

Of bedfellows not so strange

by Bob Orr

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While they may seem totally different, marketing cannot accomplish its objectives effectively without the support of a well-executed HR strategy



We all know that marketing and HR departments have different roles in helping a casino achieve its goals. Or do they? While the primary role of each may seem totally different, marketing cannot accomplish its strategic business plan effectively without the support of a well-executed HR strategy. This is why I continually claim that the "walls" in a casino must be broken down.

You've got to be kidding me, you say. No, I am not kidding. Let me explain why I say what I do.

We know that a major part of the marketing department's responsibilities is to attract and retain good customers. We also know HR has responsibility for developing strategies for attracting and retaining quality employees and ensuring they are properly trained to support the organization and its goals. OK, so what? Well, casinos spend millions of dollars to build a customer base and keep guests coming back. But if the casino hasn't invested in and doesn't understand the importance of recruiting and attracting the right employees, putting them in the right jobs and properly communicating with and training them then the efforts and investment in marketing programs become just another expense. Without recruiting, training and retaining employees who understand how to properly service the guests that marketing brought through the door the dollars spent are wasted, or at the very least, underutilized. A casino's best, or worst, marketers are the employees, regardless of their position. If the employees do not know or understand what is going on in every area of the casino, are not properly trained, do not understand the casino's mission and marketing efforts or are not happy and satisfied in their jobs they will be harmful to any marketing effort. The marketing department, in the larger scheme of things, does not execute the marketing strategy for the property, the employees do.

So how can the marketing department have an impact on the recruiting, attracting, training, educating and retaining of quality employees? How does doing so help in the success of every marketing program being implemented?

Marketing should use its genius (most of us in HR are not very creative or efficient marketers) to develop creative, cost-effective and exciting recruiting campaigns to attract quality employees. Yes, I said creative, cost-effective and exciting. Ever read a help wanted ad that was written by a typical HR department? It is usually

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not exciting, doesn't sell/market the casino as an exciting place to work with career opportunities, and often isn't informative as to why a person should consider a job with the casino. It just talks about the particular job. Why not place creative display ads (not for a specific job) in print or electronic media selling opportunity, fun, excitement, etc., once every quarter? Marketing does it for guests.

Marketing executives also should participate in every new-hire orientation to ensure new employees truly understand the casino's mission and vision and its marketing strategy, its promotions and players club, and how it all works. The GM should be involved, too, preferably in person or on a video, to define and reinforce the casino's standards and expectations of every employee when it comes to guest service and supporting the overall marketing strategy.

The marketing department, not the HR/training department, should conduct all guest/customer service training programs. (HR should assist, of course.) Marketing and HR together should plan all applicant job fairs/open houses. Marketing will make this exciting with creative and exciting designs, signage, collateral materials and advertising to attract applicants — same as they do to attract guests. After all, a marketing promotion is like inviting guests to an "open house" of the casino. Marketing also can create recruiting materials to include as part of their marketing mailers (perhaps once a quarter) or to post as flyers, handouts, etc. Who better to know the type of employee a customer would like to deal with than the customers themselves?

Marketing should create a professional looking "fact sheet" for the entire property and distribute it to all current employees as well as all new hires in the orientation phase. This fact sheet (preferably laminated) should include such things as: square footage of the property, numbers and types of table games and table limits, numbers and types of slot machines, the number of poker tables, bingo (if offered) and the hours and days of operation, the location and numbers and types of games in high-limit rooms, the names of all F&B venues and the number of seats in each, the types of food offered and hours of operation, the number of hotel rooms/suites, meeting rooms, gift shop hours, the size of any convention areas and entertainment venues, etc. Call your switchboard or ask a valet attendant, housekeeper or front desk clerk in your hotel how many slot machines are in the casino or the hours a food venue is open. How can an employee be an effective marketer if they don't know the casino's offerings and amenities?

Marketing usually prepares a monthly calendar showing the different promotions, entertainment events, tournaments, number of buses scheduled to arrive and on what days, VIP events, etc., and provides it to all departments. Problems occur when it is given to the other department heads. Too often it is never distributed or reviewed with the employees who need to know what is happening and when. Include the calendar in something every employee receives or reads — their paychecks, bulletin boards, e-mail, etc. In addition to the monthly calendar (make

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sure it is issued before the beginning of the month), marketing should consider issuing weekly updates/reminders of what is happening and when in the coming week.

The casino's Web site is usually maintained by the marketing department. Oftentimes the site has an "employment opportunities" link. However, when a person clicks on the link all they usually receive is a description of the job and perhaps an online application. Again, nothing about career opportunities or the fun and excitement of working in the gaming industry.

Remember, all job applicants are like guests. In fact they are and should be recruited and treated as guests. Many probably are or have been guests in the casino. But now you want the right ones to become and remain employees. You have to attract, cultivate, educate, communicate and retain them so they become your casino's best marketers. Igwb

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