



## Casino Cloud Based Operations

by Adam H. Smith

In the wake of COVID-19, the need to get casinos back to basics while using today's technology is now more important than ever. Prior to the widespread use of personal computers, general managers and department managers walked the casino floor, interacted with patrons, and unless for a meeting, spent very little time in an actual office. Marketing and player development was the responsibility of management, and consisted of shaking hands and having lengthy conversations with patrons. The analytics were slow and delivered twenty-four hours later, but the financials took a back seat because management already knew what the numbers would look like – they were on the casino floor for twelve hours a day. If you talk to those in the gaming industry prior to the 90s, this was the bluebook for operating a casino. Gaming management was all about relationships and knowing your customer.

Fast-forward to today and management is tied to desktop computers waiting for revenue reports, emails, and general business workflows. The proliferation of software options locally installed on back-of-house servers has tied many down to deskwork. A casino may have a half dozen different software applications that are running reports needed to functionally manage casino staff and operations. Many of these reports are delayed and twenty-four hours from when the activity took place. Retrieving cumbersome data from various applications has taken many away from the fundamentals of successful gaming management, and in times when remote work is necessary, getting accurate timely data is often not even possible. To make up for the lost player interactions and the pre-2000 style of gaming management, casinos decided to use endless amounts of free play to garner patrons. In many cases, this free play is used without much strategic thinking and is provided without merit. Personal interactions with once loyal patrons are, in large part, gone, while significant time is wasted on inefficient data communications.

Post COVID-19, the gaming industry will have changed. No more can management have wasted movements, inefficient processes and excuses for poor decision-making. Today, more than ever, two things are critical: 1) getting customers loyal again; and 2) accurate and efficient access to vital revenue and analytical data for making strategic decisions.

The objective is simple, manage the casino from the gaming floor while at the same time monitoring live real-time gaming data and business communications. How is this accomplished? Operating through cloud-based applications is the answer, and many casinos have already discovered this

competitive advantage. There are certain gaming applications that need to run off a locally installed server, but for a casino's accounting and financial reporting application, it is more secure and efficient to be in the cloud. Currently, with a manual process, many casinos are months behind on financial reporting and delivering financial results to management and council. This makes it extremely difficult to make timely successful strategic decisions.

Utilizing cloud applications that can interact with locally installed gaming applications will give back the control to management and decision makers. Operational real-time gaming analytics and data will enable management to retain the lost interactions with patrons. Management should be able to walk the casino floor with a handheld device giving instantaneous data on the operations of the casino, such as information on current cash amounts in the cage, vault, and kiosks, revenue data on current net win, and which machines are being played with current hold percentages. Data from players club accounts can interact with the gaming floor and show who is actively gambling at the casino in real-time. With accounting software and gaming analytics in the cloud, management and governing bodies have information instantaneously available. Not only are there clear benefits from a strategic decision-making standpoint, but also from an internal team-member involvement perspective. Many casino employees today are exceedingly comfortable with cloud-based applications and can readily grasp the technology, and in fact, many expect this kind of connectivity.

All of this is possible today, and many casinos who recognized the need, now have a competitive advantage coming out of the COVID-19 crisis. For years, the mere opening of a casino provided profitability and enhanced the financial viability of a surrounding local economy with jobs and resources for a tribe. Due to a more competitive environment and changes in gaming style and preference, operating a casino is not an easy task. Casinos and tribes need to be ready for the next steps in the evolution of gaming and cloud-based operations, and put their properties in a position to make timely, strategic economic decisions that will allow for success now and in the future. ♣

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