

Casino Articles

"Learn Casino Marketing Effectively and Efficiently" or "Casino Marketing for Dummies"

-by Steve Karoul

I recently took up digital photography and wanted to learn more about how to improve my photos. I went to the book store to look for an instructional book. I looked in the photography section and I purchased a book titled "Digital Photography for Dummies" because it was written for an inexperienced new user. I have used the "Dummies" books before to learn about many new subjects of interest. Having worked in the casino industry for thirty years primarily in casino marketing I realize that most of what I know today came from "on-the-job", hands-on experience. I am currently self-employed as a casino consultant specializing in all aspects of casino marketing. I have written and published numerous articles over the years about casino marketing. Never-the-less, I still feel that I am always learning new things about casino marketing and try to share them openly.

I receive numerous requests every month for help from young people who want to either break into the casino marketing field or who want to learn more to improve their present skills. As a result of this I now realize that there is not a great deal of information available for young people who want to learn about casino marketing. Therefore I have decided to try to offer some helpful recommendations and suggestions.

First, I think it is important for people to realize that it is often very difficult and frustrating to break into casino marketing in one of the better positions unless you have some unusual skill set, past work experience or speak a desired foreign language. Most of the larger casinos around the world usually try to promote from within in order to develop career paths for their own hard working, dedicated, loyal employees. Marketing seems to be one of the more glamorous desirable positions that many people want. Consequently, one strategy is to just get hired first by your company of choice; hopefully for a lower ranked position within the marketing division, and watch for any postings or listings of new open positions that the casino wants to fill. It is a great way to learn from within and to climb the corporate ladder to a higher, more desirable marketing position.

Second, I strongly believe that one of the more important things to do once on the "inside" of a new casino is to begin to assess who is who and who does what. In other words, look for the leaders in the marketing department. I also strongly believe in the mentoring process. Most successful casino marketing executives or casino operations executives can usually attribute part of their success to having found a good mentor who helped them early on in their career. A mentor is someone who takes you in

under their wing as a protégé or just because they like you and then they make an extra effort to help you, guide you and advise you. Finding a good mentor is very important. You need to take the time to research this area very carefully and select someone who you think will be receptive to your request for help and that will be willing to make the effort to actually help you and guide you. This is not an easy task so view it as a challenge. As a challenge, you have the right to be selective and to change your mind should you find a better or more qualified mentor. Remember, you are the only one who can really control your own future so manage your efforts carefully and selectively.

In addition, I strongly advise all new casino marketing career seekers to read everything that they can get their hands on to either stay current on casino industry happenings or to learn from the experts. My favorite web site that I often contribute to with educational content is www.urbino.net. It was developed by Andrew MacDonald from Australia and he has worked extremely hard over the years to solicit articles from some of the best talent in the industry. It is a great resource and contains incredible amounts of helpful information.

I think it is also important for young people to try to narrow their focus early in their careers so that they can take advantage of the help of a good mentor who has either special skills or considerable experience in their desired subject or area. Marketing is a huge area and can cover many different sub-segments ranging from slot marketing, table game marketing, direct marketing, advertising, public relations, casino promotions, special events, ethnic marketing, international marketing, etc., etc.

There are a couple of good text books available about casino marketing. The two authors are John Romero and Michael McNamee. Both have considerable experience and have written some good casino marketing text books which can help give one an initial overall awareness of many subjects under the casino marketing umbrella. However, these are text books and should be treated as such. You will still need to get hands-on experience to really understand how and why things work in a casino environment. You also need to learn a little bit about human psychology and emotional intelligence.

I think it is important to also briefly mention casino ethics. Ethics are unwritten rules that differentiate good from bad, right from wrong and honorable versus dishonorable methods. The casino industry is very highly regulated and structured in all areas except for casino marketing. Some people may argue and claim that all areas in the casino industry are regulated and controlled but from my personal experience this is not true and definitely not true in many countries around the world. This is the

reason that I mention it here. Many people reading this article may live and work in fairly unregulated areas around the world. Never-the-less, I still firmly believe that ethics are still important for the overall success of both the casino and the employee. Always strive to do the correct or proper thing in all of your efforts. Don't take the easy way, don't take short cuts and don't cheat in your work efforts. Your reputation will follow you forever.

Ethics covers subjects such as honesty. I once wrote an article titled "Thou Shall Not Steal Except for in the Casino Industry". The article was related to stealing customers and increasing market-share. However, there are ethical ways to steal casino customers from a competitor casino and there are unethical methods. The ethical methods include promotions, incentives, advertising, and direct personal contact. The unethical methods include walking into a competitor's casino and passing out your business cards or inviting customers on a competitor's casino floor to come visit your casino. Another unethical method is to try to entice people to steal information such as player lists or other confidential information from a competitor casino. Always be ethical in everything that you do. This is important.

Another hot topic in casino marketing today is ethnic marketing. In the past casinos did not pay much attention to ethnic or niche marketing but as competition increases globally we are seeing more and more casinos beginning to focus new interest on ethnic marketing efforts. One of the biggest ethnic markets is Asian marketing but one also has to be careful not to generalize too much. There are many different areas of Asian marketing. One size does not fit all and your efforts may even be offensive if not handled properly. I have lived in several different Asian countries and there is an expression that basically says "Asia is not Asia". Asia is a blend or a melting pot of many different cultures, languages and customs. Therefore, do your homework first before you begin to market.

Seminars and conferences are also important vehicles for both learning and for networking with your peers. G2E in Las Vegas is the largest annual gaming conference with over 30,000 attendees each year from over 100 different countries around the world. It is a great conference that is split between educational seminars and a vendor trade show highlighting all new equipment or services. One of the best casino trade shows is the ICE (International Casino Exposition) which is held in London each year and it is a great event to view new releases of equipment or other related casino products. Another favorite of mine are the Raving Consulting seminars by Dennis Conrad. Dennis and Steve Brown run a series of marketing seminars that get right down to the real nitty-gritty of how to manage a casino host department, how to develop great casino marketing promotions, how to develop a player development program, etc. These intensive seminars are

well worth the money and also afford a great networking atmosphere with other aspiring casino marketers. It is very helpful to be able to discuss marketing related problems or issues with fellow marketing managers working at other casinos. Spending two or three days together studying casino marketing in a closed environment helps to build trust and friendships that last for years.

In summary, there is no one simple solution for learning casino marketing. I wish there was a book titled "Casino Marketing for Dummies" but there isn't. Therefore, smart people will learn to make the most of a variety of different options available to them. Successful casino marketing executives tend to multi-task numerous functions at the same time with many of them operating in sync or in tandem with other functions. As a result, a good casino marketing manager learns to think quickly and react properly when under pressure or stress. Casino marketing can be a very stressful occupation. It can also be one of the most exciting areas in a casino. Therefore, whatever time and effort that you invest now to prepare for the future will be well worth it. Good luck.

Steve Karoul is one of the top casino marketing consultants in the world today with almost 30 years of experience with the best casinos both within the U.S. and internationally. Steve has lived in numerous countries and has conducted casino marketing activities in over 90 countries around the world. He is a contributing writer to several different major casino publications often injecting his own hands on experiences. Steve can be reached at Tel. (1-860) 536-1828 or by E-mail: skaroul@comcast.net or www.euroasiacasino.com