

Casino Guest Satisfaction Doesn't Matter

By Martin R. Baird

Wow, now is that a bold statement from a gaming guest service consultant or what? The reality is that the headline for this column is not a completely true statement, but it's more true than most people would believe.

There is a new study out that appeared in Harvard Business Review. The study found that there is zero correlation between customer satisfaction and future growth of any business. Translation: there is absolutely no correlation between guest satisfaction and a casino's future growth. That's a fact!

How can this be? If you're like many others in gaming, you have been told in countless guest service training sessions that guest satisfaction is THE most important thing. Without satisfied guests, you have nothing, so go out there and smile, smile, smile. Certainly guests want to be satisfied with their gaming experience, just as employees want to be satisfied with their work. But measuring satisfaction in either camp is a very poor way to predict future growth.

What, even employee satisfaction doesn't matter? It's true. Casinos' employee "sat surveys" have little or no bearing on the property's success down the road. Sure, the executive team likes walking around patting themselves on the back because 89 percent of their employees are satisfied or extremely satisfied. But it doesn't mean anything when it comes to the casino's growth.

Now that I've created a dilemma, what's the solution? Here's my suggestion. If you really want to be an asset to your casino and help it grow and serve more guests so you can be promoted or make more in tips or just feel good about yourself and the work you do, you need to create "advocates" among your guests. An advocate is a person who will do something for someone else without hope of personal gain. For example, you are probably an advocate of your favorite club, bar, restaurant or sports teams. You tell other people how great they are and you get nothing in return from those you praise.

How can advocates resolve the dilemma? Research has found that satisfaction is too fickle an area to measure for determining future growth. A happy guest today can be an unhappy guest tomorrow. But determining if people are advocates is a much more accurate yardstick.

The first step toward creating guest advocates is knowing what your guests want. However, this is not as simple as it may sound.

Let me use myself as an example. A couple of months ago, my wife and I stayed at one of the mega resorts in Las Vegas. It was an amazing place! We checked into our room and it was just the style and feel that we really like. Unfortunately, we had to move because you could hear the music from the club below our room. Then at 4 a.m., my wife smelled this terrible odor in our room. The front desk explained that the grease traps were being cleaned. We were graciously moved yet again to a different part of the hotel and upgraded to a suite with a great view of the Strip. But it was a totally different kind of room. We didn't like the style.

Are my wife and I advocates of that casino? Absolutely not! The way to create advocates is to ask people what they like and then determine how you can deliver it.

What I want you to take away from this column is a clear understanding that the way to create success for yourself and your casino is to turn your guests into advocates. Look for ways to

more than just satisfy your guests. Look for ways to move them to the level of freely sharing with others how great your casino, restaurant or resort is.

If you are a supervisor, manager or casino executive, you need to take it one step further and stop looking at employee satisfaction and start measuring employee advocate scores! After all, employees who are advocates of your casino are not looking to jump ship at the first opportunity. They are committed to the property's long-term growth.

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