



Shifting Gears to Drive More Guest Choices

by Rob Jacks

We live in an instantaneous society, and guest demand for quicker service is a strong force that's driving operators to change the way they think about resort improvements and how they're spending their budget.

According to *Spectrum Gaming Group's Top 2016 Trends*, operators focused their attention on how to attract Millennials as an emerging generation of consumers. But it's much more than Millennials that need to be attracted – guests of all generations want to maximize their dollars and experience. Offering more options to all generations, from Baby Boomers to Generation Edge, should continue to be a top priority for 2017 and beyond. We are seeing that the guest's desire for a litany of options is heavily influencing their destination selection and related spending decisions. They're looking for the right property for their holiday or business travel, with the right service options and amenities. For operators to attract such a broad group of guests, they should be looking to offer more options.

Tribal gaming's overall growth has remained relatively steady throughout the Great Recession and subsequent recovery. While tribes continue to see gaming as a way to generate more revenues, a keen eye is also focused on driving more innovative resort options and amenities to meet the growing trend and offer more choices to guests.

To attract and retain a much broader guest population without compromising service to an already loyal, gaming and non-gaming guest base is not simple. It's also not easy to predict what guests will want. The good news is there are several easy-to-use and affordable tools available to help understand guests and deliver a more personal experience with services they desire most. Constant guest engagement through player development, attention to VIPs and deploying guest surveys at various areas on property are but a few avenues to understanding what choices the guest will want.

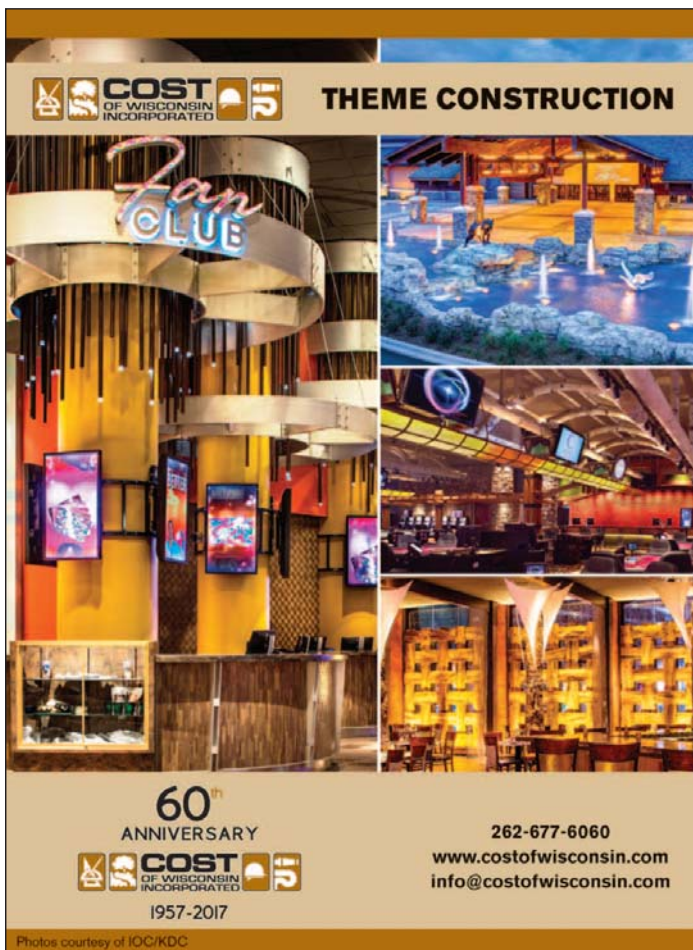
This concept of "choice" is familiar to casino environments and we've already seen a significant shift toward more options for guests. Operators are re-designing their businesses to provide categories of non-gaming amenities in the form of offerings such as spa or golf packages. Adding meeting facilities, exposition space, nightclubs, shopping, dining, pools and other offerings provide opportunities to attract a broader group of guests.

For operators to make the shift toward a more diverse and plentiful set of amenities, they will need to look beyond their comfort zone.

Five Tips to Get Started

1. Guest Considerations. What do you know and what don't you know about your guests? Look at the data you currently have about them and assess how well it informs you about their preferences and habits. Identify the top three to five initiatives that will allow you to create their ideal experience. What else may be needed to be able to deliver on these initiatives? This doesn't mean you need a unique guest experience for each profile, but it does mean that you need more than one. Fortunately, operators with BI tools are well-positioned to enable a deep understanding of guest needs, thoughts and expectations.

2. Business Objectives. Focus on the specific business objectives and prioritize them based on those most likely to attract and retain a different guest subset without compromising service levels for your existing guest base. Working through the highest priority first, formulate a well-rounded model of approach to create a process that is repeatable. Leverage this model for subsequent priorities, breaking it down into bite-sized



deliverables. Be open to adjusting priorities as guest trends may dictate.

3. Technology Considerations. There are certain technology solutions that will enable guest satisfaction and business objectives, but more than thinking about technology, think about the experiences that you want to produce for the different guest profiles. Then look at the technologies that will allow you to offer those services and to meet the business objectives better, faster and maybe even cheaper.

4. Staff Considerations. Be creative and get staff buy-in to support the new initiatives. Coordinate efforts with the cross-functional teams to develop and maintain sources of guest data. Consider a catchphrase, or even an internal contest, to involve staff in the details and to help keep your objectives top of mind. These staff approaches are not only a great learning opportunity, they're also cost-effective and help ensure your teams are invested in delivering personalized guest service across each guest persona.

5. Future Considerations. You can help prepare for the future by keeping an eye on changes in guest behavior; for example, if they're no longer interested in certain amenities. Understanding what services resonate with them today is a good start. Monitoring those preferences and remaining flexible enough to change course based on downward or upward trends is key. Businesses fall behind when they focus on protecting old investments. Businesses that focus on where the guest is going are more likely to thrive.

Nothing essential has changed for the industry; it is still clearly focused on delivering the best experience possible for every single guest. What is changing is the guest expectation. The changes are drastic and require a deeper understanding of what the guest is all about. There is no other way to know what amenities will best serve them. Guests are going to continue spending, but they're becoming more cognizant of where the spend is going, often looking for more amenities with a personal touch.

Operators are well on their way to addressing the needs of such diverse

categories of guests, with BI tools that support resort and amenity expansions intended to win more business, create loyalty and ensure greater guest satisfaction. ♣

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