



## Putting the “Social” in Social Gaming

by Anthony “Bert” Bertino

Social Gaming is legal, can be a preface for eventual iGaming, and can be an extreme tool in boosting a casino’s visibility in the online gaming market. A casino’s physical footprint is limited to city, region, jurisdiction, and nation. With social gaming, that footprint becomes universal, opening up the potential for worldwide appeal in addition to being an important tool for boosting a casino’s visibility. Casinos operating social gaming can attract customers that may be traveling to their respective areas while on vacation or business, while at the same time capitalizing on current brick-and-mortar customers, and providing them a new service.

There are many cell phone apps and web based programs that interested casinos can get utilize, so why should an organization get involved? Here are a few reasons to consider:

- The ability to reach a large group of prequalified customers. These customers are prequalified because they are playing a particular casino’s online game offerings, and like the games they are playing.
- A casino can extend their reach to customers who may not have visited or heard of the property.
- A casino can grow their customer lists with players who participate online and transmit offers that will entice on-property participation.
- A casino can organize the market they accumulate into age appropriate offers (age verification is needed).

### Who Are Social Gaming Customers?

Social gaming customers come from all walks of life, and usually are looking for the ability to “be in action” all times of the day or night, even though it is just for fun. The times when it is inconvenient to travel to a casino can be filled with social gaming. Allowing a customer to game at their leisure, enables them to enjoy a casino’s games in cyberspace and then eventually in person. Social gaming customers can come from a casino’s present customer base, strengthening their loyalty to the facility and enriching their understanding of the games provided at the physical location. Online customers can also come from rival casinos who may wish to see what a different facility has to offer, and to “try the facility” prior to their arrival on property. They can also include travelers coming to an area in the future who are looking for the kinds of games the local facility provides.

### Will Social Gaming Evolve into iGaming?

Presently there are many opinions of how and in what form iGaming will come to the U.S. and eventually to tribal gaming

entities. There are serious advocates for the online gaming community, that wish to make a federal law allowing gaming throughout communities that already provide casino games. There are also strong opponents to this same proposal.

As the discussion continues, social gaming can be the starting point to how responsible online gaming can be conducted via “freeplay” throughout jurisdictions that already provide brick-and-mortar casinos. Casino gaming is highly regulated and eventually iGaming will be too if it is legalized. These regulations will only enrich online gaming, allowing customers and operators the safety they deserve. Social gaming is not new – it has been played on social media sites like “Facebook” for several years. iGaming has been played legally on websites outside of the U.S., in the Caribbean, Europe and Asia for many years.

### Why a Casino’s Social Media Footprint will Grow With Social Gaming

The more successful a casino’s social gaming efforts, the greater draw to their facility. Once the customer recognizes a facility (either virtual or brick-and-mortar) as a force in casino gaming, they will reach out to find out more and the door is opened for a new customer.

Social media is no substitution for advertising, but has become a less expensive way to keep in touch with a client base and to entice newer customers. Social gaming is not the be all end all, it is another tool in the casino marketing department’s arsenal that can grow their marketing reach and entice a new customer from demographics they may not have at the moment. Growing social gaming will increase click through counts on a casino’s website, visits to social media and virtual “likes” a property receives. This means more visits to the physical location and customers sharing information with their friends. Propagating the interest in a facility will only help develop more casino gaming clients and more visits by present and future gaming customers.

Casinos can’t guarantee that every online gaming player will translate into a customer that visits a physical property, but expanding a casino’s base through social gaming builds a network, promotes casino properties and prepares operators for tomorrow. ♣

*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.*