Certified results: GSA program designed to ensure protocols implemented in consistent fashion

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Now that Gaming Standards Association protocols are appearing in gaming devices around the world, it is increasingly important for operators to know that the devices they are considering purchasing and installing on their gaming floors have been certified to work as intended with the protocols.

To help operators accomplish that goal, GSA has launched a new program in which operators and manufacturers can be assured of consistent implementation of GSA protocols. The "protocol certification program" helps both groups, and in different ways.

The program was designed to provide the industry a level of assurance that gaming products correctly implement GSA standards. The primary focus is to ensure consistent implementation of standards to ensure improved interoperability by striving toward every casino's ultimate goal, that of "plug and play."

The program begins at GSA's Website, www.gamingstandards.com. From there, manufacturers will be able to submit their products for certification testing. The program provides the manufacturers a neutral environment to have their equipment independently tested and certified. This certification not only gives the manufacturer peace of mind that their equipment is using the protocol as it should, but it also gives them a marketing edge by being able to display the GSA Certified seal on their products. After being certified, the products will be listed in the certification registry, where operators can easily search for products.

It is important for all sides to understand that the program was designed with the end-user, the operator, in mind. Through the program, operators can confidently "shop" for certified products on GSA's Web site. All products shown in the certification registry will interoperate with the other GSA certified equipment on the gaming floor. This allows operators to validate that the products they are considering putting on their floors are certified to work as intended, before making the purchase.

Testing and certification will be conducted by the industry's leading independent test labs. The labs are individually accredited by an International Standards Organization (ISO) recognized Accrediting Body to the ISO 17025 standard with a GSA scope. Gaming Laboratories International has become the first organization approved as an authorized test laboratory in accordance with the program, and others are expected to follow as early as this fall.

When games, systems, peripherals and other devices are submitted, they are independently tested and certified by the lab to ensure they operate in accordance with the protocols. Manufacturers and regulators should note that the certifications exclusively relate to protocol communications, and are not certifications as required by regulatory testing guidelines, and should not be considered a substitute for regulatory testing.

As products are certified, they will be added to the certification registry, which will serve as an information clearinghouse where operators can quickly see a list of all certified gaming devices and systems.

Key to the success of the program is operator feedback. Built into the online system is a feedback mechanism where, if there is a problem in the field with a certified product, the operator can easily and quickly notify GSA to allow people to identify those errors so that GSA can take appropriate steps to get the problem corrected.

Steps GSA will take in determining the cause of the problem will be guided by three initial questions. First, is the protocol clear enough, meaning was there a problem with the protocol where the device causing the error simply could not function properly? Second, was there a problem in the test script that needs to be corrected and updated to ensure the problem is avoided in the future? Last, was there a potential lab error?

The good news is, with the new direct operator-GSA feedback, solutions to these potential problems can come very quickly, enhancing the industry for everyone.

We are actively soliciting feedback and information from the end user, because that's how we will be able to make corrections, keep the program updated and keep the industry moving at the speed of business.

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