

By H. Scot Krause

Promotions at Work: Win Cards® Can Be Win-Win for All



Pam Butler, Director of Marketing, Gaming International, Inc. and Ted Gottlieb, President, Gaming International, Inc. at Harrah's, Harveys Lake Tahoe

For 20 years Ted Gottlieb was a dealer at Lake Tahoe. He often noticed far too many people gathered around tables, sometimes two or three rows deep, watching but never placing a bet.

At about the same time, during his tenure at the Sahara Tahoe, he was assigned to give gaming lessons to customers. But Gottlieb still felt something was missing. He had no gimmick, no enticement, no lure to get people interested in learning to play.

Hence, Win Cards® was born. Gottlieb, now president of Gaming International, Inc., told us, "I created the cards as a quick and easy introduction to the basics of how to play the three most popular table games on the casino floor: blackjack, craps, and roulette."

He continued, "You don't need to

read a book, take any lessons, or watch a video. You can learn and get involved quickly with Win Cards®."

So, what are Win Cards® and how do they work? What are the benefits and effects for the casino and the player? Good questions. So we asked Ted to explain his trademark Win Cards®.

From a customer standpoint, a player buys a set of Win Cards® for \$10 and receives \$15 in non-negotiable chips, plus a set of cards (spinner-like chart wheels) that "point" out how to play. However, these chips cannot be

redeemed for cash and must be played at the tables. A player may select any table game to use the chips and does have to play all three games to use them.

For example, the blackjack wheel-card allows the player to point to the dealer's card and gives a basic strategy by telling the player whether to hit, stand, split, or double down.

The written explanation on the brochure reads as follows: "The Blackjack Win Card® clearly shows possible hit, stand, double down, and split options. There are many ways to play. You do not necessarily have to follow this strategy. We offer it only as a reference for the beginning player."

For craps, the following explanation is given: "The Craps Win Card® clearly shows the exact odds for the Pass and Don't Pass, Come and

Don't Come, as well as Place Bets. Use it as a guide to help you follow the table action."

And for roulette: "The Roulette Win Card® clearly shows the correct payoffs for three common bets...a. Straight up on a number, b. Split between two numbers, and c. Corner Bets - split between four numbers."

It should be noted that these cards provide only the absolute basics of how to play the games and they give a casino an excellent alternative and/or accessory to any existing free gaming lesson program. The Blackjack Win Card®, for example, recommends that the player split only aces and eights, no matter what the dealer's up card is (although there are times when other pairs should be split).

This information is correct but is intentionally limited. The Win Cards® will not increase the skills of existing players, but they will quickly and easily show beginners the basics of how to play these live games. By providing information designed for these novices, the Win Cards® do not negatively affect a casino's win margin or the smooth casino operation.

Another nice card feature is that a "One-Dollar Tip-Chip Coupon" is included to make a bet for the dealers. This is an important feature in that it teaches new players about including the dealer through tips. Generally, dealers are happy to accommodate Win Card® users because of this feature.

So how do Win Cards® help a casino? Why would you want to participate? Again, Gottlieb offers some sound reasoning. "A lot of casinos are good at marketing to their existing customers, but are not doing enough to create new customers. Many of today's Generation X customers are just starting to make their first trips to a casino. Win Cards® are a very proactive way to introduce these new players to table games and then keep them as regular customers."



New Excalibur Win Cards®. Win Cards® can be customized to accommodate any casino's artwork and logos.

Another important aspect of the Win Cards® program is that players who purchase them must join or be a member of the casino's player's club. This helps build the casino's customer database and encourages future brand loyalty.

Basically, the program works like this: A casino buys the Win Cards® on consignment (paying only for those sold in the following month) for five dollars and sells them to a casino customer for ten dollars, who in turn receives 15 dollars in non-negotiable chips (as described previously). But you may be asking, "Isn't this a losing proposition for my casino?" The simple answer is "no."

For example, in 1997, The Nevada Gaming Commission provided Gaming International, Inc. with a documented letter clarifying how these special non-negotiable Win Card® chips may be treated for accounting purposes. It states, in part, that since the casino is making a five dollar profit at the Win Cards® point of sale, the 15 dollars in non-negotiable chips can be viewed as a third of their value.

This makes the Win Cards® transaction a "wash" for accounting, and when combined with the consignment offer, the transaction allows a casino to implement the Win Cards® program on a cost-free basis. Similar rulings have been approved in other gaming jurisdictions.

Gaming International gives free technical support for the Win Card® program, from start-up through implementation. Guided by Pam Butler, director of marketing, the company provides all necessary materials including signs, fliers, sign-up coupons, and even an eight-minute video to train staff. Win Cards® can even be customized to include a casino's logo at no additional cost (after a successful trial period of up to six months).

Additional casino concerns about the use of Win Cards® have also been addressed. First, the sign-up card states the offer is "strictly limited to one per person," to prohibit any possible abuse, although, many casinos are

much more lenient with the program.

Second, while the chips are played, many casinos find customers rarely use the actual Win Cards® on live games. They are apt to take them to their rooms or homes and review them in private, so the flow at the tables never really slows.

Even if a customer loses all of their bets, the Win Cards® provide a nice keepsake souvenir of their table game experience and keeps the casino name in front of the customer, even after returning home.

To date, more than 10 million Win Cards® have been distributed in over 150 casinos, cruise ships, riverboats, and Tribal casinos worldwide. Norwegian Cruise Line has been a Win Cards® supporter and customer for over 18 years.

Additionally, new casino customers continue to add the Win Cards® program. Among the latest include: the Royal Beach Resort (St. Kitts), Akwesasne Mohawk Casino (New

York), Meskwaki Casino Resort (Iowa), the Westin Hotel & Casino and Tuscany Suites Casino (Las Vegas), and Curacao Resort & Emerald Casino (Curacao). Later this summer, Mill Casino (Oregon), the Hyatt Regency (Lake Tahoe), and the Hyatt (Aruba) will all be adding Win Cards®.

Gaming International is currently introducing newly designed Win Cards® at Las Vegas' Excalibur, the program's most successful venue, where over 150,000 people have been introduced to live games since the program's inception there seven years ago.

For more information about Gaming International, Inc. and Win Cards®, visit www.wincards.com or call (775) 588-4222.

To review a copy of the Nevada Gaming Commission's letter, visit: www.wincards.com/casinoexec.



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