



## Loyalty Marketing vs. Player Development

by Anthony "Bert" Bertino

With the economy in the state that it is, and with the costs to reach the most qualified customers the tribal gaming organization can, finding the most effective media and marketing channels is imperative. Targeting the total market that will utilize the casino gaming facility has gotten more difficult over the last few years. Many tribal organizations who spent a great deal of time promoting casino entertainment and non-gaming amenities (food, rooms, spas, etc.) must now expand their efforts to attract a sufficient number of patrons to obtain revenue to survive.

The tribal gaming organization that can define who they are and what patron they attract, has a greater chance to fulfill their goals, especially when an organization realizes they are an ever changing living organism that must evolve with the environment they reside in. The casino patron a tribal organization attracts, and who they target, may be vastly different. Knowing who your markets are at the current time, is crucial. What worked for the gaming organization ten years ago, will not work today. The slot machine, table game or amenity that was popular last year, may now be out of favor, and needs to be updated, improved or removed.

**Definition:** *Loyalty Marketing* as a definition, is the group of employees that welcome the new casino patrons, attract the established casino patron, and make sure that everyone is utilizing the marketing programs and facilities on a consistent basis. Loyalty marketing employees are the face of the marketing department to the majority of your casino database, and therefore the group that receives the most direct information from the casino patron (be it good or bad).

*Player Development*, as a definition, is the group of employees that bring in new gaming customers, maintain casino patrons that are profitable to a gaming organization, and deal with the daily marketing issues of the higher valued casino patron. Player development is also the face of your management team that the casino patron is familiar with, the "go-to" personnel when there is a problem that effects them.

**Driving Force:** *Loyalty Marketing* is the driving force behind an organization's database, the contact agent that most casino customers will utilize and identify with. Incentives offered by the gaming organization, based on the patron's loyalty is what keeps the customer coming consistently throughout busy periods and lulls within the year. Gearing these incentives (be it rooms, monetary offers, food offers, special events, gifts, entertainment, etc.) to the correct market is imperative, while the cost factor is reduced by sheer

volume of offers made. Social media in recent years have been able to greater supplement and target to a specific market on a quicker and more personal basis.

*Player Development* is the driving force behind your most desired and profitable division of your database. This is the contact agent that many casino patrons desire to have. There is a status level that casino patrons achieve when they have "someone that takes care of me," and this status level also breeds loyalty.

**Approach:** *Loyalty Marketing* is the blast approach in reaching the tribal gaming customer, whereby the gaming organization will distribute a vast amount of offers to attract a specific percentage of gaming patrons. Depending upon how many seats, slots and events the gaming organization must fill, this is the most cost effective way of reaching that goal. The goal may be reached, but is the most valuable gaming patron being brought to the casino facility? The sheer volume that a casino patron receives from a specific gaming organization must be realized when it is multiplied by the number of gaming organizations in the marketplace. If the tribal gaming organization is inundating the casino patron with offers, this will suggest many alternatives, but will also cause the casino patron to become indifferent to all the offers, and these offers become "white noise," not delivering the desired impact.

*Player Development* is the precision approach in reaching the highest profitable casino customer, whereby the gaming organization will bestow a limited amount of offers to attract a specific level of casino patrons. Depending upon how many seats, slots and events the gaming organization must fill, this division is charged with supplementing the invitation process utilized by loyalty marketing, to make sure the highly profitable sector of casino patrons are represented in higher percentages. Again, based on the sheer volume of offers that a casino patron receives from the gaming organizations in the marketplace, player development is the saber that cuts through the "white noise" of offers, therefore reinforcing the marketing message and delivering the desired impact.

While player development can insure a higher percentage of the desired casino patron market, it is vastly more expensive and must be utilized intelligently to insure that there is always access to the player development staff to fulfill this higher-end patron's needs. The amount of casino patrons in this

desired target sector defines the amount of staff that are employed in this division, insuring proper attention to this valued sector.

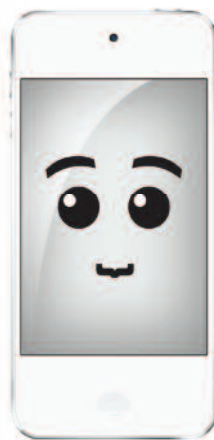
Being aware of what market is profitable for the gaming organization to attract can help the facility to avoid constantly marketing to unprofitable casino customers. Not all casino patrons are in the best interest of a gaming facility. If the tribal casino customers that the organization is targeting costs too much to attract and maintain, or is too difficult to appease, then serious consideration should be given to change focus or widen the scope of the target market. Example: constantly marketing to the clientele that the tribal organization perceives will utilize their facility, instead of the patrons that actually utilize the facility. In the same respect, if the casino customers that the tribal organization is targeting towards are too vast and do not fit the layout, size and scope of the casino facility, then sharpening the scope of the total market is needed. Example: attracting 3,000 casino patrons for an event when you only have 1,000 machines, 20 table games and three restaurants is a vast waste of marketing expenditures.

Loyalty marketing, social media and player development can achieve many of a tribal gaming organization's goals singularly, however utilized in unison, can achieve greater profitability and revenue for the facility. Successfully integrating loyalty marketing, social media and player development will keep the tribal gaming facility operating during all times of the calendar, be it high season or during a lull, at the greatest efficiency and allow for greater return on marketing expenditures invested. Loyalty marketing can ensure that a variety of patrons are always utilizing the gaming facility, social media can be an inexpensive and quick way to reach a vast group of patrons, and with player development supplementing those marketing efforts with the profitable casino patron. Knowing who is profitable to the organization defines what marketing effort should be utilized, and what efforts will work for a specific facility. What works for one tribal organization in one jurisdiction, probably will not work for a tribal organization in another jurisdiction, be it the same organization or a differing one.

Attracting the most customers possible is the goal of every business organization. Attracting the most valuable customers possible, on an ongoing and reoccurring basis, is the goal of every *successful* business organization. ♣

*Anthony "Bert" Bertino is the CMO for Dakota Nation Gaming Enterprise and the Exec. VP of Marketing / COO for Casino Excursions Resort Gaming Group. He can be reached by calling (609) 892-1298 or email bert@casexc.com.*

# Overwork me. Please.



**He's never late. He never gets sick. And he never goes on break. Meet the future of casino operations.**

### Meet Kai.

Think of Kai as a virtual slot manager, who is on the job 24/7/365, eliminates the need for a human dispatcher, and replaces handheld radios. Kai helps you keep players happy while dramatically dropping response and completion times for jackpot lockups, bill jams, ticket paper fills and customer service requests of all kinds.

**“ In this business time is money... and Kai has managed to give us more of both.”**

ART NAVARRO,  
GENERAL MANAGER  
BLUEWATER CASINO & RESORT  
PARKER, ARIZONA



Hi, I'm Kai.



Hire me.

Ready to interview Kai?  
He's ready to apply!  
[acres4.com/kai](http://acres4.com/kai)

