



The Power of a Strong Entertainment Program

by Anthony "Bert" Bertino

The art of offering entertainment can be quite challenging for casino entities, but is a must have for any enterprise that wishes to compete in the gaming environment. Entertainment spans from headliners and reviews to variety shows and lounge acts. If your facility is offering an entertainer your clientele is excited about, they will come to you and so will your competitor's clientele because you have the desired attraction. Entertainment is your entry into successfully competing for your jurisdiction's clientele as well as adding to your promotions and events mix. Offering entertainment will bring the gaming and non-gaming clientele to your facility. This will allow for increased gaming revenue and increase the revenue in your non-gaming outlets, especially your hotel, restaurants, bars/lounges and retail outlets.

Entertainment can be the only reason that certain groups of customers will identify and attend your facility. Based on bias against gaming in certain individuals, they will not eat, visit or discuss a gaming facility. However, should a lounge or showroom be showing a certain act that attracts this person's interest, and this is the only place the entertainer is appearing, they have no choice but to frequent the facility or miss the show. Opinions of gaming are changed based on their entertainment menu, and so are revenues in your gaming and non-gaming entities. Some clientele have traveled from vast jurisdictions to see a performer that is not offered in their area. Las Vegas has made a cottage industry of offering performances by noted entertainers in venues that are quite smaller than sites normally available.

Entertainment costs vary from area to area and especially venue to venue. Many entertainers (but not all) charge a premium for playing a casino. The options of entertainment vary as greatly as the customers you wish to attract. If you are the "in-town-casino," a nightly (or a few nights weekly) lounge may attract the crowd who needs a leisurely cocktail/dinner/meeting option. You may also be a destination that is looking to take care of those customers who are vying for escape from their "every day." The costs include the entertainer and their production/staging (which depending on the act may be quite expensive). This majority of these costs can be recouped by the ticket sales of the entertainer. The advertising costs of letting the patron know is the cost of doing business and allowing the outside world be advised as to your entertainment options. This advertising will again reinforce your "full-service-entertainment-option" and give a large leg up on other entertainment options that are offered in your community. The cost of your entertainment program should be weighed to include the sale

of tickets, the attraction and appreciation of your present customers and the notoriety of your facility in your marketplace.

Gaming is a form of entertainment, but without offering a full circle of flavors, your facility cannot be established as the "go-to place" to enjoy differing varieties. We all know that the better the food offerings and options, the more patrons that will frequent that facility. The same is true with entertainment – if you offer lounge, variety, headliner and private events in the proper measures, the varying customer base and surrounding traveling bases will be attracted.

Your facility is open to all types of customers and so should your entertainment offerings. Given the different genres of entertainment, a variety of entertainment, similar to food and beverage offerings, should be available to attract the greatest number of customers, repeat and new.

Once your facility is the "go-to place" for shows (or affiliates with a venue that is large enough to house a greater show), you are now a viable entertainment option. When your facility is in the discussion of "What should we do tonight," you have become that "go-to place." The better the entertainment, the better your facility option can and will be. Your facility may now become the place to eat, place for an overnight stay, and yes – a gaming entertainment option. This full-circle of flavors now contributes to many facets of your bottom line, not just one.

Headliner entertainment in a larger venue is of course more expensive, but will attract many more patrons to your facility. If you have a showroom or event center, there is a cost associated with keeping it dark, and if you are the "go-to-entertainment-option," then regular shows are extremely important. Revues and variety shows will not only round out your entertainment menu but will allow all level of customers to be invited and attracted.

If done correctly, entertainment will draw patrons from throughout your community and become an option for those that are visiting from other areas looking for something to do. This increases the bottom line across the board. If not done correctly, entertainment will still reach out as a publicity tool to make those aware of your existence. The difference here is to constantly monitor who is being booked, and fine tuning the entertainment that represents your facility to draw a consistent group to your facility. You are then positioned to be the "go-to-entertainment-option." ♣

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