

Expert Casino Marketing Advice

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One of our Casino Marketing Boot Camp goals has been to reach beyond the casino industry for new ideas that will help us become better marketers and connect with our stakeholders. I thought I'd ask some of the marketing experts I have come to know for their casino marketing advice and tips.

Here are some tips we can all use in our marketing efforts.

Consider a Balanced Communications Plan

I've long admired Gini Dietrich, first from afar as a fan of her writing and podcasts, and now I'm lucky enough to consider her a mentor. She has completely altered the way I think of the content I create and how I think about a balanced approach to communications as an adopter of the PESO Model. If you don't follow her now, I highly recommend you do!



“The world of marketing,” says Dietrich, “has changed, as we all know. The past 12 months have been rough on all of us, especially those in the hospitality industry. Not only have we had to figure out how to communicate the ever-changing COVID-related restrictions, we’ve had to figure out how to also message the organization’s stance on social injustice movements, societal changes, and the environment. And that has nothing to do with the lines that continue to blur between marketing, communications, and advertising.”

“As you think about what 2021—and the “new normal”—holds for you as a casino marketer,” continues Dietrich, “consider evolving beyond your core expertise. Adding in paid media if you typically do shared—or adding in owned or shared if you typically do earned. It’s what we, in the communications industry, call the PESO Model. It’s integrated. It’s effective. And it’s measurable. “

Engage the Right Way

When I moved to St. Louis, I had no idea a customer experience expert would be so close, and never did I dream of meeting New York Times best-selling author, Shep Hyken.

Hyken advises, “engage with your customer/guest – the right way! That means connecting with them the way they like to, which could be via email, text, or an app. And, by engaging, I don’t mean selling. Create content that will be of interest to your customers and draw them in. Something they are interested in, not overt sales messages. Also, personalize it. Different

types of customers should be getting different content at different frequencies. You want your customers to be thinking, either consciously or subconsciously, “They know me.”

Shep Hyken inspires us to *Always Be Amazing!* Get inspired by following him on [Twitter](#), [Linked In](#), and [Shep.TV](#) on YouTube. Shep is also the host of the Amazon Prime business show, [Be Amazing or Go Home](#).



Operationalize Your Brand

I confess I am a huge fangirl of brand leadership expert and author Denise Lee Yohn. From the first of her [books](#) that I devoured, I felt she was talking to my soul as a marketer. I’ve read all of her books. I have seen her speak at conferences. My next step will be to include her in a future edition of Casino Marketing Boot Camp.



Yohn reminds us, “Brands are often perceived as a tool for appealing to external audiences – in marketing, PR, maybe even sales. People define a brand as a company’s name, logo, image, advertising, aura, personality, look and feel, attitude, reputation, or trademark. But, none of these is your brand. These are manifestations, symbols, or expressions of your brand – and by limiting the definition of your brand to this external, surface level, you fail to realize its full potential to power your business.”

“Your brand is a bundle of values and attributes that define the value that you deliver to people through the entire customer experience,” continues Yohn, “and the unique way of doing business that forms the basis of your company’s relationships with all of its stakeholders. Simply put, your brand is what your company does and how you do it. Your brand is not what you *say* you are – it’s what you *do*.”

Find more of Yohn’s wisdom on her [website](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#). You might also want to sign up for her [newsletter](#). Check out her latest Smartbrief on Leadership: [What 2021 Requires from Leaders](#).

Fandom is Worth Cultivating

I also met [David Meerman Scott](#) at my favorite marketing conference, [Brand ManageCamp](#). His presentation and live stream this year about fans illuminated why we need to be more than a database of names and ADT.

The best-selling author of *Fanocracy: Turning Fans into Customers and Customers into Fans* (which he co-wrote with his daughter Reiko) reminds us that we need to be more than liked to achieve long-term growth. We need to have fans.

Scott reminds us that casino customers are only human. “We humans are hardwired to want to be part of a tribe. We’re social animals who feel safe and comfortable when we are together with like-minded people. However, our normal world has been radically altered because of the need to social distance during the pandemic.”



We’ve always known that a casino visit is a social event, but what does this mean for us as it relates to building a fan base and, more importantly, growing our business.

Scott shares six steps with us.

- **Grow and nurture genuine human connections** – People are hungry for even online connections to be deeper and more meaningful. Be humble. Be kind. Be generous.
- **Use the power of video to make virtual connections** – When we can’t meet people in person, video is a powerful substitute. Humans bond with people on video because of mirror neurons (as if we were in the same room.) It’s why we feel we know television personalities. You can use video now to bond with people in a personal way, even when they are thousands of miles away.
- **Passion is infectious** – Successful people understand that to ignite a spark in another, they must first ignite that spark in themselves. When you are enthusiastic about your personal and professional life it’s apparent to the people around you.
- **Let your fans own the relationship** – Fandom is built on its members’ experiences, not limited to the imagination of one creator. Don’t try to dictate how fans interact with your products. Instead, give them a sense of ownership.
- **Be real in your marketing** – If you’re using innovative, cutting-edge, best-of-breed (or likewise thread count and words like “luxury”) and other similar garbage words on your website and marketing materials, now is a great time to make edits. Write like a real person! Additionally, invest in great photography. Using stock photos of people to represent your customers or your employees is insulting to all (especially if your competition ends up using the same image.) To build fans, use photos of real people!
- **Never forget passion is infectious** – Successful people understand that to ignite a spark in another, they must first ignite that spark in themselves. When you are enthusiastic about your personal and professional life, it’s apparent to the people around you.

Learn more from David by following him worldwide on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Vimeo](#). You can also find information on his website.

Casino Marketing is High-Frequency Marketing

When I asked Christopher Penn for his advice, I got more than I ever expected. I'll be honest. I don't really know Penn more than listening to his dulcet tones during a round of [Marketing Over Coffee](#) and from the emails he sends to me because I've signed up for his newsletter. We belong to the [Spin Sucks Community](#) on Slack. So, I thought, "Why not?"

I got WAY more than I expected. What follows is an (all too brief) summary, but he's got some great advice for casino marketers at this [link](#), complete with charts!



Penn recognizes, "Because of the nature of gambling, casino marketing is high-frequency marketing, the same category of marketing that applies to things like FMCG – fast-moving consumer goods. Companies in these spaces require lots of transactions and need to prioritize their marketing based on keeping loyal customers, attracting new customers, and increasing the value of all customers based on the dimensions available to them."

"For example," he continues, "got a recent customer? Turn them into a frequent customer with highly-focused marketing to this segment."

"Got a valuable but sparse customer? Turn them into a frequent customer with highly-focused marketing to this segment."

"Got a frequent customer who spends just a little? Turn them into a bigger spender with highly-focused marketing to this segment."

"In any business where you're highly dependent on returning customers, you have to examine the entirety of the customer journey – and that means not only the buyer's journey but the owner's journey. If a casino were my client, I'd start with understanding the entire customer journey and examining the KPIs at every single stage."

Awareness is key. "Casinos being local and typically physically-based businesses need awareness within a radius of their facility." He asks, "how much awareness does the casino have in its target population? And, how much audience is available if everyone is competing for the same customers in a geographic area?"

He also advises we look at brand intent. A key measure in regional markets would be local search. How many people search for "casino near me" in the service area of a casino? That gives us a sense of an addressable market. Further, how many people are searching for your facility by name (which could indicate evaluation of your brand.)

"The most important action I'd take, though," Penn continues, "is not on the acquisition side, but on the ownership and loyalty side, the owner's journey. Most brands that have repeat business needs have done – or should have done – RFM (recency/frequency/monetary)

analysis to understand their customer base. RFM analysis provides much of the data for KPIs in the owner's journey.

Don't stop there. The next steps in the analysis should be understanding just how much data you have about your customers, at the individual customer level, and using that data to predict and forecast what makes someone a VIP. Are there specific data points that you collect which you could use to build a solid model of "this is the ideal customer" – and not just with demographic data, but with behavioral data as well? As casinos adapted to the changes of 2020, many of us implemented new tools and technology. Are you harvesting all of that data to create the proverbial "golden record"?

Steal from Aliens

I met Steve Miller just a few short months ago, and he's already inspired me to look differently at what I do. The self-described "marketing gunslinger" is the author of Amazon's #1 bestseller, **Uncopyable: How to Create an Unfair Advantage Over Your Competition.**



Miller says looking to other industries is more important than we may initially realize, but *how* we do it might be even more important.

"Every industry suffers from a market-wide strategic orthodoxy," he says. "This happens because we all live in the same industry box. Being in the casino industry box, for example, means that you all experience and observe the same world every day. You hang out with each other. You attend the same conferences and trade shows (when we could/will be able to). You read the same trade magazines. You drink the same 'kool-aid.'"

"It also means you observe and study each other," he continues. "You watch your competition like hawks. When a competitor does something 'new,' or 'better,' we think to ourselves, 'We can't let them do that! We'll do it, too, but BETTER!' When we want to 'brainstorm' for new ideas, we study everybody else 'inside our box.' What are they doing?"

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that after a while, everybody looks alike and acts alike. Everybody's marketing looks exactly like everybody else's.

Miller says, "Actually, that's not marketing. It's mimicking. Not much ROI from that, don't you think?"

"The secret is to stop doing that. (Now there's a blinding flash of the obvious!)" he adds.

"Start studying organizations, people, and experiences OUTSIDE the casino industry. Don't study ANYBODY remotely connected."

“Study supermarkets. Study DisneyWorld. Study the San Diego Zoo. Study Zappos. Study super smart, successful marketers in alien worlds. “

“How do they communicate and promote themselves? What types of messages and media do they use (hint: it’s not ALL social media or digital).”

“Let me give you an example. Minor league baseball teams. They are EVERYWHERE. And they are, IMNSHO opinion, the BEST marketers in the world! They have a bad, inconsistent product. If a player is good, he doesn’t stay. If he’s not good, he stays. They HAVE to be great marketers.”

“Go to some games. Watch how they impact the fan’s experience and make them want to COME BACK. Study their websites and see how they promote their brand, even during the winter when they’re closed. Here, check out a couple of random teams, the Worcester Red Sox and the Durham Bulls. I just went to their websites and came up with a half dozen ideas for casinos in less than five minutes. That’s what I call *Stealing Genius from Aliens!*”

“Keep this in mind. New ideas aren’t everywhere. New ideas are not in the casino industry box. You must look at completely unfamiliar sources. It can be a bit uncomfortable, but if you really do want to develop brand new, never before used marketing and promotion campaigns, this is how you do it.”

His enthusiasm is hard to ignore. What are you doing to steal from aliens?

BTW, want some more ideas? Miller has a new FREE ebook titled 108 Secrets to Grow Your UNCOPYABLE Business. If you want more information about Miller, visit his site TheAdventure.com.