

DEFINING THE PLAYER EXPERIENCE

Six assessment points to compare how your offer stacks up.

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I READ Bill Friedman's book on gaming room design in 2009 upon my return to Australia. A ponderous tome of well over 600 pages, it was steeped in practical research which is great, but it was dated then and is even less relevant now. Trends often change because of larger changes in society, not just those related to product. For NSW clubs, continued social stigmatisation of gaming is as much of a threat as the improving pub market.

Despite all of my data-based research, I have spent little time noting my thoughts on the big differentiator – the player experience. I have done several projects over the last six months looking at what the "player experience" means and then how to enunciate it. Below are listed six significant assessment points to see where your offering stacks up;

1. It starts at the car park: Clear signage, well lit, a feeling of safety and a clean presence are the pillars of how a car park should be designed and maintained. As it is almost always the first point of contact for patrons, this is how first impressions can be positively formed.

2. The three Cs: (1) Cleanliness almost always rates near the top in any hospitality survey, it is super-important. **(2)** Car parking is vital because the club's prime target market (50-69) drive, especially at night and this forms part of the decision-making process, and **(3)** Coffee; the national consumption continues to rise as do the number of outlets. Coffee is important to the committed player in 2019.

3. Customer service: Over the years I have spent time watching floor staff interacting with top players. I believe the best staff are the ones who are industrious, are "invisible" until needed and are time conscious. I see many customer service staff still overstay their welcome and not take the obvious visual cue that the engagement is over.

4. Baseline technology: Card-based systems offering TITO and cashless are a must in 2019. High end players preferences aren't necessarily black and white, they can be grey. Many clubs run TITO but offer cashless to top tiers as a service – as all current systems

have that functionality approved, clubs should ensure players have options, especially when it comes to money.

5. Comfort: I understand the need for consistency in obtaining aesthetic pleasure, but I still think multiple chair options and base heights can't hurt the performance of a gaming room.

6. Privacy not seclusion: The UNLV Centre of Research has put so much work into this, so I am not going to rehash it, but having small secluded or differentiated gaming areas does not work. Privacy can be achieved in a crowded area.

Assessing your gaming offering is only part of the equation, knowing and honestly assessing the competition completes the process. Put yourself in your players shoes and understand what they really want, not what was written in a book in a different era. ■



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