

The Ultimate Failure in Guest Service

By Derk Boss

How casino floor security can reduce theft dramatically

It happens on the casino floor every day and during every shift. A guest reports a missing TITO voucher, or they set down their phone or purse and now it's gone. Both Security and Surveillance are notified, and an investigation is conducted. Unfortunately, the item is usually not recovered. In most cases, the item was taken by an individual who grabbed the item and immediately left the casino.

At this point, all security and casino management can do is complete their report and help the guest report their missing items to the police. While, at times, some casinos will authorize some service recovery, such as a comped meal or possible replacement of their stolen TITO with free play, in most cases the guest is left to mourn the loss of their personal property alone and without further recourse.

The aftermath of theft on the gaming floor

It's a sure bet that most guests who get ripped off in a casino are not going to come back, and they're certainly going to tell their friends and family about it. You can also imagine what gets put on social media about their experience at your casino.

Yes, it is almost a fact of life that there are people who only go into casinos to find a victim and take whatever they can. We've all seen them; homeless and common street criminals whose part of their day, if not their entire day, is spent visiting as many casinos as they can and taking everything that's not nailed down. I'm not even discussing the opportunists who just happen to see abandoned credits or a wallet dropped on the floor. Nowadays, there are a lot of people who will not turn in an item they find in the casino, they will just pocket it and go on their way. That's just the way it is.

Most Security and Surveillance departments deal with such thefts every day, and we spend a lot of time and resources trying to determine what happened to the item and whether it is recoverable. The problem with this approach is that the incident has already occurred, the item has usually been taken off-property, and there is nothing further we can do to assist the guest. The ultimate failure in guest service.

A contributing factor to these types of thefts is the fact that they usually do not result in any loss to the property. We may replace a TITO ticket or buy the victim a meal, but overall, the casino is out nothing. I mention that because some security and surveillance teams view these types of thefts as the guest's problem. In their eyes, "They left the item exposed and somebody stole it. They should have been more careful." To me and other security/surveillance professionals, the fact that a guest has been ripped off is a failure in our security program and must be addressed. We tend to take that theft personally, and we should! There are things we can do to prevent most of these thefts from occurring at all!

Security and Surveillance must address the root causes of these types of thefts. There are usually two reasons why these thefts occur.

There is an existing population of individuals who regularly enter the property looking for people they can hustle, victimize, or steal from and;

Guests usually feel safe in casinos because of all the security and cameras, and thus leave things unattended that they would never dream of doing anywhere else.

Security and Surveillance can and should address both of these issues on a daily basis. We can do this by:

Positioning officers at each entry/exit point of the property to prevent undesirables from entering the property in the first place. This is an ideal and very effective approach. However, if you don't already have officers posted at the doors, it may not be a cost-effective solution.

Require security officers and surveillance personnel to constantly patrol the casino floor, particularly the slot areas. They should be looking for those individuals who behave suspiciously; not playing, wandering aimlessly (looking for victims), dirty or shabbily dressed, eyeing guests (selecting victims), talking to or loitering about other guests they don't belong with, such as a young male with an older female or senior couple, a street person hanging around a young couple at the slots and providing them tips on how to play (hustling). An approach by security to ask an individual wandering about to see if they need assistance, or to make sure that guests aren't being bothered is usually enough to move the bad guy on or may develop enough information to trespass the individual permanently.

Security should also be on the lookout for customers who may have placed their purse or phone where it can be taken, or who may be leaving their machine with credits unattended. Advising the guest to protect their property may prevent it from being stolen.

The best approach to protect guests from casino floor theft is to proactively patrol the floor with Security and Surveillance to identify and isolate those individuals who are in the casino for only one reason; to steal. If you can move those types of individuals off your property as soon as they arrive, your casino theft will be reduced dramatically, and Security/Surveillance will have more time on their hands to protect the property.