

# GAMING EXPO UPDATE

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## Win Cards Boost Table Game Play and Profits

### Special to Gaming Today

Larry Close, general manager of The Mill Casino Hotel & RV Park, had a problem. Each day, his North Bend, Ore.-based facility attracted thousands of customers, a growing number of whom were casino novices, unsure of how to conduct themselves at the property's various games of chance. Nowhere was this more evident than at the table games pit, where crowds would gather, drawn by the sites and sounds of the action, but where few would actually plunk down their money and participate. To fully take advantage of this increase in table game traffic, Close had to find a way to convert these interested passersby into actual table game players.

"If a customer is unfamiliar with a table game, chances are they are not going to play it," Close said. "They probably want to try, but are afraid of mistakes."

To help bridge this inexperience gap, Close turned to WIN CARDS—

### TEACHING BEGINNERS THE BASICS

The increasingly popular WIN CARDS Program has proven effective in attracting and developing new players in casinos all over the world.



Pam Butler, Gaming International Marketing Director and Ted Gottlieb, Gaming International President



Customized Win Cards for Tropicana Las Vegas

handheld plastic cards with easy-to-use dials that help beginners learn the basics of how to play the games of blackjack, craps and roulette. Created and produced by Lake Tahoe, Nev.-based Gaming International, WIN CARDS are sold through the casino's players club and/or cage, and come packed in a brochure that offers simplified instructions on how to play the live table games.

For Close, WIN CARDS were a godsend, with an immediate and dramatic impact on table game play and profits. "The cards are a creative tool for the novice player to learn some of the basic

table game strategies and give them a little confidence that when they sat down at a table of strangers, they would not make fools of themselves," he said. "I think it is a great concept; it educates new customers and increases your player base."

Table games experts are also sold on the worth of WIN CARDS. "You got to do something to help introduce beginners to blackjack, craps and roulette; attracting new players to the casino's live tables has been a neglected, though critical, aspect of casino operations," said Vic Taucer, renown gaming authority and author of the landmark casino operations textbook, Table Games Management. "The pool of table games players must be actively replenished—new players are central to keeping these games alive. Over the years, the WIN CARDS program has proven

to be the best way for casinos to address this issue.”

Indeed, alleviating the fears of inexperienced gamblers while growing table game play is the primary purpose for WIN CARDS, according to Ted Gottlieb, president of Gaming International and this casino marketing program’s creator. “Table game play is in decline despite the fact overall casino resort visitation continues to grow,” he said. “The reason for this is simple: older table games patrons are dying off and new players are not stepping up to take their place. Indeed, beginners often find table games to be intimidating—they are fearful of making mistakes and looking foolish. WIN CARDS offer a way for beginners to ease into live game play.”

Gottlieb is quick to point out WIN CARDS have uses beyond introducing new customers to table games. For example, facilities can use the cards to boost player club membership by offering customers who purchase WIN CARDS through the club special, non-negotiable chips that they must play on the live games.

“Our guests definitely like this deal; they like getting \$30 in play for a \$20 purchase,” said Andy Asselin, CEO of Mount Pleasant, Mich.-based Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort. “The offer is strictly limited to one per person and we have never experienced any abuse of this offer. Our customized WIN CARDS are like our casino’s ‘calling card,’ and those who purchase these cards take them home, show them to their friends and help us get our advertising messages out.”

Soaring Eagle is not the only property that uses WIN CARDS as a promotional tool. Gaming

International offers a customization program that allows clients to print logos, pictures and other support material on the brochure and on the front of the card. A number of casinos have opted for the customization, including Tropicana Las Vegas. “We have made many

changes at the Tropicana but some programs, like the WIN CARDS, have always worked for us and we are proud to continue this promotion to help us promote our resurgence,” said Tanya Montoya, casino administrator for the property.

Another selling point for WIN CARDS is that they are a risk-free

investment for gaming properties, according to Gottlieb. “Return on investment is instantaneous, since WIN CARDS do not really cost casinos anything,” he said. “Customers purchase the cards and immediately provide the property with a revenue stream by using the non-negotiable chips at the resort’s table games. Since the chips are obtained by joining the players club, this play can be monitored and verified. There are no hidden costs or associated fees with WIN CARDS. It’s that simple.”

All told, Pam Butler, Gaming International’s director of marketing, reports that WIN CARDS have attracted over 10 million new players to table games, most of who are registered in casino databases and players clubs. The cards have found success in all types of casinos—from large Las Vegas Strip resorts such as Luxor, Mandalay Bay, Excalibur and Circus Circus to smaller casinos such as the Mont Bleu and the Hyatt Regency in Lake Tahoe. “The product is universal and will work at any size property in any jurisdiction,” Butler said. “If you have table games, WIN CARDS are a proven method to attract more customers.”

Gottlieb is always on the lookout for ways to improve his flagship product, but is pleased at the progress he has made thus far in growing the table game trade. “Next year will be 25 years for WIN CARDS,” Gottlieb said. “WIN CARDS are actually a better mousetrap, and as the adage goes, if you build a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to your door. It has and casinos interested in attracting and developing new players continue to do so.”

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