

# Useful 2008 Resolutions for Casino Chief Executive Officers and Human Resources Directors

By Martin R. Baird

Well, it's that time of year again. Time to make resolutions and prepare for the best year ever. I have a few suggestions that would be of use to casino CEOs, GMs and human resources directors. They have to do with purpose, strength and simplicity.

Distractions. I read an article in Forbes about a guy who teaches sports psychology to people who play golf. He said that sand traps, the rough and water hazards are just distractions. WOW, this is big! When you keep it simple and see them as distractions, not monsters, it's much easier to focus on what you want... your ball resting comfortably on the green.

We all face distractions in our business and personal lives. You know, the things that pop up that force us to take our eyes off what we really want. Sometimes, we even let these distractions interfere with our focus. It could be a flat tire that gets the better of us and we end up wasting a day. Or it could be a mistake that a person or department made that we get sucked into like a black hole.

**So my first resolution is to have a clear and written purpose for 2008.** After all, if we know where we want or need to be, it's less likely distractions will get us off track. If we use our purpose as our guide post, we can make faster and easier decisions about what our priorities are. It also guides us into giving projects to the people who should be doing them rather than to those that will do them.

If I were a casino GM or CEO, I would ask all my direct reports to give me their purpose or a short list of purposes for 2008. This would help me help them stay on task. If someone brings me a whopper of a laundry list of "purposes," they clearly need

direction and coaching. This would be done early to avoid confusion as the year progresses.

**My second resolution would be to make a major improvement in the area of “bench strength.”** If you have read my articles over the last few years, you know I often mention “poofs.” I think what was once funny to me is now becoming a festering sore in the gaming industry.

Poofs are casino employees who are good at what they do and, before they're ready for it, they are promoted to supervisors and mid-level managers. Joe is an outstanding beverage server, so “poof,” he is suddenly an F&B supervisor. And he's lousy at it! He probably wishes he could go back to what he was doing before his promotion. Consequently, he makes life less than fun for his front-line team members. Poofs demoralize people and weaken a casino's bench, its pool of employee talent. Our employee Advocate Index™ scores for some of our clients are so low it amazes me. And this is not just an issue with our customers. When I talked with a variety of people last year at a major gaming conference, they shared the same feelings. Employee advocates love their jobs and recommend their casino to friends as a great place to work.

If you are not measuring the degree to which you have employee advocates – expressed as your employee Advocate Index – you are missing the boat. Research published by Harvard University makes it crystal clear that “satisfaction” is fickle and a waste of money to measure. So-called satisfied employees are fickle, but employee advocates are the real deal.

Once you know your employee Advocate Index score, it comes down to internal improvement to create more advocates. Employees need to be educated, trained, coached

and mentored to be good supervisors and managers. If they are not, they will fall back on what they know and that frightens me. What they know is what they learned from past bosses or high school coaches who stressed that one should never spare the stick. For example, supervisors and managers need to learn how to recognize and reward success in others. One of the top things casino employees tell us is that they want to know when they are doing their jobs the right way. Too many bosses think their employees will not raise their level of guest service if they are told they're doing a good job.

Finally, in the area of bench strength is the selection process. You need to know what skills people should have to be successful. In order for a casino to grow over time, it must have people coming up through the ranks who can run it. Let's say a new casino is opening in your market and it needs 12,000 employees. If this competitor takes a few of your best and brightest, do you have high-caliber people waiting in the wings?

**Here's my last resolution – keep it simple.** As the gaming industry evolves, some very talented people are working in it and consulting to it. You don't need to grow all of your own talent or re-invent the wheel with every project. I'm all for training and improving people, but I see it as a terrible waste of time, energy and money to take two years to create what you could have implemented immediately using the right resources.

Make 2008 the best year ever for your casino by staying on track with a well-thought-out purpose, strengthening your employee ranks and keeping it simple so the things that matter get done on a timely basis.

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*methodology of Advocate Index in combination with best business practices to chart a course for growth and profitability. More information about the Advocate Development System and Robinson and Associates is available at the company's Web sites at [www.advocatedevelopmentsystem.com](http://www.advocatedevelopmentsystem.com) and [www.casinocustomerservice.com](http://www.casinocustomerservice.com). A copy of "Advocate Index: An Operational Tool" may be obtained by calling 206-774-8856. Robinson & Associates may be reached by phone at 480-991-6420 or by e-mail at [mbaird@casinocustomerservice.com](mailto:mbaird@casinocustomerservice.com). Based in Annapolis, Maryland, Robinson & Associates is a member of the Casino Management Association and an associate member of the National Indian Gaming Association.*