

The new talent era

Neal Wyman and **James Theodore** of **Tyzack Partners** explain how the next generation of gamers must be catered to – and how staff recruitment must change as a result

Amidst all the economic doom and gloom, Macau's economy is stellar – in fact it is the fastest growing in the world. As we all know, its prime economy is gambling, and whilst business is indeed still brisk – only last year Macau earned over five times the gambling revenue of the Las Vegas Strip – competition between the gaming establishments is now seriously heating up. The fact that they recorded a 0.6 drop in visitation in August is a reflection of what is going on in all gaming capitals of the world.

However, far from feeling dispirited, the industry is full of promise. Integrated resorts, which started as a slow-burn change some 20 years ago, are increasingly

becoming the trend and a timely one at that. The world economy, rising interest rates and intensified competition are just some of the challenges the industry currently faces. In Nevada, the first legal “real money” online poker site is just weeks away from launching. It is time for the industry to take an innovative approach and to this end start defining the next generation of consumers who will ensure continued industry growth.

The new target audience is already very much in evidence but its drivers are different and need to be catered for in a more relevant manner. They are not pure gamers but more ‘experience-seekers’. In this time-starved, choice-saturated era they have moved





beyond “consumerism on steroids” to expecting to be thrilled. They want hi-tech, connectivity, exciting brands, top end retail choices, innovative environments - and they want it at their fingertips. Offer them the right sort of emotional cues and suddenly gaming takes on a whole new meaning.

Re-formulate your offering

As new regulations, new technologies and social media all impact on the gaming industry, it is imperative that the bricks and mortar resorts focus on re-formulating their offering, effectively creating a new era of all-inclusive gaming experiences.

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the globe have largely been managed in the same way their core industry developed, by gamers, for gamers. If the next step is to intensify the ‘experiential’ offering, they need to embed a new breed of person to plan, lead and manage this evolving style of gaming experience.

This is where transferable skills come into play. By meshing the skills that have propelled travel, leisure and entertainment sectors forward with leading players in the f&b and retail sectors, we will start to see a new pattern of talent emerging – people who have a broad



SKILLS



understanding of a number of these core sectors and the capacity to evolve these into the gaming arena. Whilst these are the more obvious transferable skills we also need to cherry pick talent from less obvious sectors to breathe innovative new life into an industry that is still reliant on the traditional business model that has kept it sparkling for decades.

Relevant

Re-crafting the traditional integrated gaming resort will need to ensure that it will not only remain relevant to their consumers but will effectively start engaging this new style of consumer – the one who will be drawn by the buzz and excitement, who comes for the high-voltage experience first and foremost, rather than a pure ‘gamer’.

In order for the evolution of this new style of entertainment arena to shift to the next stage, the talent pool that drives it needs to have the vision and the stamina to sustain the changes. Inserting new offerings into an existing and very traditional business model can be challenging, despite all the hype around ‘injecting fresh blood and energy’ into the business. Innovation, by its very nature, is disruptive and this is what our next generation of integrated resorts needs.

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Combining on- and off-line entertainment is a difficult mix to achieve successfully and something with which the industry struggles. Certainly the deregulation of online gaming will take a chunk out of the bricks and mortar gaming industry but there is more than enough for everyone. What we need now is to have in place the right people who can clearly articulate the vision for a future which combines the virtual with the traditional.

Finding these star-class players is not as simple as scouring the globe for obvious innovators. Neither is it a matter of ensuring candidates look good on paper. While they don’t need to have actual gaming experience, they do need to have a good feel for resonating trends in the entertainment or service sectors, a keen appreciation of trends not only in gaming but also in customer service and the capacity to be flexible and rapidly adjust direction.

Sector shift

Where once 25 years was the norm for a trend to have an impact on an industry sector, we are living in an era where, thanks to connectivity, our communication channels enable whole sectors of people to rapidly shift from embracing one trend to the next. Being one step ahead is no longer good enough. We are looking for people who don’t just follow new trends and apply them but who actually create them. As we shift from a knowledge economy to a social economy, the line is quickly blurring between the value of what we know and who we know and this too impacts on our choice of candidate.

In practical terms we now find ourselves having to choose between hiring an expert with a high IQ or a generalist with a high measure of social influence. A decade ago the trend was to look for people who had industry expertise; now we are looking for people with far broader skills sets which paradoxically narrows the talent pool considerably. The future for gaming looks poised for enormous expansion, not just in Asia but on a global scale and both on and off-line gaming will benefit from the new mindset and the innovative approaches to recruiting talent which are now coming to the fore.