



PURE CANADIAN GAMING

Committed to “making good things happen”

The world of gaming is an exciting and risky business. In order to be a market leader, organizations must have something that the other competitors do not possess. Pure Canadian Gaming is a market leader within the province of Alberta, and maintains this position by focusing first and foremost on the guest experience and ensuring exceptional service delivery.

Many organizations claim to care about their guests and players, but that is not always a reality. When you speak with George Goldhoff, Pure Canadian Gaming’s passionate President and CEO, about the significance of customer service and their mission statement to “Make Good Things Happen for Other People”, you soon realize that this is not just a key focus for the organization, but a true impassioned tenet of the company’s culture.

Pure Canadian Gaming, the largest gaming company in Alberta, started its rich history as Casino ABS (Alberta Bingo Supplies). The company was founded in 1973 by Heinz Oldach, a pioneer in the Western Canadian gaming business, opening Edmonton’s first permanent, privately operated charitable casino. In 2013, Casino ABS was rebranded

as Pure Canadian Gaming with its new name promoting a vision of the company’s future.

PLENTY OF VARIETY

Of the 27 casinos within the province, four of the largest are owned and operated by Pure Canadian Gaming. Between the four, Casino Edmonton, Casino Lethbridge, Casino Calgary and Casino Yellowhead, they offer over 100 table games, 50 poker tables, 3,000 slot machines as well as associated food, beverage and entertainment facilities.

The company’s casinos reflect their Western Canadian origins. “They have their own style,” says Goldhoff. “We are not Las Vegas. We consider ourselves to be an entertainment company, but we differ from what you would see in Nevada or even Ontario. Canadians are typically slightly more modest, but they do enjoy their entertainment and they

expect us to focus on the one-on-one relationships that we create with our players and guests.”

One way that Pure Canadian Gaming has been creating relationships with the gaming public and its loyal players and guests is through Pure Rewards, its player loyalty card program. One of the key focuses when the brand was launched in 2013, was getting the player loyalty program right for guests.

CREATING LOYALTY

“There was a player loyalty program previously with ABS but nobody really understood it,” says Goldhoff. “It was really confusing. Most casinos in Alberta were operating with player loyalty programs, but they did not provide value for the players. Our goal was to create a program that would reward our guests and players for frequenting and playing at PCG

properties and to generate return visits through offers provided by the program.”

Membership is free to all guests, and the card provides discounts on food, beverages and merchandise, exclusive offers and the richest point accumulations in the province. Points are awarded simply for visiting and, of course, for playing. In the first month after the launch on the April 02, 2013, there was a 500-per-cent increase in new card signups and player card use.

Pure Canadian Gaming is currently in the midst of completing renovations in all of its casinos, including the addition of new luxuriously appointed High Limit gaming rooms, a future hotel, and a number of new restaurants. Any aspect that touches the guests or enhances their experience has been upgraded or looked at as possible renovation opportunities. New chairs in all the properties will ensure comfort at slot machines and the tables. Among many additions there are also new tables, felts, rails, gaming chips, lights, sound systems, carpets and wall coverings.

NEW F&B OFFERINGS

New restaurant concepts such as pizza delis, noodle bars and new lounges and entertainment venues have been added as a response to our guest’s requests. In the Lethbridge casino, a snack bar has been converted into a pizza deli, after market research was undertaken, showing that city residents were looking for a quick lunch alternative and there were opportunities to offer nearby hotels with delivery services.

In Lethbridge, there was also some underutilized land adjacent to the casino and as the hotel/casino combination benefits the casino, the company is currently planning a full service hotel with banquet facilities for the site. While it is still in the preliminary planning stages, the hotel will be attached to the casino for a seamless guest experience and should be between 125-140 rooms and reminiscent of a Marriott standard. While convenient for casino guests, the hotel will function as a self-sustaining business on its own.

At Casino Yellowhead, the shift in entertainment offerings has been even more dramatic. Revitalizing the entire property with extensive renovations



including the build of brand new table games and slots areas, as well as a beautifully designed new High Limit and VIP room including private gaming tables, it also houses a new showroom entertainment concept for the Edmonton market featuring burlesque and variety shows in the recently renovated Cherry Bar & Cabaret. Still to come is a complete refresh of the deli and restaurant dining spaces.

FOCUS ON EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Despite the huge undertaking of renovating all of its properties, the primary focus of recent changes has to do with the employees. Pure Canadian Gaming employs some one thousand people and Goldhoff admits that the company had fallen a bit behind the competition in investing in its people, but major training and development initiatives over the last two years have catapulted it back to the top.

“I can put all the Persian rugs, gold plated doorknobs and crystal chandeliers in our casinos, but none of that will make a difference unless we invest in our employees. We have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on development, and our employees are better trained, happier and friendlier. Our guests are the beneficiaries of that.”

With a strong community involvement focus at all sites, the company’s teams are consistently and regularly participating in local events and charitable initiatives with the goal of building team unity and providing a lasting positive impact, further supporting their mission to “Make Good Things Happen for Other People.”

When asked where he sees the company in ten years, Goldhoff says, “I would hope to have a company that is three times our present size. There will always be growing pains when you change, but if the change is communicated effectively – and you involve your team members – people get really excited about it and become enthusiastic. I believe that you need to be receptive and open to constant change. If you don’t then you become irrelevant.” ■

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