

Spotlight on Player Loyalty and Internet Gaming

This month we talk to four tribal leaders from across Indian Country about how they maintain player loyalty at their properties and their opinion on Internet gaming. Here is what they had to say...

**Vincent Armenta, Tribal Chairman
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
Chumash Casino Resort in Santa Ynez, CA
www.chumashcasino.com**

We know that in order to ensure that our guests return to our properties again and again, we have to provide them with a reason to return. That means valets at our resort greet guests with a smile, hotel staff makes check-in easy and efficient, greeters at the entrance of our casino welcome guests warmly, blackjack dealers are friendly, casino hosts are knowledgeable, restaurant servers are exceptional, etc. Everywhere our guests turn, they are met by our skillful and professional team members whose primary goal is to provide guests with outstanding customer service.



Vincent Armenta

The outcome of our strategy to focus on providing excellent guest service has been an AAA Four Diamond Award of Excellence for our fine dining restaurant, The Willows, as well as awards for both of our hotels (Chumash Casino Resort and Hotel Corque, our non-gaming hotel in the nearby town of Solvang). Our guest-focused strategy has also resulted in our property becoming one of the premier entertainment

destinations in the region.

To further demonstrate that our strategy of providing



excellent customer service has resulted in accolades, we recently received ten “Best Of” awards in a survey conducted by our local newspaper, the *Santa Ynez Valley News*. Our properties received awards in different categories including, “Best Entertainment,” “Best Spa,” “Best Hotel,” and “Best Restaurant Service.”

We have tough competition in our area, so to be recognized in ten different categories is a huge accomplishment. Our goal is to offer our guests an unforgettable experience that keeps them coming back. Being recognized as the “best” shows that we are meeting that goal.

Like many other gaming tribes, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians is concerned that Internet gaming may have an impact on our brick-and-mortar casino. Therefore, our tribe has only committed to supporting California intrastate Internet poker. We believe that intrastate Internet programs offer the greatest opportunity for tribal involvement while limiting the game to Internet poker reduces the current and future risks to the tribe’s current gaming operation. The tribe also endorses the NIGA “Principles of Sovereignty” as also adopted by NCAI.

John L. Berrey, Tribal Chairman Quapaw Tribe

Downstream Casino Resort in Quapaw, OK and
Quapaw Casino in Miami, OK
www.downstreamcasino.com



John L. Berry

Our strategy is always the same; great customer service and focus on spending. It is easy when times are good to run a casino/resort, but when the economy is tough you are tested. Our philosophy is simple; take good care of your team and reap the benefits. When we spend money our decisions are metrics driven with pinpoint analysis focusing on pro-forma and post-forma results.

We also cultivate our experienced management to become good decision makers who

A close-up, low-angle shot of several horse hooves on a green grassy field. The hooves are dark brown and some have silver metal shoe caps. The focus is sharp on the hooves in the foreground, with others slightly blurred in the background.

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take ownership of their actions and give them the tools that measure results. The outcome is evident in our stellar performance amplified by our tremendous margins and a growth trajectory that meets our goals.

Our approach to Internet gaming can best be described as cautious and definitely part of our ongoing planning that allows for product evolution. Because it's still very much abstract we have taken an analytical approach, looking at all the new technology as well as a pragmatic interaction with our talented tribal regulator.

If you look at our current customer it's very difficult to imagine Internet gaming taking much of a share of the entertainment dollar, but we see Internet gaming as a next generation activity. So we allocate a reasonable amount of time and treasure to stay ahead of the game.

**David Keyser, Tribal Chairman
United Auburn Indian Community
Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Lincoln, CA
www.thundervalleyresort.com**

Most importantly in 2011, Thunder Valley Casino Resort was able to build on our momentum from 2010 and continue to establish our identity as a true resort destination. We opened a new 17-story hotel, pool and spa last year, so many of our strategic gaming changes have been to support our expanded facility. We expanded our live poker room by 900 sq. ft. and added five poker tables to bring our total to 21 tables. Not only has the poker room physically expanded, but we have also created new, exciting promotions for its players. We gave away three tickets to the World Series of Poker Main Event, a custom hot rod and a trip to 2012 Super Bowl. We have placed an emphasis on rewarding players for their loyalty, so the more hours poker players play, the better prizes that are available to them and the better chances they have to win.

In the slots department, we have established a special "Premier Slots" area in the casino where guests can try the newest slot machines in the industry. This helps guests identify exactly where to go to try the newest machines. The latest machines are more interactive than ever. We are using technology that allows guests to choose to have a web cam feed of them on the machine so they can capture the excitement of every win. Our guests also like to play games with familiar themes so you will see everything on our floor from the classic Batman, Betty Boop and Dirty Dancing to the more contemporary Sex in the City. We try to have a new experience every time our guests visit us and regularly updating our machines is a key part of that.

The legalization of Internet poker and other Internet



David Keyser

gaming is inevitable. The combination of potential tax dollars and a poor economy make the prospect of millions of dollars in new revenue too much for legislators to ignore. For us, it is not a question of if, but when, and who first. Both the state of California and the federal government have legislation pending. We want to be ready for when legalization happens. We have explored the issue for years,

and met with representatives from different companies already well positioned in the industry, to determine how the United Auburn Indian Community can take advantage of this opportunity. The UAIC intends to become as significant in Internet gaming as it is now in land-based gaming. It is all about doing what is best for the long-term success of the tribe. All of the tribe's investments exist to ensure our economic prosperity and our approach to Internet gaming is no different.

**Robert Odawi Porter, President
Seneca Nation of Indians
Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel in Niagara Falls;
Seneca Allegany Casino & Hotel in Salamanca;
Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino in Buffalo, NY
www.senecacasinos.com**

Through our Seneca Gaming Corporation, we have continued to make prudent investments in our casino properties with the customer in mind. Our approach is designed to provide our patrons the best possible experience during each visit – from the excitement of the gaming floor, to the delicacies in our restaurants and the unmatched luxury of our hotel rooms. Some of the highlights of 2011 included major developments at both of our Four Diamond-rated hotels. We initiated a \$10.4 million renovation project at Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel that includes upgrades to all 486 deluxe rooms and all 86 corner suites in our 26-story hotel tower.

Patron response to the new rooms has been spectacular, and we expect all of the room upgrades to be complete in early 2012. At Seneca Allegany Casino & Hotel, we have initiated a \$53 million project to build a new hotel tower that will add approximately 200 rooms. This will give us much-needed additional capacity at Seneca Allegany, where strong demand for on-site accommodations in our existing hotel tower continues to grow. We continually reinvest in gaming operations to offer our patrons to best possible

selection of games, themes and technology.

Over the past 18 months, we have replaced thousands of slot machines on our three gaming floors to keep our offerings fresh and excitement high. As a result of our unwavering commitment to sound management, prudent investment and exceptional service, Seneca Gaming Corporation has produced some of the strongest financial results in the gaming industry at a time when many operators are faced with unprecedented challenges brought on by the stagnant U.S. economy.

Big gaming interests, like big tobacco before them, allied themselves with state regulatory interests in Nevada and New Jersey and lobbied for federal Internet gaming legislation. It would bestow upon them a monopolistic control of Internet gambling operations. That brazen power grab is



Robert Odawi Porter

premised on the fiction that the big Nevada and New Jersey interests are alone sophisticated enough to operate Internet gaming.

The truth is this: the Seneca Nation and dozens of other tribal gaming operations, are as or more sophisticated in terms of management, security, oversight and regulation than the biggest and best operators in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. In addition, until Congress and the Administration recently shut it down with enactment of the PACT Act, the Seneca Nation regulated one of the most robust Internet commerce operations in America – the tobacco trade.

It is an affront to our dignity for anyone to give any credence to the insulting notion that the Seneca Nation is somehow "not ready," or inexperienced, or otherwise ill-equipped, to conduct Internet gaming from Nation Territory. We can easily do so, according to Nation laws and regulations, anywhere the Internet markets take our game and our trade.

Our treaty rights to conduct commerce – from our land, on our own terms, and without restraint by any outside power – must be respected and honored. ♣



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