



Internal Casino Communications: Aligning Company Values and Behaviors

by Renee K. Martin

Some tribal casinos grapple with communications issues and work hard to smooth over any communication conflicts. However, in some cases, the conflicts are over what is being communicated, such as training events, performance evaluations, associate disputes, meetings, disciplinary actions, grievances and policy changes. There are many ways human resources are assets to their respective casinos. With effective internal (associate) customer communications, human resources professionals can assist tribal casinos practice more effective intercommunication.

Tribal gaming enterprises strive to make profits for their respective tribal communities. A solid business philosophy and framework are essential to maintaining integrity and commitment to the company's mission, providing support for the sustainability of the company's values and retaining qualified and worthy talent. In order for human resources departments to be recognized as assets to their business, a diligent effort to motivate associates to effectively communicate issues, concerns or questions that arise, is essential.

Human resources professionals must be prepared and be committed to sharing vision, mission and expectations through effective internal casino communications. A strategic plan is required. Stakeholders need to demonstrate their commitment to the company's mission and goals through associate handbooks, associate orientation, training sessions, and of course leading by example. Tribal gaming enterprises strive to have successful associate relations through effective, efficient, and productive internal communications. Tribal casinos' human resources staffs are tasked with interweaving internal concerns and communicating those concerns to many facets of the business, such as casino associates, operations management, compliance/regulations, and tribal leaders.

To be effective, motivational strategies must be incorporated into strategic goals and woven into organizational business philosophy. If an associate's action or behavior does not reflect the company's mission, values, policies and procedures, communicating what is expected through effective training, coaching and mentoring should occur. Human Resources personnel can guide internal communications by capitalizing on technology training, newsletters, and associate input from surveys and comment cards.

Internal customer (associate) support services can address changes in associate performance and behavior through associate meetings, fair and effective associate grievance procedures, associate handbook, training, and communications coaching. Motivated workforces are driven by strong

leadership/ management commitment to communication of casinos core values and mission. Communications, training and procedures need to be structured to meet and exceed at fulfilling the casino's mission. Consistency is the key.

Internal (associate) customer support service begins by recruitment and hiring of new associates, which can be accomplished a number of ways.

Career Fairs: These allow recruiters to meet and greet prospective associates. Many high schools, tribal colleges and universities, and technical schools have career fairs.

Postings: Local newspapers, tribal newspapers, on-line job posting sites and local job service programs.

Internal Recruitment: The training and succession of current associates to fill leadership positions is crucial, especially for tribal members who have potential.

Reference Checks: Practicing legal and sound reference checks will filter your qualified applicant pool.

Gaming Licenses: Discussing the possibility of/for a different approach to licensing for non-gaming associates, allowing for flexibility for non-gaming labor pool background investigations.

Tribal gaming human resources departments and casino operations management must work as teams to acculturate a new associate and nurture new associates to practice criterion set forth that represents the casino's mission statement, framework and philosophy.

Associate evaluations are tools for addressing associate strengths and challenges in regards to job performance. Human resources professionals can coach casino associates in meeting and exceeding at job performance expectations. Human resources professionals can also guide supervisory/ management staff with effective communication strategies when presenting an associate evaluation.

Associate reward and incentive programs are great and provide motivation, but mainly focus on attendance. Attendance is one component of associate performance. Attitude, appearance and service are components that require equal attention. Training departments can assist supervisors to praise or discipline associates by sharing fresh, updated examples of associate reward and discipline communications.

Any time there is change with respect to company expectations, communicating such changes needs to be

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direct, professional and requires a training approach. There are many strategies to take when motivating associates:

Show Company's Value: Be visible. Casinos' missions and philosophies should be visible and practiced for internal and external customers.

Lead by Example: A diligent effort driven by mission statement, values and goals. Treat people with respect and dignity.

Ask Questions: What can I do to be more successful? How can I help the company and tribe to become more successful? As an associate, continue to look for ways of improving things, with an understanding of a fair grievance process when addressing disputes and/or grievances.

This is especially crucial for supervisory and leadership positions in tribal gaming. Some tribal casinos have

developed gaming management mentoring and succession programs. Those who have successfully completed mentoring or succession program are promoted to management positions at their respective casino.

Much emphasis is spent on external communications to external customers. Just imagine if similar emphasis was spent on marketing, training, and retaining quality internal (associates) customers at our casinos.

There are many reasons human resources departments are assets to their respective casinos. With effective internal (associate) customer communications, human resources can strive for intercommunication practices that are productive, aligned, and continue to add value to the business, with an external customer service approach. ♣

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