



## Building a Player Development Team

by Anthony "Bert" Bertino

*"Like every foundation, a strong nucleus is paramount. Several persons can be strong within a group, but when diverse individuals work as a team, your foundation is rock solid to build upon."*

It is never too late to start or re-start a marketing program, but when doing so, assembling and building the proper foundation is critical. Many casinos start programs to keep up with the times and simply assign marketing staff members to take care of their very best customers. This is important, but finding the best personnel to represent your organization depends on who your customers are.

### The Cornerstone

Having the right individuals deal with your best clientele on an ongoing basis is paramount for success. Personal mannerisms, interpersonal contact points, relationship skills and utilization of technological tools are major issues for all marketing departments. Having a team member that can cross many of these areas defines success, as the customer must feel absolute comfort utilizing the player development (PD) staff. Knowing how to deal with an irate guest is important, as your PD staff is the intermediary for many disputes. They are the customer entrance point to management, to marketing and to the casino/resort facility. Many customers know their host/PD representative as the only person that can help them. Therefore that individual has to have the connections, intelligence and the drive to solve the problems, fix the inadequacies and make things happen to the satisfaction of the customer in front of them, whether they know the guest or not.

### The Foundation

To find the right people to staff your department you must begin with genuinely helpful people who have the ability to care and empathize with the customer, and who will help people return on an ongoing basis. If the PD staff member is disingenuous, the clientele will realize that and decide not to utilize their services. These individuals must also have an attention to detail, or at least have the ability to utilize staff to handle the onslaught of increased reservations. Like every foundation, a strong nucleus is paramount. Several persons can be strong within a group, but when diverse individuals *work as a team*, your foundation is rock solid to build upon. Finding channels for contact is a major obstacle for many organizations and their guests. Blowing up mailboxes with offers can be

detrimental to inviting customers and to the bottom line. Overindulging emails is less expensive but can lead to a lack of interest and a disregard of offers. Telephone conversations are more personal, and the PD staff can deliver a greater efficiency for this type of program. But finally and most importantly, greeting the guest, pressing the flesh, spending time when they are at the facility is the *defining principle* to getting guests to return.

### The Building Blocks

Giving this newly formed or reformed team the tools they need to increase customer interactions form the foundation for explosive growth. If you have a hotel, make sure that your PD staff has ample amounts of rooms to give to their better customers. If you have restaurants, make sure there are reservations times available to assign to special guests and signature dishes that will excite all who enter. If you have a spa, make sure there are services that entice the general public, touch the massage aficionado and electrify your special guests on a continuous basis. Make available special amenities, special parking, VIP lines, club rooms, private facilities, golf and tennis and special gaming facilities (private or exclusive higher end gaming). Whatever amenity your facility has, should be part of the PD staff's toolbox.

### Topping Off

Integrating this PD staff into your marketing department is the last major step to undertake. The PD staff is the face of marketing and must integrate into the programs that are being instituted. The PD staff should be considered the *face of the organization* and understand the importance of being involved. Where the customer is comfortable is where they will give their largest share of play. If the PD staff can give them a desire to return again and again, you have a winning formula. ♣

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