliner Howie Miller and our long-time event host Larry Omaha. Again, this evening of laughs benefits NB3F and its critically important work addressing the health and fitness of Native American youth. We're thrilled that this event is once again endorsed by Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. and the National Indian Gaming Association. We are also pleased to announce that Notah Begay III will be attending this year!

Sincere thanks for your support of this very important event and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. I hope you buy a table or heck, a couple of tables, and bring your clients, your friends, your spouse and your business associates. Make sure to book your table fast; we will sell out.

Best Regards and See You at the Comedy Slam,

Brady Scott
Raving CFO
bradyscott@ravingconsulting.com

The State of Direct Mail

Despite increasing costs and new technology, it's still a casino marketer's bread and butter

By [Tami Jones](#), Strategic Raving Partner, Direct Mail and Digital Printing and Senior Account Manager, [CSG Direct](#)

I know I'm a little late, but keeping in the spirit of the State of the Union address, I can confidently say that the State of Direct Mail is STRONG.

According to Raving's 2nd Annual Indian Gaming National Marketing Survey released this past February, 44% of casinos are increasing Direct Mail this year, and 88% of survey respondents said that Direct Mail is the most effective way to communicate with existing customers.

This may seem like a pretty bold statement to make, given the prolific integration of technology and digital advertising into every single nook and cranny of our lives, but it is true. Many marketing companies have spent a LOT of money trying to find out why. The answer they have found? Direct mail is REAL. You can hold it, touch it, turn it over in your hands, open it, close it, set it down for a day or two and easily find it again, and do the same thing all over again. It is tried and true and has been around forever, like an old friend. You can count on it. Why else

would over 80% of us check our postal mailboxes at least twice per week?

While it is true that direct mail is alive and well, we must still be mindful of the times in which we live

Digital technology can no longer be denied, so you need to incorporate the technology into the mix of your overall direct marketing strategies and use all of the communication channels to reinforce your messages and increase your overall ROI. While even millennials like direct mail, they will go to a mobile device to redeem an offer they received in the mail. So, provide them with a personalized landing page (PURL) or QR code on the mailer to use to redeem the offer that you have tailored just for them.

The age-old marketing and advertising principle of making sure that your customers are engaged by multiple touches to reinforce your message is still true today. One direct

What is the one MOST effective medium that your casino uses to communicate with existing customers?

**Top Answer: Direct Mail: 81% in 2016
88% in 2017**

	2016	2017
Email	5%	0%
TV	4%	0%
Radio	4%	2%
Newspaper	2%	2%
Social Media	2%	3%
Texting	2%	0%
Call Center	n/a	2%



Although newer communication channels are gaining usage in casinos, Direct Mail saw a 7% increase as the most effective way to reach existing customers. (N=60)

CASINO MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

mailer to a player may not convince them to come to your event, but a direct mailer preceded and/or followed by an email or phone call letting them know that it's coming or reminding them that there are still available seats, followed by a personal phone call from a host, will do wonders.

Direct mail is a challenging and costly medium within your marketing arsenal, and you have to be aware of the ever-changing costs involved

Postage went up this past January, and there are no indications that it won't continue to go up every year for the foreseeable future. That having been said, the US Postal Service is still the LEAST expensive postal system on the planet. If you want to know how to keep the costs in check, it is simple. KEEP USING THE POSTAL SYSTEM. As we have migrated to online bill pay, online invoicing and paperless statements, postal costs have continued to rise in order to counter the drops in revenue. Just like every other business in America, the United States Postal Service is a slave to the principle of supply and demand. But it is the only legal monopoly, which means that it isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

Be mindful, too, that the industry has been made aware that the cost of paper will be going up as the year goes on as well. Trade issues with the markets that supply US with

a large amount of the least expensive papers have forced US paper companies to source more expensive markets in order to meet demands. These increases are not huge in the big picture, but we all know that once costs go up, they aren't likely to come down. Be sure to plan for this in your budgets going forward. The cost increases will be incremental over time.

How do you counter these increasing costs? Take care of your most valuable asset, your database, and be sure that you are targeting the right people with the right offers. Support your direct mail with less expensive digital channel marketing tools, and keep your messaging simple and consistent.



In her 20+ years of casino, direct mail and management experience, Tami has worked for three different casinos, a home health corporation, and her current employer, CSG Direct, a direct mail and digital printing company. She specializes in helping casinos optimize their direct marketing programs by evaluating actual mail pieces and scheduling practices, data hygiene practices and more.

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How machine learning will change gaming

By [Azam Husain](#), Strategic Raving Partner, Analytics and Systems Integration Specialist and CEO, [Casino Science](#)

Hidden away inside your data are incredible secrets. With lots of data there can be many multiples of insights locked away. But make no mistake – the data holds the answers that you are looking for. You just need to find them.

And with lots of available data, you just need to analyze it in a way that allows you to observe some discernible pattern. It is within those patterns, too complex for you to detect manually, that you will find answers to your most complex problems.

This is exactly what machine learning does: It examines large amounts of data, looking for patterns, and then generates the capability for you to recognize those same patterns in new data. You can use this insight to make better predictions. Put another way, machine learning helps you get smarter with the data that you already have.

For example, suppose that you want to determine with a high degree of confidence, that a promotion will lead to redemption. What's the right approach for doing this? One option would be to estimate a possible redemption rate for said promotion. The estimate might be based on anecdotal evidence of past conversion, or it may be an artificially created assumption based on your best guess. This approach could work, but it will not be precise.

A different approach would be to look at the available historical data. For example, suppose that you're trying to find the best approach for detecting offer redemption, and all that you have to work with is the historical redemption data shown in Figure 1.

PlayerId	Offer	Gender	Redemption Status
23423	10	M	Redeemed
89455	10	M	Redeemed
12342	10	F	Not Redeemed
98377	10	M	Redeemed

Figure 1: With a small amount of data, the pattern is hard to find.

The good thing about having so little data is that you might be able to find a pattern just by looking at it. The bad thing about having so little data is that the pattern you find is likely to be wrong. Given the data in Figure 1, for example, you might erroneously conclude that males have a higher probability of redemption for this particular promotion.

With more data, your odds of finding a more accurate pattern get better, but finding that pattern will be more difficult. For instance, suppose that you have the set of redemption data shown in Figure 2.

With this much data, it's immediately obvious that our first guess at a pattern — all males — can't be right. But if that simple guess was wrong, what's the right answer? In the data shown here, players older than 55 seem to redeem more. But then look at PlayerId 24552 and 93646 — they don't fit this pattern. Or is it possible that the offer amount led to the redemption? Even that doesn't seem right, since both high and low offers were redeemed. Maybe a combination of factors like offer amount and distance to property is fueling redemption. But even this could be suspect.

With some time, you may figure out what is driving redemption, since the data you have to work with isn't very large. But the permutations could be maddening, even with this small sample size.

What if you had not just the ten records here, but hundreds of thousands of records? And suppose that for each record, you have not only seven columns of data as shown in Figure 2, but 60 columns. There's probably a useful pattern hidden in that data for determining which players will redeem. But you'll never figure it out by manually looking at the data — there's simply too much of it. Instead, you have to use statistical techniques and approaches that are designed for finding patterns in large amounts of data by using a computer and an algorithm.

This is exactly what the machine learning process does. It applies statistical techniques to large amounts of data, looking for the best pattern to solve your problem. It then generates a way for you to recognize that pattern. This is

PlayerId	Offer	Gender	Age	Distance to Property	Redemption Date	Redemption Status
23423	10	M	59	0-25	3/24/2017	Redeemed
89455	10	M	61	25-50	3/24/2017	Redeemed
12342	10	F	36	25-50		Not Redeemed
98377	10	M	55	0-25	3/28/2017	Redeemed
13442	5	F	78	25-50		Not Redeemed
23423	50	F	68	50-100		Not Redeemed
63445	50	M	55	50-100		Not Redeemed
24552	50	F	44	25-50	3/19/2017	Redeemed
93646	25	F	41	25-50	3/15/2017	Redeemed
82048	10	F	62	0-25	3/26/2017	Redeemed

Figure 2: More data can help with finding better patterns.

often referred to as a model, and it can be used against your data to solve all types of data-centric problems, like the probability of offer redemption. With our offer redemption problem, a marketer could build a way to detect who to present with an offer, using characteristics from prior redeemed offers. Armed with this information, you could save on promotion costs by only offering to those players who have a high probability of redemption. Or you could evaluate the probability that the gaming behavior associated with the redemption is high, and only offer to those players.

Machine learning plays an important role in this new analytics renaissance. Data wears its secrets as armor, until it's punctured to reveal the insight. Used in a targeted way, it can unearth insights at immense scale and amazing precision.



A self-confessed “data nerd,” Az helps casino operators make sense out of the vast quantity of casino data. Az helps Raving clients extract the right data from casino systems, enabling marketing and player development teams to make data-driven decisions.

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Billboard Technology

Yes, it exists, and this is how you can use it strategically

By [Mark Astone](#), Strategic Raving Partner, Branding, Advertising and Media Services and CEO, [Catalyst Marketing Company](#)

A few months back, we talked about [Data and the Human Factor](#). Technology (and big data) is every company's favorite playground. Or at least it should be. Dead and gone are the days where we rely on a media sales rep to rattle off impressions or market index identifiers to sell us on our traditional media opportunities. With the latest marketing tools and technology, we are able to truly optimize media opportunities that were previously considered catch-alls. For example, let's take a look at how technology can drive your billboard and out-of-home placement and content decisions.

Catalyst is able to map out billboard locations for our clients with the use of current technology. These applications allow us to apply a heat map overlay and conduct proximity analysis to determine theoretical and player counts. With

the touch of a button, we can bring data to life. No more driving by billboard locations, as this technology allows you to preview potential billboard sites from the comfort of your office desktop. Simply zoom in on the interactive map to see specific locations, or zoom out to see customer information for a larger area. By using theoretical value or player counts with billboard placement, our clients can target the right locations for their specific needs.

No longer are we spending time putting pins on a map to identify prime billboard locations. Technology now works with the knowledge of where your players are coming from, along with the value of your main markets. This helps you ensure that the impressions of each billboard will come from existing and potential customers.

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Another important use for this type of marketing application? With interactive map visualization, you can input competitor data and zero in along specific sections of roadway to review competitor messaging as well. This is key to the planning process and helps you strategize your best messaging for each location.

However, whether your billboard features a brand message, a headlining act, or a promotional message, with a strategically placed billboard, your messaging is secondary. The most important thing is that your presence is there and in the right strategic location. With this type of research behind your billboard placement, your brand's impression WILL reach your intended audience.

With the use of key tools, technology takes the data and makes it work for you. Another plus? For markets in high-traffic areas, this software also assists with calculating drive times, rather than miles. This can be helpful for messaging, too. Make this software work for you ... manage, filter, and chart your maps. Create an operational workspace using player data and market analysis. Import your known player data and export the magic that comes with smart technology.

Technology is also enhancing the billboard experience. We are seeing more and more billboards being converted to digital boards. Utilizing marketing technology to better understand when your customers are seeing these digital boards will ensure that you are best dayparting your content, allowing you to deliver the right messages with the optimal frequency for a single digital location. In addition to digital boards, we are starting to see beacon technology being built into billboards. This technology allows you to direct message or target mobile devices for your customers who have opted into your messaging services or provided their data through your property's Wi-Fi, for example.

The story that we are able to tell about our billboard network regarding messaging, impressions, traffic volume and patterns, as it relates to your customer data, allows you to support and enhance your buys with the rest of your media mix. For example, following a high-traffic time block on your billboard route that is heading into a residential area, you know it is a good time to make sure that your broadcast media is activated in that target area. This presents a great opportunity to push a geo-fencing campaign that reinforces the messages on your billboards in the area.

Through the use of marketing technology supported by a focused media or strategic planner, we can take a once static medium, like a billboard, and make it truly dynamic. There is something profoundly sentimental to me when I consider that marketing today can still very much benefit

from the time-honored tradition of a roadside billboard. Yet, over a century later, we have continued to build upon its success with the use of modern technological advances. This isn't our grandparents' marketing strategy – but it is one that utilizes the best of both worlds.

Remembering that data is only good if you can do something with it, in this new year, I encourage you to take a look at some of the programs out there that help support and direct your business. Marketing technologies are allowing us to make our real-time data actionable with mediums that have long been ignored in the real-time data world. The opportunity for growth, when utilizing valuable software and systems, is as infinite as the World Wide Web ... it's endless.



Mark 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. Raving has partnered with Mark and his team at Catalyst to help our clients with solutions for branding, advertising and media services.

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Invest in Your Property's Future

Put curb appeal and upkeep in this spring's budget

By [Kevin Parker](#) & [Andrea McCurry](#), Raving Partner, Casino Operations and Technology

*“Successful investing is anticipating the anticipations of others.”
- John Maynard Keynes*

As winter turns to spring, many of us feel a sense of renewal and excitement at the idea of new beginnings and the prospect of new opportunities. We throw open the windows, deep clean the house, and mend any damage caused by the long, cold winter.

Do you and your staff have the same anticipation when it comes to your gaming facility? Has the property's senior leadership provided adequate budgetary resources to allow the staff to keep the facility clean and fresh?

If our goal is to attract new customers to our casino resorts, the resort must offer clean and comfortable accommodations in conjunction with an engaged and knowledgeable staff. While we, as an industry, understand the need for and invest in a well-trained staff, we generally under-plan when it comes to the upkeep of our facilities.

Our facilities are very much like our homes; the value lies as much in the curb appeal as the functionality of the structure. When we forgo upkeep, it negatively influences the perception of the customers we are targeting.

A carefully designed and well-executed reinvestment strategy is a necessity for the long-term health of any facility.

If we underinvest to boost our short term gains at the expense of renovation or modernization, we ultimately endanger our long-term revenue stream.

There is any number of reasons that a property might delay or cancel capital equipment purchases or improvement projects, but many of these delays are shortsighted and some are dangerous. Those of us who have been through the budgeting process understand that at the end of each year, required items submitted to the capital budget remain unfunded, while the issue that the funds were intended to address remains unresolved.

Revenue production dictates the availability of reinvestment resources, and there will always be expensive situations that present themselves which were not considered during the budget process. While we must address the most pressing matters first, we must plan on increasing reinvestment funding to cover both the current unresolved issues and the needs of the coming year. As property leaders, we must do our best to champion reinvestment

in the facility if we want to continue attracting new customers and increasing profits. We recently evaluated a property that had reallocated large amounts of the slot capital reinvestment budget for four years running. The slot floor is now underproducing and the out-of-date slot mix requires significantly increased parts and labor costs related to its aging machine base.

There was a time when a property could hide its condition until the customer arrived onsite, and then attempt to placate their displeasure with dynamic customer service. Those days are over! If your customer is thorough and minimally computer-literate, they already know the current condition of your accommodations.

Travel advisory sites such as Oyster.com, a hotel review site, detail out the true story about a property's condition and amenities. Similarly, Trippy.com syncs with social media sites and allows your online pals to provide recommendations for your itinerary. Friends don't let friends stay at dive resorts!

If your property is not up to the standards of its immediate competition, or your marketing department has started using the term “shabby chic” to describe your accommodations, you need to rethink your property-wide priorities, immediately.

If you do not have the authority to guide the focus of the capital projects in your facility, we are certain that you have the ability to influence the cleanliness and appearance of the overall property. While customers may forgive outdated decor, they demand clean and serviceable accommodations in return for their entertainment dollar. You get one chance to make a positive first impression, and if you fail, there are simply too many other entertainment venues available to your customers to expect them to give your facility a second chance.

Take a walk around your property with an open mind, beginning at the parking lot, and visit every outlet and public area in your facility. Look at the accommodations from the point of view of the customer, rather than that of an employee.

Outlets and Amenities

Cruise through your outlet areas; the restaurants, gift shop, spa, hotel lobby and pool areas. Look for potential risks to guests as well as team members.

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- Ask your team about any safety concerns that have become acceptable because the staff has found a workaround for them. Although the idea of a disregarded hazard is appalling, they can be found in virtually every facility.
- Is the gift shop fully stocked with merchandise, or is it mostly bare with minimal products on display? Sure, customers rely on the gift shop for snacks and cigarettes, but many like to pick up merchandise for friends and family.
- Check the pool area. Is the pool clean and well-chlorinated? Is the pool deck free of tanning oil, dead bugs, and other potential hazards? Are the tiles worn or in need of replacement? The pool should look cool, relaxing and inviting. If that's not the case, then you have some work to do.

Should you find areas within your facility that require serious attention, but you lack the resources to address them, don't rationalize away the shortcomings. Remember that the average customer doesn't care why your facility is in disrepair, only that they are paying good money for a substandard experience.

Remedy the issues you can with the resources you have available, and ensure that proper attention is given to the overall cleanliness and safety of the entire facility. Your efforts will not go unnoticed by your patrons.

Instead of addressing all the issues on your own, take the opportunity to make this a learning experience. Repeat this exercise with your key supervisors and managers so that they are also aware of what your customers are seeing. You can't assume that your employees understand the standards your facility requires, you must educate them. Through training, follow-up and setting an example, you generate awareness for your staff and a standard for them to follow.



Kevin and Andrea are Raving's experts when it comes to casino operations, technology and regulations. They have partnered together for the last 15 years specifically opening new casinos, rehabilitating existing properties, and developing new technology to enhance player experience.

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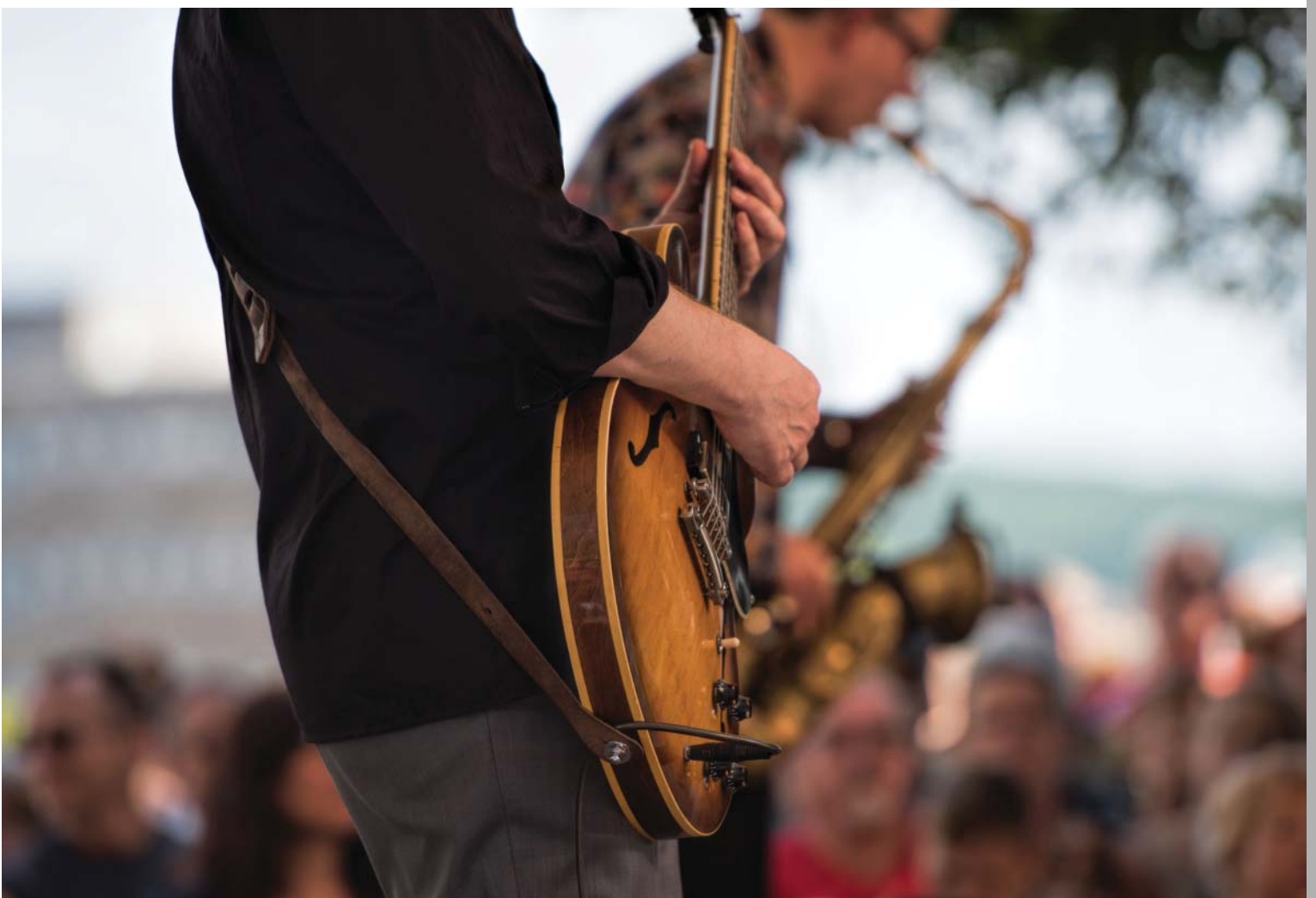


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Losing Money on Your Entertainment?

Here's a different way to look at your budget

By [Kell Houston](#), Senior Raving Partner, Gaming Entertainment

One of the more common discussions that I hear all the time is, “we lost money on the show.”

For example, let's say that your show cost you \$50,000. You had ticket sales totaling \$30,000. You comped your top tier players free tickets, you also provided comp tickets for your Tribal council members. For 45-60 days, the whole community was hearing about your show and seeing your advertising and marketing, your billboards, your TV commercials and your radio. You also dropped a mailer with invites to your top customers.

Did you really lose money on the show? What about the intangibles that cannot be tracked on an Excel spreadsheet? Are you factoring in all the positive revenue flows being created by the concert? Or is each department taking credit individually for a full hotel and additional add-on nights, for the additional restaurant revenues and alcohol sales, for the sizable bump on your gaming floor, for your

spa services and golf course (if you have these amenities)?

All of the costs for a concert add up, and yet the loss ends up being directed at marketing/entertainment.

Even though there is a budget in place to provide the concert/entertainment...

- Have you taken into consideration all the additional incremental revenue on the property created by the concert?
- Have you looked at the indirect increase you have created in more frequent visits due to a strong entertainment program?
- Have you looked at the strength of your brand in your region and how it is impacted by your entertainment?
- And where does the ticket sale revenue get credited? The general casino budget or back to the entertainment budget?

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Imagine a casino without entertainment. Concerts and live events create energy and excitement. It's a night out, it's a nice dinner, it's a getaway night or two in a resort. It's a break from reality to some extent. Otherwise, it would be a pretty boring and unexciting place to go.

Concert entertainment especially, is a very important part of your brand, and also probably the most misunderstood.

You can't just throw stuff at the wall and expect it to stick. Entertainment today is a very specialized and competitive business, especially for casinos. You need to be realistic about costs, of course, but you also need to be very aware of your brand and your reputation. Imagine what would happen if your fine dining had poor service and unimpressive food. It would be a disaster. The same applies to a hotel room, with an uncomfortable bed, poor water pressure, dated and uncomfortable furniture and carpet.

Entertainment must be the best that you can afford for your budget.

It needs to be strategic, consistent, regular and unique. It needs to be managed internally and methodically from start to finish. Just as your restaurant cannot have a bad day, neither can your entertainment have a poor show.

The entertainment/marketing department versus other casino departments.

I have noticed recently that casino departments, for the most part, are working very hard to meet goals for their own department. In this process, what is being missed is that it's about the overall success of all the departments that make for a successful property.

I bring this up because, more and more, there seems to be a lack of teamwork between departments internally. Each department is more concerned about their individual goals, and in that pursuit, it comes at the cost of another department.

I will use concert entertainment as an example:

When a concert is put together for a casino, numerous departments are involved. Communication between these departments is an absolute must, from the beginning planning stages to the follow-up after the show:

- Hotel
- Food & Beverage
- Transportation & labor
- Security
- Banquets

These concerts are meant to draw new business, maintain current business and customers, and strengthen the brand of the property itself in the region/community.

Here's what I have noticed:

- On a concert night, the fine dining restaurants are tending to stick to their regular closing time, instead of staying open to accommodate the concert-goers, who often are getting out of the show at 10 PM or later and wanting to get a bite to eat. Doesn't it make sense to provide this amenity for your customers on concert nights?
- Oftentimes there is a lack of communication about the day-of-show requirements, such as room set-up times, crew & loader needs, security, the need for extra staff and longer hours on show day.
- The hotel room needs for Artists who are coming to your property to perform are being charged back to marketing/entertainment at sometimes the rack rate, not at a discount. Of course this helps the Hotel Department bottom line, but it seems like it punishes the marketing/entertainment department's bottom line.
- Food and beverage needs for Artists, including hospitality and meals, are also getting charged back to marketing/entertainment at sometimes the retail rate.

Concerts cost a lot of money. Not just the Artist fee, but everything else that goes into producing a successful show:

- Marketing and advertising, which includes billboards, in-house signage, radio & TV, etc.
- Outside production company for the sound, lights, backline & video needs
- Additional staffing and long hours
- Additional local transportation and security needs

So back to my point, each department must work for the common goal on a concert day. It's a lot of extra work, and it involves teamwork between departments. Marketing/entertainment often seems like a black hole where money disappears, but this is where the magic starts on your property.



Kell has a savvy gaming approach to utilizing entertainment as a tool to drive folks to the casino floor, which 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.



Dennis' *Vintage*, Sure-Fire, Personal Casino Promotions (Part IV of IV)

By [Dennis Conrad](#), Senior Raving Partner and President Emeritus, Raving

This will conclude my four-part series on casino promotions in which I was personally involved over the last 35 years. All were very successful, except one, and it, too, should have been successful with a little better planning and anticipation of what could go wrong. Enjoy these last three samples from my personal collection of casino marketing successes. You may see them as fine, aged wine to be savored and enjoyed. Or perhaps as old garage sale items long past their prime. In either case, I felt they were worth sharing.

Category: SLOT PROMOTIONS

Name: "TOO HOT TO HANDLE" SLOT TOURNAMENTS

DESCRIPTION: "Too Hot to Handle" was a summer series of three monthly slot tournaments, one each held midweek in June, July and August. The entry fee for each was \$395 with discounts available for participating in more than one tournament. First prize for each tournament was \$20,000 and there was an "Everybody Wins" prize structure whereby every entrant was guaranteed a minimum cash prize of at least \$25. Entrants in all of the Too Hot to Handle tournaments also received a drawing ticket for a hot red Camaro, which was given away at the conclusion of the August tourney. Participants of each tourney received a commemorative "Too Hot to Handle" t-shirt, a different one for each of Too Hot I, Too Hot II and Too Hot III.

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DENNIS' TAKE: Prior to the “Too Hot to Handle Slot” tournaments, our Las Vegas casino had two VERY successful high-end slot tournaments, with a \$1,500 entry fee, a \$100,000 first prize and all the bells and whistles. I was tasked with finding ways to have more successful and profitable slot tournaments. Not wanting to create more high-end tourneys for our small, high-end slot tournament player base, I focused on creating value-priced events that could attract new, but still profitable, slot players.

Summer was the perfect opportunity time for the new “Too Hot to Handle” slot tournament series. We had soft midweek occupancy in the hotel, and it made sense to try and put some slot players in those rooms. At the time, however, Las Vegas was not very popular with gamblers during the hot summer months, so there was some risk in scheduling not one, but three slot tournaments in a short, three-month timeframe.

Once we decided on the tournament entry fee (\$395) and the dates, we set out to make it exciting, to truly be “Too Hot to Handle.” We made sure that we had an eye-catching first prize (\$20,000). We pioneered the “Everybody Wins” prize structure for these tournaments and could promote the fact that everybody would at least win something, and most of the smaller prize amounts would be spent later in the casino. We added a sexy red sports car as an additional lure for the players who played in any tournament, with bonus car drawing tickets for those who played in additional Too Hots.

The smaller entry fees created a budget challenge, which we addressed by making the awards dinner less lavish and the welcome gifts less costly. In fact, the “Too Hot to Handle” t-shirts that we designed were in such demand, that we had requests for additional t-shirts from guests, and no one cared that we paid about 8 bucks apiece for them.

And the results for the “Too Hot to Handle” Summer slot tournaments? They all sold out. They attracted a new base of slot tournament players, as well as many of our existing VIPs as well. They filled the hotel and drove event profitability in the eyes of even the hardest-nosed bean counter. And they continued for several years afterward. Not bad for a low-end group of slot tourneys in the dead of summer.

Category: COMMUNITY CO-OP PROMOTIONS

Name: McDONALD'S SCRATCH-OFFS

DESCRIPTION: Back in the day when I was the Casino Marketing Director at a casino that also had a very popular kids' midway area, we felt that it would make sense to run some midway promotions, not only to attract kids for the games and attractions upstairs, but also to attract their parents for the casino games downstairs. My good friend and neighbor operated 15 McDonald's restaurants in the city, and I asked him if he was interested in handing out scratch-offs for free midway games at our property, no cost to him, to any cash-paying customers at his Mickey D's. Each scratch-off was guaranteed at least one free midway game at our property.

What could possibly go wrong? We were looking to attract kids (and parents). McDonald's is loaded with kids and parents. They had to make a purchase to get the scratch-off at McDonald's, driving their sales. And they'd have to buy more midway games at our property (after using their free scratch-off game win), driving our business. Sounds good, right?

We ended the promotion within 10 days, after scores of McDonald's employees came to our midway with handfuls of scratch-off tickets to use for an entire evening of midway fun.

DENNIS' TAKE: This is the one flop that I have included in my vintage series. I still think that the strategy is sound – partner with a company whose business intersects with yours (McDonald's with a circus midway). But what I learned is that quality control for a promotion is hard enough in your own organization, much less at another business.

We never asked the 15 McDonald's restaurant managers to control the scratch-off ticket inventory or their distribution. We assumed that they would give one to every cash-paying customer. We never met with the employees to explain what we were trying to accomplish with the promotion, never tried to get them excited about it or give them an incentive to

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hand out those scratch-offs. Had the scratch-offs been French fries, I'm sure there would have been controls on who gets them and how many.

I still believe in the power of cooperative marketing between two businesses with shared interests. But if you don't work closely enough with those businesses, you might be overrun by minimum wage employees, glad to have a fun night out at your expense.

I know it cost us a lot of teddy bears at our midway games. But I also know that I'd do it again, just a little smarter.

Category: SLOT PROMOTIONS

Name: "CELEBRATE THE WIN"

DESCRIPTION: One of the first gaming industry slot celebrations for jackpot winners was held at our Las Vegas property under the working title of "Celebrate the Win," devised by an in-house "skunkworks" team of dedicated volunteer employees. The process started when the VP of Casino Operations brought a strategic challenge to the group: "Slot players play for many hours in search of a jackpot, and when they finally hit one, I don't think it is a memorable experience – slow to pay, lots of paperwork and the jackpot paid by harried, sometimes frowning slot employees – so how do we change that to make a big impression on the player?"

After many weeks of brainstorming (and chatting with many slot employees who actually would have to execute the new jackpot protocols), the skunkworks team came up with a "jackpot celebration" that went something like the following:

Player hits jackpot.

Slot employee(s) responding to the jackpot go through existing procedures to get jackpot amount from cage and gather necessary paperwork.

After initial response and paperwork, one of the jackpot-paying employees would stop at one of the "Celebration Stations" on the slot floor, to pick up a boom box, a camera, a jackpot necklace medallion and a packet of "Lucky Dust" (a small bag of purple glitter).

Heading to the jackpot winner's slot machine, the slot employee would turn on the boom box full blast to play "Celebration" by Kool & the Gang, as they walked through the casino.

Upon reaching the jackpot winner, the slot employee would give a hearty congratulations to the player, quickly handle the paperwork, enthusiastically count out the jackpot amount as they placed hundred dollar bills into the winner's hands ("One, two, three..."), put the gold jackpot medallion around the winner's neck, take a photo to present to the player in a small photo frame with a winning message, and FINALLY, give the player the bag of "Lucky Dust" glitter and invite them to sprinkle it near the machine to demarcate the "winning zone" for other gamblers.

The jackpot-paying employee would return the camera and boom box to the "Celebration Station" and await the next celebration.

DENNIS' TAKE: You see lots of jackpot celebrations in the gaming industry now, but our "Celebrate the Win" effort was one of the first. It indeed was a big hit with the guests, and the concept took root at other properties in the company. Certainly, it makes sense to try and make a jackpot win a memorable experience for the guest. As I think back over this "home run innovation," the following points bear mentioning:

When you think about making it fun, get a little crazy and truly make it fun!

Involve the slot employees every step of the way – they are the ones who need to buy in to the process and pay the numerous jackpots daily.

View the effort not only from the jackpot winner's perspective, but also from the perspective of all the slot players who watch the whole process take place.

Don't chintz on the celebration elements. If you give away a jackpot medallion, make it a good one. If you take a photo, make sure that the guest would be tickled to receive it.

Devise some "signature" jackpot celebration elements that make it "yours," and refresh and improve them over time.

You can pay a slot jackpot like a bank might – slow, complicated, and without much joy. Or you can pay a jackpot like an enlightened casino operator who is glad the player won at MY CASINO and wants them to win (and play) there again and again, plus tell all of their slot-playing friends.

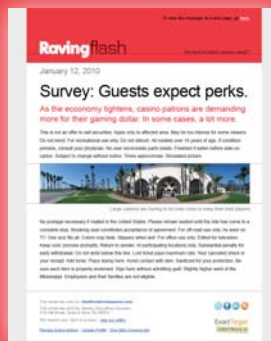


Dennis is President Emeritus of Raving Consulting Company, and has over 40 years of casino experience, including keno writer, bartender, dealer, floorperson, gaming instructor, special events manager, casino marketing director, gaming institute director, and corporate vice president of employee training and development.

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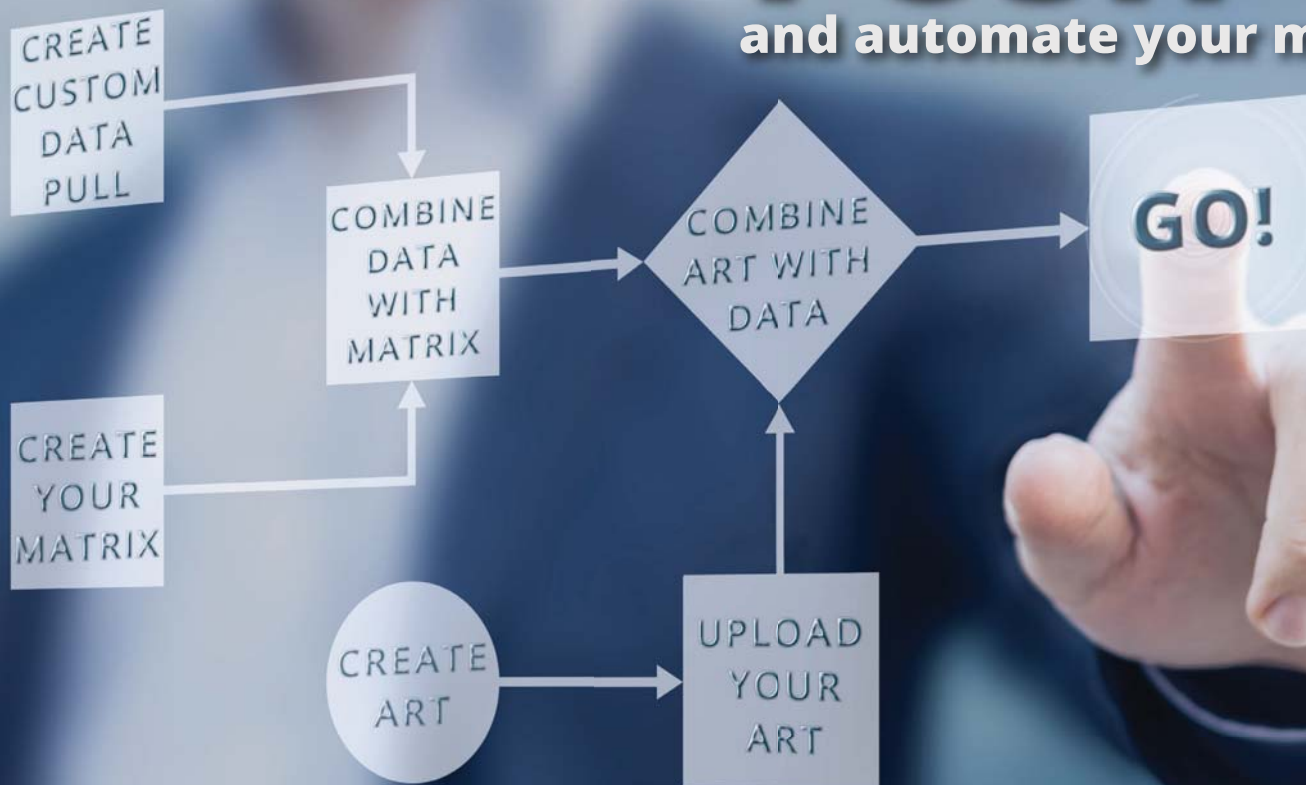


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