

Comment

Gaming's shifting landscape needs new skills

As the worlds of offline and online gaming collide, the skill sets that operators need in their people to keep their businesses appealing to players needs to expand.

Neal Wyman, head of private equity, leisure, hospitality and gaming at executive search firm, Tyzack Partners, argues that talent and experience other than pure gaming needs to be brought in.

skillup
COMMENT

Just yesterday, we were amazed by the miracle of making calls from our cars. Now we grow impatient when our 4G cuts out while streaming an HD video on a four-inch touch screen. As consumers, our expectations are driving our everyday experiences to new heights and the gaming sector is not immune to the shift. More to the point, the sector is embracing the fast pace of change.

Take online gaming. In the light of increasing global relaxation of legislation, not to mention the ubiquity of the smartphone, gaming can be enjoyed virtually anywhere. Gamers don't need to visit a bricks and mortar destination to get their gaming buzz, neither are they harnessed to their computer at home. They can play on the go. Of course this has thrown up all sorts of debates, challenges and concerns, as traditional gaming resorts wonder how great a proportion of their existing revenues they will take and whether e-gaming will spawn a new, and hitherto untapped, market.



Neal Wyman

The reality is that there is more than enough for everyone. The key, however, is for both on and off-line gaming to focus on reformulating its offering, effectively creating a new era of all-inclusive gaming experiences.

Historically, gaming resorts have largely been managed by and for traditional players. On a global level, gaming has been progressively shifting from operating within a closed network of talent to entering a dynamic era where it is looking to stretch its brands and its offerings. The challenge for managers, both on- and off-line, is to establish how best to ratchet up their offering to the next level. For this they need to go beyond hiring those who understand the gaming concept to those who understand its connected network and who are capable of pulling together a new setting and context in which gaming can thrive.

If we take a closer look at our target audience we will see that they are quite differ-

ent from the traditional players of previous generations. The new generation of gamers are 'experience-seekers'. In this time-starved, choice-saturated era, they have moved beyond "consumerism on steroids" to expecting to be thrilled. Brought up in the video gaming environment, they want hi-tech, connectivity, exciting brands, top-end retail choices, innovative environments - and they want it at their finger tips. Offer them the right sort of emotional cues and suddenly gaming takes on a whole new meaning.

If gaming wants to engage new customers and disrupt the current status quo of relying merely on the hard-core traditional players, it needs to think imaginatively about who is going to drive this new business model forward.

This is where transferable skills come into play. By meshing the skills that have reinvigorated the travel, leisure and entertain-

ment sectors with leading players in the F&B and retail sectors, we will start to see a new pattern of talent emerging, people whose broad understanding of apparently unrelated sectors is matched by their capacity to incorporate these into the gaming arena.

The online gaming sector should look to broaden its talent pool with experts from digital and interactive agencies. They need to open themselves up to attract those who have the digital know-how to embed new technologies such as Augmented Reality and Near Field Communication (NFC) to create heightened engagement.

Combining on and off-line entertainment may appear to be a difficult mix to achieve yet it does offer new avenues. The key is having in place the right people to develop and implement a strategy that combines the virtual with the traditional and thus breathes new life into the traditional.

Finding these star-class players is not as simple as scouring the globe for obvious innovators. Neither is it a matter of ensuring candidates look good on paper. Whilst they don't need to have actual gaming experience, they do need to have a good feel for emerging trends in the entertainment or service sectors, a keen appreciation of gaming as well as customer service and the capacity to be flexible and rapidly adjust direction.

A decade ago the trend was to hire people who had industry expertise. Now we are looking for people with far broader skill sets which, paradoxically, narrows the talent pool considerably. The future for gaming looks poised for enormous expansion, and both on and off-line gaming will benefit from an innovative approach to recruiting talent which combines an understanding of not only where gaming sits in the entertainment/leisure industry but also the power of the online universe.



QUOTE UNQUOTE

"Novomatic's stand is the largest single booth ever seen at any gaming show anywhere"

Novomatic's David Orrick on how the company really was Thinking Big for ICE Totally Gaming

"This project, which we have worked on intensively for months, is beginning to see the light. Over the last year, we have worked hard with the leaders of Las Vegas Sands on what will be the most important investment that will occur in Spain and in the world in the coming years."

Ignacio Gonzalez, president of Madrid autonomous region

"The entrance of one of the world's leading resort gaming developers into Nevada is another fantastic sign that Las Vegas and the Strip are poised for great things moving forward in 2013 and beyond."

Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval on Genting Group's ambitious plans