



Don't Let Your Casino Entertainment Get Stale

by Kell Houston

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Many in the casino industry speak about the ageing out of the core customer. The slot player has been the main revenue stream for casinos for years. The discussion has been building about how to attract and develop the next generation of customers. The youngest boomers turned 50 last year. The Generation X and the Millennials are now becoming very relevant. They are the target for properties today, in order to keep building and retaining their customer base. Entertainment plays a big part in all of this changing landscape.

So all of this time is being spent on the customer, what about the entertainment? The tried and true entertainers casinos have been relying on since the 1990s are ageing out. The days of Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, Loretta Lynn, Wayne Newton, Debbie Reynolds, Don Rickles and other older entertainers plus all of your favorite bands out of the 60s & the 70s are on that list.

What does this mean for the entertainment you now bring into your casino property? Simply put, you have to do your research. The casino entertainment trends being set in Las Vegas all lead to developing younger entertainers and younger concepts. No longer are casinos considered the place entertainers go to end their careers. Today's casinos are jumping in with both feet and bringing in rising stars, and artists who are on their way up, not on their way down. Properties are partnering with local radio in the tertiary market places where radio is still relevant, to bring in new artists. The relevance of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram all give you access to the younger generation. Those avenues also give you access to new artists and new trends. Most artists today are using these digital channels to connect to their fan base and to the world. So casino marketing/entertainment people have to be actively entrenched and on the cutting edge of technology and trends.

Today, casinos are bringing in current stars, when affordable. This includes the celebrity DJs playing electronic dance music and the weekly procession of high end club appearances here in Las Vegas. Note the huge success of the Electric Daisy Carnival. However, depending on your geographic location, you have to be careful dipping into this type of entertainment. Your core customer base may not be as receptive to this direction, so balance is very important.

Country music today is probably more popular than any other genre, when it comes to the live band experience. To make

things even better, country knows how to develop new artists and there are many opportunities for you to find a "hot" country artist with songs on the country and pop charts. This is a big deal for you and radio loves current artists. The current TV line up of *American Idol*, *The Voice*, *America's Got Talent* and others are breaking new stars every day. These are great opportunities for your property to explore.

Casinos are branching into different kinds of entertainment like tribute shows, game shows, magic shows, comedy shows, TV reality stars and more. The power of TV is very real and the number of different kinds of stars and programs out there today for you to consider is tremendous. The challenge is finding how to reach them and knowing which ones are qualified for your customer base and which ones would be a bad choice.

The tribute world is full of millions of marginal acts. A lot of bands discovered if they did a tribute show they could make more money, so the rush was on. This does not always equate to a great show for your customer, so do your research. A good tribute act can bring the music of that artist back to life. Today the music still survives but the original artist is fading away. Screen these acts and pay a little more for the best. It will make a big difference.

Comedy – you get what you pay for. Don't look for the cheapest acts, look for the best quality. They need to have some major TV exposure to mean anything to your customer, especially if you are going to have a cover charge. Comedy packages tend to work best. Give this concept adequate time to develop at your casino.

Hypnotist shows and magic shows can do very well, if they are marketed and advertised properly. Make sure you check references and see if they have played any other casinos

The development of your younger generation customer cannot be overlooked. Explore your options and look outside the box for unique artists and events. These are not as expensive as you may think, but you need to do the research. Always remember that casinos are in a transitionary time and baby steps are a much better choice than jumping right in the deep end. ♣

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