

What Can You Learn from *The Flintstones*?

As a casino operator, a lot actually.

By Rob Gallo



If you remember the episode when Fred, Barney, Wilma and Betty went to Rock Vegas, you'll notice that even in prehistoric times, the core function of the casino was the same. Giving players the value proposition of entertainment, enjoyment and excitement, with the possibility of winning money is

the recipe for success.

With the exception of the Roulette wheel being made out of a slab of granite, and the dice at the craps table being forged from a piece of marble, the games were pretty much the same. The house had, and still has, an edge, and that's why we're all in the casino business. Fast forward to modern times, and while fewer people are wearing lion pelts and loincloths in the casinos, and the materials which the gaming machines are made of have changed, the underlying principles have remained intact.

What can we expect in the future? The delivery method of gaming entertainment WILL change, and we need look no further than the computer to see how. The proliferation of digital gaming devices on the casino floor has expanded in the past decade, and now Internet gambling is making its regulated debut in three of our fifty states... Yabba Dabba Doo! Fred can now b-b-bet, bet, bet from his handheld slate phone.

The nugget of wisdom from this reference is that while times change, and the method of delivering gaming excitement has changed, and will continue to change, casino operators MUST adapt. So, what can you be doing today in order to prepare for the inevitable?

1. Learn from history

You may not need to go back as far as the Stone Age, but look at your past history of players and conduct detailed player segmentations. Create demographic and psychographic buckets to categorize your

players. The objective is to see how they may or may not adapt to change. Meaning, if you have data from before and after gaming changes, look at the adoption rates from both a monetary and timeline perspective. The idea is to learn how long it may take for your existing players to make the migration to a new gaming delivery method.

2. Open new channels

Recognize that the next group of players in your casino might not be traveling to your physical property YET, but they will. I emphasize the word yet, because I don't want you to be afraid of cannibalization by Internet gaming. In fact, [studies have shown that online gambling has increased land-based gaming activity](#).

There's nothing like the real thing, but I digress. Understand that your future customers will have their gaming entertainment "itch" in a digital world, and you need to be prepared to scratch it.

3. Knowing what to offer

Even though Fred and Barney drove to work on solid stone tires, the wheels we use today were not reinvented, just changed with the times. The same holds true for your online gaming offering. Stick with what is tried and true from back in the day, and offer new innovative games as a value-add. Speak to the demographic you are looking to attract in a language that they understand, and use brands and features that they are familiar and comfortable with.

You can spend an inordinate amount of time by trying to find the perfect offering, but the only way you will truly know what works and what doesn't, is to get it in your customers' hands. You know that you want to appeal to the next wave of gamblers, but how do you reach them without alienating them? This is the age of honesty and transparency ... Get your target demographic involved in the process. This is exactly what the Social Casino operators are doing. Get the software in the hands of the masses for free, and then have pinch points in the game to see where users are willing to spend money buying virtual chips. This is extremely valuable metadata.

4. Understand your regulatory environment

Based on your specific jurisdiction or compact, there will be different considerations that you will need to be prepared for. For the purposes of this article, we will assume that real-money online gambling will NOT be legalized or regulated in the majority of states or tribal nations in the immediate future. That changes the content of what you can offer as an online gaming solution to a play for free, or social, gaming component. Having said that, there are several different interpretations at the state and tribal levels as it relates to any form of gaming, even if no real money is involved. I suggest coordinating legal counsel with an attorney who is intimately familiar with online gaming in your jurisdiction.

5. Newton's law of motion

While developing a detailed and comprehensive plan, developing a realistic budget, defining an overall objective, and setting specific goals for your online gaming offering are critical, getting started is paramount. An object in motion tends to stay in motion. Seek the guidance of proven professionals in the online gaming space who can help your casino staff create the strategy and get it moving in the right direction.

To bring this article full circle and tie it back to *The Flintstones*, I was going to offer up \$100 to the first person who could have told me Betty Rubble's maiden name, but Google spoiled all the fun.

Contributors

Mark Astone — Raving Partner, Branding, Advertising and Media Services, is the Owner and CEO of Catalyst Marketing Company. He has spent many years studying and working within the casino industry and understands what it takes to drive gamers to increase a casino's bottom line.

Nicole Barker — In partnership with Raving Consulting Company, she works with casinos across the country to harvest potential from patron databases in order to fine-tune the segmentation, messaging, and programming of multimedia and multi-channel campaigns.

Derk Boss — Raving Partner, Security and Surveillance, has served as a senior casino executive in surveillance, security, loss prevention and compliance for over thirty years with major gaming companies. The surveillance teams trained and led by Derk have a proven track record of continued success in the detection of cheating at gaming, advantage play, and internal and external theft and fraud

Dennis Conrad — President and Chief Strategist of Raving, Dennis has nearly 40 years of casino experience, including

keno writer, bartender, dealer, floorperson, gaming instructor, special events manager, casino marketing director, gaming institute director, and corporate vice president of employee training and development.

Rob Gallo — Rob Gallo, Raving Partner, Online Casino Gaming, is considered to be one of the founding members of the online gaming industry. Rob offers significant expertise and experience in successfully implementing varying marketing methodologies across the globe. He has the ability to effectively strategize new markets and identify viable opportunities within the online gaming sector.

Winnie Grand — Winnie has studied the casino industry since the early 60s. With a Masters Degree in Psychology, she has been interested in the psychological aspects of gaming, along with the growth and development of the industry. She and her husband, a retired physician, travel to casino destinations for much of the year. She has written for *Strictly Slots* magazine and is an active participant in the gambling scene.

Deb Hilgeman, Ph.D. — An experienced casino marketing executive & consultant, Deb was founding GM of Mississippi

Gaming News until Hurricane Katrina devastated the state's casino industry in 2005. Deb developed and taught the first casino marketing course at Tulane University. She has an M.S. degree in International Relations and has currently completed her Ph.D.

Kell Houston — Raving has worked with Kell since 2001, and throughout the years, we have not only valued his friendship, but his integrity. That combined with his gaming savvy approach to utilizing entertainment as a tool to drive folks to the casino floor, makes him a perfect fit for Raving clients. Kell is the Owner/President of Houston Productions, with offices in Las Vegas, Minneapolis, Seattle & Vancouver, BC. Houston Productions is a proven industry leader in casino entertainment buying and consulting. Houston has worked in all aspects of the entertainment industry over the past 30 years, focusing for the last 15 years on Indian Gaming.

Adam Smithline — is CEO of Opticity, a hosted casino marketing system that enables operators to harness the power trapped in player tracking systems. Opticity makes it easy to understand player value and drive effective campaigns, increasing

gaming revenue while reducing inefficient player reinvestment.

John Stewart — the CEO of Encompass Develop, Design and Construct, LLC, is an award-winning registered architect, licensed contractor, and licensed authority in the gaming industry across the country. John's experience includes project development in industries including gaming and hospitality, restaurant and food service, retail, healthcare, religious, and manufacturing.

Sean Vestal — Since 1999, Sean Vestal, Raving Partner, Marketing and Player Development, has held several executive level marketing positions with a number of Native American casino operators. He brings the advantage of versatility and leadership across multiple disciplines inside a casino marketing department. During his tenure in the gaming industry, he has had successful engagements as both the Director of Player Development at Lucky Eagle Casino, and as the Marketing Director at Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort.