

Casinos Going Mobile

Five Tips To Get The Most Out of Your App



By Aron Ezra

It's hard to go anywhere without seeing someone flicking their fingers across a smart phone, and that is increasingly true across casino floors around the world. Casino patrons take photos of big wins, invite friends to play, preview shows, and check out what else is happening nearby.

This is good news for the gaming industry. Smart phones and mobile apps provide operators with new opportunities to interact with players before, during and after their actual visit to the casino.

The Pew Internet Project estimates that one in four U.S. adults now uses mobile apps, and of those, nearly two in three people use their apps every day.

And this is a trend that's only just getting started—mobile is revolutionizing the way that people access information.

Consider the following:

- Gartner Inc., a technology research firm, predicts that by 2013, more people will access the internet through mobile devices than through personal computers.

- Smart phone sales are now outselling PCs—there are more than 350,000 Apple mobile devices activated every day and 550,000 Android devices activated daily.

- Data from the Nielsen Company projects that half of Americans will own and use smart phones by 2012.

- To date, more than 15 billion apps have been downloaded by Apple users alone.

After we created their apps, many of our individual casino clients have been able to attract more than 100,000 mobile app users in just their first year following launch.

Given those numbers, it's no wonder that operators are so excited about the future of mobile. Apps allow a casino to be ever-present on a patron's mobile device. But in designing your app, watch out for some of the common pitfalls. Here are five important steps to ensure your app is as effective as possible:

1. Listen carefully to what your users are requesting. Feedback is critical. The best app designers are open to what their customers sug-

gest—and they act on those suggestions. A good app allows patrons to rate games, rooms, staff, meetings and more as they walk around the casino. Users should have the ability to comment on everything happening at the property, which gives casinos a 24/7 focus group. If someone at one of the tables has a bad experience with the dealer, through the app, management can find out immediately and take action before the player goes home.

2. Don't just duplicate your website.

Take advantage of a smart phone or tablet's capabilities; remember that people want a different experience in the mobile world.

A lot of first-time app efforts are essentially glossy brochures with photos and a booking area. That's a good start, but not fundamentally different than the experience someone has on a website. The beauty of apps is that a person can have a wealth of location-based information and features at their fingertips.

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Mobile devices have interactive features that most personal computers don't have, like GPS, an accelerometer, cameras, QR Code readers and more. Users want an app that helps them as they walk around and takes advantage of their device's capabilities. Be sure to create experiences that are customized to a customer on the go, not a customer in front of a computer.

3. Apps aren't just for guests—they're for your employees too. Remember that it's important to think about creating solutions to help

your employees to be more efficient. Apps for your employees are powerful internal communication tools, and can show team members everything from back-of-the-house maps and orientation materials to player's club profiles or scheduling and benefits information. This is an exciting new area that can generate new revenue and make your teams more effective.

4. Integrate mobile into your larger marketing, gaming and outreach strategy.

It's not enough to just launch an app. Properties should be cross-promoting their app over several marketing channels, using on-site signage, social media, advertising, public relations, direct mail and customer service to get the most downloads and interest. It's amazing how often companies launch an app but don't properly promote it. Another common mistake: forgetting to tell the front-line staff that there's a new app. This results in a lot of patrons asking staff mobile questions that they can't answer.

5. Don't let content get stale.

Continue to innovate. To keep people coming back to an app, it's critical to make sure you don't let the content or the features stagnate. An app that was great six months ago doesn't necessarily take advantage of today's new features and hot social-media technologies, such as Foursquare and GPS possibilities. Outdated offers or difficult-to-find info is one of the quickest ways to generate negative feedback, so be sure to keep content fresh. Give your customers something valuable that they will enjoy using, and you'll earn more revenue and more respect. Remember, mobile is still a young technology, and the rules are still being written. Don't be afraid to take risks and try new things. You never know where it can lead.

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