

PRESIDENT CORNER: GAMING IN THE NEXT 25 YEARS

A new connected world of gaming

As the world becomes more interconnected the boundaries between physical and virtual space will fade. The Internet is how we interact socially, communicate, entertain, keep informed, meet, innovate, collaborate etc. It is the virtual air we breath that allows us to manage our daily lives. We will all be connected and for the next generations it will be hard to imagine NOT being connected. Social behaviors will continue to shift and so will the gaming industry as a whole.

As the demand and access to the Internet continues to grow, so will the real and significant technological challenges of ensuring data protection, security and integrity. The financial industry is all too familiar with these challenges. Whilst the challenges are highly complex it is essential to keep the world turning and people socially interconnected. Global collaboration between governments will be vital to provide a socially responsible and safe online access. The world is getting smaller and we need to recognize the technology threats, identify solutions to ensure protection of consumers.

The world of gaming will become flat and this globalization will make gaming available anywhere, anytime. Gaming will become ubiquitous and part of the social fabric. The industry will find new ways to globally collaborate to achieve a level of social responsibility through shared regulations offering protection through responsibly managed and monitored online gaming experiences. Centralized systems will provide a much-needed oversight to ensure the level of protection consumers are seeking. At the same time these interconnected systems will automatically determine revenue for the governments involved at the respective geographical locations. It is this global collaboration between the policy domain and vendor domain that remains most critical to ensure a sustainable and continued growth for the gaming industry.

Over the next 25 years we will witness exciting new gaming experiences spanning across geographical boundaries with potentially global jackpots. A whole new world of gaming will emerge anytime, anywhere and the rewards will be substantial. Lottery operators are well positioned to take full advantage of these new paradigm shifts and land-based operators will expand their product offerings through further global collaboration. Future generations will want instant gratification and expect a level of gaming sophistication and experience not yet offered anywhere. It will be harder to retain player loyalty due to the short attention span and as the gaming world will become flatter every day, so will the new opportunities grow.

The gaming industry will need to adapt and offer solutions for the ever-growing connected planet. But this can only be done hand in hand with policy domain stakeholders.

How will the look/design of land-based casinos change? What will stay the same?

Land based casinos will morph into themed resorts or themed 'experience bubbles' that promote social interaction. They will bring people back together from the physical separation instigated by the technology revolution. These entertainment bubbles will stimulate the senses in various ways. They will offer variety of pleasures and enhanced services such as food, music, movies, gaming, shopping, etc. The focus will be to bring people back together. Visitors will be able to interact with anyone anywhere and share their experiences.

Whenever you enter these experience bubbles, the environment knows everything about you and your preferences. You will receive tailored experiences. Whatever your desires or dreams are, you will be pampered and able to interact with like-minded people in a safe environment. Interactive surfaces will allow you to continue your social dialogues, invite people to share or play games with you, order anything you like, from goods to adventure trips, travel promotions. Your winnings will not necessarily be cash, it can be any goods and services you prefer or accept.

The traditional tables/slots as we know them today will fade away and be replaced by remote thin client devices allowing you to play anything, anywhere, anytime. They will become multi dimension gaming experiences spanning across multiple properties real or virtual. Gaming will be cloud based and central regulatory servers will monitor access to games based on biometric characteristics of the user. Data will be shared across states, provinces, and countries.

How will land based and online gaming coexist?

They will be so intertwined that there will no longer be delineation between them. Some of the older generations still think about connecting to the Internet to read their email or access information on websites.

What will casino marketing look like in the future?

You will be known and they will find you. They will pamper you with offers wherever you are. As they know your preferences, whenever you are close to a wine store, you might receive a special offer for a wine you like and by the way, you will earn loyalty points or a free 'experience' when you purchase that special bottle.

Whether it's a wine store or you enter your favorite experience bubble at which you have a membership, they will know you and find you. Interactive surfaces will not only bring a new experience they will drive targeted marketing to you on yet another 'device'. If you leave you will carry that message with you and you will never be out of touch or out of reach for marketing, gaming or anything else that the bubble has to offer unless, of course, you opt out. Don't forget you are truly connected.

What about expansion? Where do you see casino growth occurring?

Casino growth in the format we know it today, will definitely accelerate in Asia and India. However this will be quickly followed by and expanded by portable virtual experiences and become truly global and interconnects through social media channels.

What will be the role of cash going forward, if any?

Today cash is king; tomorrow we are dealing in virtual currencies. Cash will be phased out and virtual currencies will dominate all transactions. NFC technology will eventually replace cash and debit cards. Status, goods and services will become more important than cash as it is the way to differentiate your self in the virtual world. When you win, you might cash out by requesting a service you like.

Which casino operators will be the most forward thinking and ready to embrace such change?

Only those operators that are forward thinking, have the vision, embrace the change, and are willing to commit the resources needed will drive the gaming experiences of the future. They might not necessarily be casino operators, as we know them today.

Will regulators be ready for these changes or will they hold us back?

The rapidly evolving technology landscape creates significant issues that are unique to our industry. For regulators it is becoming increasingly more challenging to stay up to speed with the fast changing world of technology allowing them to craft regulations to protect consumers. Gaming is an intricate part of the fabric of people's life and the technology revolution we are all experiencing will only accelerate. This reality will force the industry to create a far more collaborative environment between stakeholders of the policy domain and industry domain. As an industry we need to create common regulatory and technical standards across multiple jurisdictions on a global scale.

To conclude:

We all desire a social environment; we like to be with and around other people. Technology advancement has created a level of social connectivity like never witnessed before. However at the same time it created a level of social physical isolation like never seen before. I believe that the bubbles have the opportunity to bring create and foster social environments and themed eco systems that will create a very unique global gaming environment.

Will the brick and mortar casino business be another Blockbuster or Barnes and Nobles story? In 25 years I predict it will and 'casino's' will no longer exist the way we know them today, but virtually they will thrive.