

How Great Wolf Lodge Achieved 3X Growth in Hero Reservations

For Great Wolf Lodge, what started as a discount program has become a strategic revenue channel: one that acquires verified guests, protects margins, and delivers CRM data to fuel long-term growth.

Great Wolf Lodge offers exclusive rates to military members and first responders through its “Howling Heroes” program. By automating verification, the brand tripled its reservation run rate, removed material margin risk, and shifted from a defensive posture to a “loud and proud” marketing strategy. The integration provides a seamless, eight-second booking experience for high-value communities while delivering rich verified first-party data to fuel long-term lifecycle marketing and repeat bookings.



Challenge

Overcoming Margin Leakage and Invisible Communities

In the hospitality sector, unverified discounts represent a significant strategic risk. Prior to partnering with ID.me, Great Wolf Lodge operated its hero program on an “honor system” basis. This lack of verification created a massive operational bottleneck, as front-desk staff were forced to manually verify credentials during check-in, resulting in guest friction and inconsistent enforcement.

The lack of digital verification meant Great Wolf Lodge could not risk aggressive marketing. If a hero-specific promo code went viral, the resulting margin risk would hurt profitability. Consequently, Great Wolf Lodge was forced to keep the program passive, effectively rendering these high-value communities “invisible” within their acquisition strategy.

To unlock growth, Great Wolf Lodge needed a verified identity solution that served as both a gate and an enabler, allowing them to market “loud and proud” without the risk of offer abuse.



Folks can just simply add their stay to cart and apply that 30 percent off discount at which point they then may or may not verify in person at check-in. We're all assuming some percentage of folks are not actually verifying, so there's some margin leakage there."

David Van Saun
VP, CRM and Ancillary

Solution

Overcoming Margin Leakage and Invisible Communities

The brand modernized its approach by pivoting to ID.me's Digital Wallet and verified first-party data. By tapping into ID.me's pre-verified network of over 165 million members, Great Wolf Lodge could offer a high-trust experience that converted guests in seconds.

Great Wolf Lodge implemented a dual-entry approach: a dedicated landing page for high-intent community traffic and a "Verify with ID.me" button on the booking plan page. A critical feature is the "Oops, Verification Required" flow. If a guest manually enters the HEROES promo code without

being verified, an interstitial pop-up prompts an ID.me sign-in. This protects the exclusive rate while keeping the user in the booking path. Notably, this integration remained stable and unaffected even as Great Wolf Lodge navigated a complex internal system migration.

The integration goes beyond a simple "gate." The ID.me payload flows into Great Wolf Lodge's analytics and reservation systems, enabling subgroup performance tracking and personalized nurturing across communities (e.g., military/Navy vs. first responder/firefighter).

3X

reservation run rate

97%

pre-verified rate
(97% Military)

8 seconds

median verification

200K

verifications in first
5-6 months

8 figure

first-year revenue

Results

Quantifying the "Heads in Beds" Impact

The partnership shifted the program from a passive offer to a primary acquisition lever. By automating trust, Great Wolf Lodge achieved a **3X increase** in the program's run rate, effectively putting more "heads in beds" while protecting margins.

The efficiency of the ID.me network was the primary driver of this growth.

With an 88.8 percent pre-verified rate and a 97.6 percent true pass rate, the median verification time dropped to just eight seconds. This speed minimized checkout abandonment, particularly during high-traffic periods. In the first five to six months post-launch, the program drove 200,000 verifications.

Playbook

Bring This to Your Brand

After building a scalable foundation with members of the military, teachers, nurses and first responders Great Wolf Lodge recently expanded their audiences to include government employees within the ID.me network.

In just over a year, the program has driven eight figures in revenue for Great Wolf Lodge.

By replacing "set it and forget it" discounts with verified identity marketing, Great Wolf Lodge has turned community offers into a profitable growth engine. With ID.me's fixed per-verification cost model, Great Wolf Lodge maximizes its own marketing ROI as the program scales, while the Digital Wallet handles identity.

ID.me

See how community marketing can work for your brand, and reach out to our Sales team.

Reach Out →