

IGA: Unlocking The Full Potential Of Smart Tables Via Analytics, Efficiency, Player Satisfaction

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Buddy Frank, CDC Gaming

"There is a 20% leak of table-game revenue today. Fifteen percent of that is due to productivity issues and the remainder is lost to advantage players." That was one of the headlines from panelist Bennie Mancino, the chief gaming officer of Tavolo Tech.

The late -afternoon session at IGA was moderated by long-time table-game analyst Maulin Gandhi, the president of Tangam Systems. He posed a series of questions for the group that included, "What is the cost of not having better data from our table games?"

Jay Bean, the WP of Gaming Strategy at Seminole Hard Rock, responded, "We absolutely don't know what's going out the door." He said that the basics of profitability on traditional games like blackjack and craps is well known, but "when you get into the discrete games and side bets, it's more difficult. That data is hard to capture now, but it can be a real value."

Surprisingly, Nasr Sattar, an executive VP at NRT Technology Corporation, said that AI and "smart tables" could actually improve guest service and restore the dealer/player interactions that are disappearing today. "In the old days, we had higher staffing levels and knew our players better. But now, people have gotten away from the tables, because we can't relate to them."

"Using good data can actually re-introduce a missing human element to table-game players. That's where it gets really powerful, in my opinion." Sattar said that they can give out comps and rewards that feel personal, but are actually based on solid data. "When we start doing this, we can recover lost players and bring new ones back to the games."

A shrinking labor force was one of key factors cited by all, specifically the lack of surveillance operators and table-game supervisors. Interestingly, Mancino said that if the "no-taxes-on-tips" measure passes, things will get much worse. "No one will ever want to be a supervisor when they can make so much more dealing."

Despite the slow adoption of true smart tables, some encouraging news is coming from the world of AI. Bean said that the use of artificial intelligence in the surveillance rooms is starting to pay big dividends. "We all know that two or three operators can't really watch multiple games and spot dealer mistakes or all advantage play. But AI can and this type of smart-camera technology is getting better every day."

The session also included a question that has been lingering for years. “Why has it taken so long to adopt smart table games and the improved analytics they offer?” The panel cited numerous factors: the cost of RFID chips, advanced cameras, infrastructure requirements in wiring and servers, chip readers, smart shoes, and new procedures combined with dealer training.

Yet all agreed that the benefits would be huge, due to improved player reinvestment and dealer efficiency, reduction of fraud, better products, and better customer retention. One panelist said if operators knew exactly how much they could save, they’d implement true smart tables immediately.

But moderator Gandhi put it into perspective when he said, “Today, we just don’t know what we don’t know.”

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