

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2010

All casinos can provide outstanding customer service that leads to a successful brand, but they must have a turnkey system in place to make it all happen. In this article, Martin R. Baird, chief executive officer of Robinson & Associates, Inc., outlines the best practices of such a system.

Every Casino Can and Should Implement A Turnkey System for Success
By Martin R. Baird

If Southwest Airlines can establish a nationally recognized brand by providing customer-pleasing service, then a casino should be able to do exactly the same. In fact, Forbes magazine has identified stellar service as one of seven secrets to successful corporations.

Publisher Rich Karlgaard wrote in an opinion piece that “the trick is being true to your brand and never promising service you can’t deliver.” Karlgaard notes that Southwest customers gladly print their own boarding pass, stand in line and scramble for available seats because that’s the expectation Southwest sets. The airline delivers a good record of on-time arrivals. And flight attendants are free to laugh and entertain passengers. “The message is: We’re all in this crowded aluminum tube together, so let’s relax and have fun,” Karlgaard says.

Every single casino on the planet can do this. They can establish service standards so they never promise more than they deliver. They can set realistic expectations of an outstanding gaming experience so guests feel comfortable with what

they find on the casino floor. All guests are in the same building and casinos can make sure they have fun while they are there. In the process, a brand is established.

But casinos must have a system in place to make all that happen – a turnkey system of best practices that gauge, monitor and improve the casino's performance and guest service. The end result is guests who are far beyond being simply satisfied with their gaming experience. They are advocates for the casino and will return to play again and generate new business through positive word they spread about the property.

The best practices that casinos adhere to are critical. I believe those practices are leadership, program management, goals and metrics, incentives, action planning, improvement, and guest and employee closure.

Leadership. Management must act as leaders to create a culture that clearly demonstrates how important guest advocates are. A property's executives and managers must do more than simply support the changes needed to generate improvement. They should lead by example. For any improvement program to be successful, it must start with and be guided by management's vision and ability to lead people to a new place. An idea can start at any level of a casino, but for it to have maximum impact, it needs to be embraced and exemplified through leadership.

Program Management. This is one of the areas that casinos will find challenging. If your people are all busy working, how can they add a project like managing advocate development to their plate? It's also challenging because creating more advocates requires the effort of all departments, not just one. So if you have a person from table games managing the program, how will that make the people from F&B or slots feel?

Most casinos will be more successful if they delegate program management and support to an outside company. An outside firm won't have the bureaucracy to deal with and it will have a single focus that it is accountable for.

Goals and Metrics. Measurable goals and metrics should be established for all departments within the casino. They should be tied to a common goal to create incremental progress and profits. Many casinos spend a significant amount of time and energy developing goals and metrics so they can measure and judge the performance of a person or a department. The weakness I see many casinos facing is that the goals are not connected to the department and its ability to create advocates. The goals should add value to the casino over time.

Incentives. Once you have relevant goals, you want to have "carrots" or incentives in place to encourage employees to embrace the new behavior or system. If smiling will create more guest advocates, what incentives do you have in place that are directly connected to that behavior? To be effective, incentives must be specific. They also need to have a positive effect on the entire casino. For optimum results, the entire team should have identical goals and incentives.

Action Planning. Now comes the next major hurdle and that is action! For a program to be successful, it must have an action plan that lays out in detail who will do what, when they will do it and why they will do it. This plan is the cornerstone of improvement. It turns a dream into actionable items.

Improvement. Internal improvements should be identified and implemented to create more guest advocates. The improvement process likely will involve participant-centered training for all employees. For people to improve, they need to know what is expected of them and the best way to do that is through training that uses accelerated learning. This technique

makes learning fun and that, in turn, helps people adopt new concepts. Poorly executed improvement makes the entire process painful and ineffective.

Guest and Employee Closure. Employees will want to know how things are progressing. Keeping them informed gives them closure. As part of the system, guests should be asked how the casino can be a better place to play. Guests have closure when the casino tells them how their input was used.

I have just outlined a program for success based on internal improvement, outstanding service and guest advocacy. The Southwest Airlines brand didn't happen by accident. Without a doubt, Southwest also created a system for success and then moved forward. Your casino can and should do the same.

To read other articles by Martin Baird, go to www.casinocustomerservice.com/post.htm

Martin R. Baird is chief executive officer of Robinson & Associates, Inc., a Boise, Idaho-based consulting firm to the global gaming industry that is dedicated to helping casinos improve their guest service so they can compete and generate future growth and profitability. Robinson & Associates is the world leader in casino guest experience measurement and improvement. For more information, visit the company's Web sites at www.advocatedevelopmentsystem.com and www.advocateindex.com or contact the company at 206-774-8856. Robinson & Associates is an associate member of the National Indian Gaming Association.

CONTACT: Tom Ellis
Ellis Communications, Inc.
Phone (417) 881-5635
E-Mail tellis@casinocustomerservice.com
Yahoo IM tom_ellis46