

Contact Management Programs

by Steve Karoul

Staying in touch with your players.

"Out of sight, out of mind". I'm sure most of us are familiar with this expression. If you are not, you should be. You can also use it as a simple tool to remind yourself that if you are not keeping in personal contact with your players, you're competition probably is. One common trait that I find in the area of casino marketing is that the longer a marketing executive remains in the industry, the larger his customer base of players becomes. It is easy to keep track of the "whales" or the premium VIP type players. However, many other "good" players often fall through the cracks and just "disappear". This is not magic, it is negligence. In today's age of computers and sophisticated computer programs, keeping track of your players and keeping in touch was never easier.

If you don't know how to use a personal computer, take the time and teach yourself. There are numerous courses available geared for the beginner. If you really think you can't learn or just don't have the time, make sure you hire the best possible executive secretary that is computer literate. Hopefully she has also taken a course in data management such as Microsoft Access or Lotus Approach. These are two of the more common flexible, easy to use, database management programs that give you the flexibility of creating your own custom tailored database and query system. I am still surprised at the large number of casino marketing executives that still use a manual customer contact system versus a computerized system. Never-the-less, they have a formal system whether it be a simple sales tickler card file system or a full blown high-tech computerized database management / customer contact system. The problem arises when the casino-marketing executive tries to rely on personality and memory rather than an organized follow-up program. I can guarantee you that this type of casino marketing executive will magically have many of his players mysteriously disappear over time.

For those of you reading this article that have management responsibility for a casino marketing department, I urge you to sit down with each of your marketing executives and conduct a detailed analysis of exactly how they conduct their day to day sales efforts. I recently went through this exercise with one senior management casino executive and he was shocked. Don't expect your sales people to have formal training in this area. However, it is your responsibility to support your good casino-marketing executives with the proper tools and support staff to help keep them better organized. By doing this, I can almost guarantee that you will see their productivity improve and their business volumes increase. This translates into more table game drop per month per casino marketing executive. If your hold percentage remains constant, your bottom line net profit will improve. When you realistically look at the small incremental additional cost involved in properly supporting your casino-marketing executives you will wonder why you didn't do it earlier. The problem is usually the accountants who analyze operating budgets and numbers of full time employees, etc. Don't accept this as an excuse, it is your responsibility to convince them of the cost / benefits ratio of proper database management / customer contact programs. Make a deal. Get them to try your ideas for six months. If you use these new customer contact programs with your player database, I am sure that you will be more than able to justify any additional departmental expense.

I also realize that many of the larger casinos have large professional Management Information Systems (MIS) departments with numerous computer programmers that will produce mountains of formal looking computer printouts. However, from my experience, unless you get the end user, the casino marketing executive, to personally take some responsibility for maintaining his or her own personal customer contact program or sales tickler file system, the benefits of such are never maximized. Therefore, if you are lucky enough to have a good MIS Department, use them as a support service rather than a means to an end. Use them to help condense, organize and simplify the tasks but still require the casino marketing executive to create and manage his or her own daily "follow up" customer contact system. Once again, the benefits and the results will be measurable.

Take a trip your local computer software store and take a look at the new customer contact programs available. There are many goods one on the market today. Choose one that you feel comfortable with, install it on your or your secretary's PC and begin using it. You'll be surprised at how many of your players no longer magically or mysteriously "disappear". Good luck.

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