

Super Systems

By Dave Bontempo

How CMS is continuing to evolve and serve the needs of operators

What's in *your* casino management system? No vendor can fill every big-property software need, prompting the CMS to collect information from many operational systems. This pragmatic view is heightened by operators acquiring properties and choosing not to replace important player-tracking systems.

It's a wise approach, especially when the list of potential applications could be infinite, and expensive. There's nothing wrong with limits to this daily world of processing and transaction recording.

Yet the rise of specialization, real-time bonusing and the mobile age creates a new a competition grid.

Suppliers try to exceed an already-extensive basic-application package: from slot monitoring/accounting and ticketing, to cashless gaming, e-games platforms and RFID table monitoring, from promotional kiosks, surveillance and security to third-party check cashing, internet gaming and data warehousing.

If you can't beat the system, expand it. This is a strong opportunity for the industry's largest players. They have the global reach and massive resources to help casinos think bigger, even on small details.

The Synkros Saga

Konami Gaming, the Las Vegas-based division of Tokyo-based Konami Holdings Corporation, continues to thrive as a leading designer and manufacturer of slot machines and casino management systems. The company's core technology supports nearly 400 venues, and it showcases Synkros, one of the industry's leading player tracking systems.

"A robust CMS should equip teams with new possibilities, not limit



them to a singular approach," says Steve Walther, Komani's senior director of marketing and product management. "It should drive more accurate data and analysis, even beyond what's expected. That's what ultimately pushes the industry forward. As markets across North America and abroad have become increasingly competitive, systems technology has become an important factor in advancing the casino's positioning. The player tracking data, analytics, targeting and technical functionality needed to support daily operations is more relevant than ever."

Walther says not all casino management systems can analyze gaming and non-gaming spend in a single ecosystem, thus preventing many operators from implementing a cohesive property-wide strategy. Synkros, with its comprehensive real-time data, will help them capitalize on opportunities, he adds.

Synkros fashions some timely innovations. True-Time Windowing brings up the player loyalty information directly on the slot game screen. Tap-On/Tap-Off is a cardless player loyalty solution to replace



True-Time Windowing

a traditional player's card by allowing players to authenticate their loyalty account with other methods like a mobile phone, room key, fob, etc.

Tap On/Tap Off uses near-field communication to let players authenticate their loyalty account at the EGM. It is embedded within a traditional card reader, to accommodate new authentication methods as well as traditional player loyalty cards.

"This multi-channel solution empowers operators to reach more players using technology that's already interlaced through their daily life and the guest experience," Walther says. "Instead of being tethered to a traditional player's card each time they visit the casino or waiting in line for reprint when their loyalty card is misplaced, players can get right to the game through a number of secure access methods right at the device. For mobile cardless connection, players can simply tap their personal smartphone device at the zone of the card reader bezel."

The card reader changes color to indicate blue for inactive/uncarded connection, green for successful active connection, and red for misread/failed connection. Once players tap-on a successful connection to their account, it remains active until they tap-off to disconnect or the session times out from inactivity, similar to a traditional player's card.

"There is a high level of anticipation for Synkros' Tap-On/Tap-Off solution," says Walther. "Many of the casino operators we work with see high levels of mobile adoption among their core player demographic, and they recognize where other industries are phasing out traditional loyalty cards for branded apps and mobile wallets. Because Tap-On/Tap-Off is a hybrid solution that supports several different methods of authentication—including personal smartphones and traditional player's cards—it gives players the luxury of adopting new mobile conveniences at their own pace and eases the transition. That is especially appealing for operators."

True-Time Windowing is another significant offering. This technology allows players to access account and property information directly on any video slot machine. It also enables synchronized and on-demand tournament bonusing, with True-Time Tournaments, so operators can reward players with on-demand tournament bonus games and/or simultaneous tournament events. It deploys a full canvas of possibilities directly onto the screen of most video slot machines without interrupting game play. These items include loyalty account management, custom offers, notifications, system-delivered tournaments and floor-wide bonusing.

"Konami's next-generation True-Time Windowing contains a variety of new enhancements designed to reach the widest possible audience with top conveniences that players want, including HD display, portrait-screen

compatibility, drink ordering and web services," Walther says. "With these new developments, properties have the freedom to customize windowing displays with branded art and video content to highlight any number of property initiatives—upcoming events, room specials, restaurant happy hours, player's club promotions, etc."

The launch of web services allows properties to feature HTML5-based tools they offer—such as an online box office, hotel bookings and restaurant reservations—to facilitate additional sales opportunities, he adds.

Synkros has other significant elements. Offers Management gives operators the tools to drive targeted player behaviors, while rewarding players in a life cycle of customer engagement. In terms of analytics, Synkros Dashboards is expanding the convenience, accuracy, speed and usability of enterprise-wide data with a fast, interactive new dashboard interface. Among the biggest challenges faced with casino analytics are slow integrations, antiquated flat reports and inconvenient access, Walther asserts.

Looking forward, he sees continued growth in connected integrations with non-gaming features, touchpoints and amenities.

Delivering the Advantage

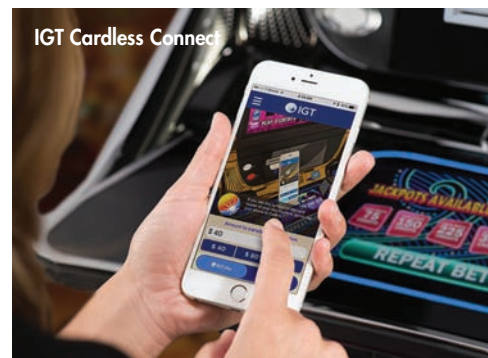
International Game Technology found another winner with Advantage, its flagship casino management system. The scalable solution features a modular design, making it highly configurable for casino operators of all sizes. This is the company's most widely deployed casino management system, and is the CMS of choice for prominent new casinos like Resorts World Catskills, MGM Cotai and Wynn Palace in Macau, officials say.

The company lists bonusing, patron management, mobile apps, table management and EZ Pay as major facets of the Advantage umbrella.

"IGT is committed to further developing Advantage to meet the evolving needs of our customers and their players, while also staying true to the attributes that have fueled the product's success for many years," says Eric Lancaster, IGT director of systems product management. "We believe continued development and investment in Advantage is fundamental to its success and ability to integrate with Tournament Manager and new mobile solutions like Cardless Connect and PlaySpot."

"We have recently made significant advancements in our systems bonusing portfolio. By pairing IGT Advantage with Service Window and IGT bonusing apps, our customers are having great success in differentiating their entertainment experiences."

Lancaster says IGT Advantage helps casinos of all sizes manage their patron



Everi-thing to Everybody

Jackpot Xpress is a solution that works with all systems

It's always interesting to watch big names coordinate with one another.

Everi Holdings has rapidly ascended in its payment, games and intelligence areas. Its most recent NIGA presenta-

tion involved management systems to include including innovative gaming machines that power the casino floor. The company also touts casino operational and management systems with comprehensive, end-to-end payments solutions, critical intelligence offerings, and gaming operations efficiency technology.

Yet the company also plays well with others in the CMS space. Its Jackpot Xpress solution is supported on the Scientific Games SDS 12, IGT Advantage, Konami Synkros and Aristocrat's Oasis systems. It also is integrated with system processing functions for Scientific Games and Konami. The synergy gives Everi an edge, turning compliance into real-time efficiency and blending the world of mobile apps and kiosks.

As mobile devices, kiosks and gaming devices become one integrated family, security and compliance gain more stature. These innovations will be touted on the security side for the theft they prevent and in the revenue realm for unclogging casino-floor lines to enhance continuous play.

That's the goal of Jackpot Xpress. This application alerts slot personnel on the casino floor when a jackpot occurs. The application promptly alerts floor staff to new jackpots and provides the winner's location and loyalty tier level. That allows them to process it in the slot management system, gather and verify the winner's information, specify tax withholdings and distribution types, and generate the necessary Internal Revenue Service forms for patron signature. The easy-to-use interface is customizable to meet various casino business rules and processes.

When Jackpot Xpress is used with Everi's



Cage Notification module, the selling of cage window-paid jackpots and batches to the property's bank or vault is automated, eliminating paper and expediting the audit process.

Jackpot Xpress can run from a mobile device, and

is fully integrated with the Everi JackpotX-change kiosks. When Jackpot Xpress is implemented using both the mobile application and JackpotXchange kiosks, properties are able to perform additional functions such as pouch pay and cageless cash retrievals. When using the mobile application, additional, optional peripherals like mag-stripe and RFID readers may also be supported to further reduce time and effort of floor, cage, audit and compliance personnel. Using Jackpot Xpress may completely eliminate jackpot paperwork produced through other software, Everi officials say.

Speaking of Aristocrat, the company announced that its Oasis 360 system has become the casino management system of choice for Sunland Park Racetrack & Casino's 700 slot and video poker games. Sunland Park will benefit from Oasis 360's player-centric modules, including Oasis Loyalty, Oasis One Link, Player Max Mobile and nLive, with Player Portal.

With this most recent installation, Aristocrat's Oasis 360 system is now installed at 80 percent of New Mexico's racetrack locations, officials say.

Sunland Park, in concert with the installation of the Oasis 360 system, added 20 new high-performing Aristocrat slot machines. Sunland Park's Executive Gaming Director Ahmad Mughni says.

"Bringing the Oasis 360 system online is a significant step forward in our customer service initiatives. The combination of loyalty products and communication tools will empower us to provide our customers with the most meaningful and entertaining gaming experience possible," he adds.

—Dave Bontempo

loyalty programs and casino-floor performance. Its most powerful selling points include scalability, a robust bonusing application suite, and integration with solutions like Mobile Host, Mobile Responder and Mobile Notifier. Advantage's modular design enables users to grow their system's infrastructure as their business needs mature, and to add and replace components as needs arise.

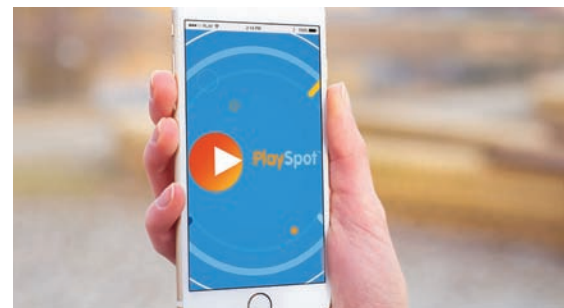
The upgrades have unfolded in a timely manner. Lancaster says the demands of the business continue to grow.

"The biggest trend that we're seeing from our customers is the demand for technology that enables patrons to move freely throughout the casino while earning and applying loyalty rewards for gaming and non-gaming activities," he says. "There also is a significant market opportunity for mobile solutions like Cardless Connect and PlaySpot that enhance land-based casinos. At one point in time, the systems dialogue was keenly centered on the operator benefits of the technology. Today, the dialogue has matured to include topics such as the player benefits, floor differentiation, mobile capabilities, player rewards, customer service, time on device and more."

A growing industry consensus views mobile as the fastest-growing segment, and a natural beneficiary of sophisticated casino management systems. Lancaster acknowledges its rising influence.

"It certainly adds significantly to the value proposition," he says. "Combining IGT mobile solutions with IGT Advantage is one way the company is enabling scalability in casino management systems in meaningful ways. We have provided operators with enhanced operations capabilities, and players with faster, easier access to entertainment and amenities with our mobile systems solutions. We're excited to build on the momentum that we have established with mobile solutions such as Cardless Connect, PlaySpot and Mobile Host."

CMS components often address the market's perceived future needs. Perhaps nothing hits that



sweet spot like PlaySpot, a turnkey mobile sports wagering solution.

Charles Cohen, IGT's vice president of mobile, PlaySpot and North American sports betting, told *GGB* last month that sports-betting activity resembled a dormant volcano—that there was a storm of activity waiting to erupt below the surface.

It has begun.

The American industry faced a dramatic “flip the switch” scenario when the Supreme Court struck down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, meaning that each state can decide whether to allow residents to bet on sports. Casinos can't assemble legalized sports facilitation quickly enough.

PlaySpot will perform a role in that. If an operator has an existing mobile convenience app, the sports betting functionality can be incorporated into that app, or IGT will collaborate with the customer to create an independent portal.

The Big i-4 Picture

Scientific Games touts its industry-leading CMS in general, and iView4 in particular, regarding a major deal it closed earlier this year. The company announced it will install a comprehensive suite of system products and devices at the Oneida Indian Nation's Turning Stone Casino in Verona, New York, as well as its Yellow Brick Road Casino, Point Place Casino, and several SavOn convenience stores. Scientific Games' casino management systems will manage all 2,921 slot games across all of the Oneida Nation's gaming properties in upstate New York.

The deal not only covered a substantial number of devices, and multiple properties, but revealed the flexibility of a strong CMS. The management systems include SDS slot management, TableView real-time and CMP player-tracking system, to help all three properties evaluate player activity.

Marketing solutions include the Elite Bonusing Suite, a group of applications enabling the gaming properties to reward players at the point of play via Scientific Games' innovative iView4 and iView4 Display Manager.

“The iView4 paves the way for true cross-channel content,” says Ted Keenan, vice president of product management, systems, for Scientific Games. “Using web-based content, casino marketers can build content that runs on iView, kiosk, mobile or any other device that supports HTML5. The same content on iView that enables access to player accounts, mobile wallets, beverage ordering and bonus games will be available for kiosks and mobile devices alike. Players will have a consistent experience on any device. The Web Content Management System is designed first to enable casino operators to build and publish content for iView4. The same system will enable content to be published to kiosks and mobile devices next.”

What about iView4? This new, state-of-the-art system boasts cutting-edge technology, as well industry-first features that make it best-in-class, company officials say. The innovations fit under the umbrella of faster, bigger and better, they contend. Faster: the iView4 has an AMD quad-core processor and Radeon graphics processor. Bigger: It has more system memory and 10 times more media storage on a 64 GB solid-state drive. Better: It has a modern Windows operating system that is upgradeable, and sup-



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Keenan considers the iView fleet a window to the future.

“Casino operators are increasingly looking for the player convenience and loyalty aspects available with mobile devices,” he says. “The methods casino players use to fund their gaming experiences are beginning to feel cumbersome. In other industries including retail, grocery and banking, electronic wallets have made it more convenient and very secure for consumers to access their funds. Electronic wallets are likely to change the funding experience in a casino similar to the way ATMs changed the experience years ago. A good system will work seamlessly with an electronic wallet for players to manage funds and transfer them to and from gaming positions including slots, tables and more.”

Keenan also acknowledges the industry push for strong analytics.

“Casino operators with superior analytics solutions will be able to make offers and communicate to their players more effectively,” he says. “They’ll be able to better plan and balance their product mix. They’ll be able to marry superior player experiences with increased profitability. All core systems at a casino need to increasingly integrate with other data solutions for the best analytics engines to produce meaningful predictions, suggestions, recommendations and offers.”

Casino consolidation plays into the CMS dynamic. One view of the player and a common experience across multiple properties is becoming a common requirement, Keenan asserts.

It's an exciting time in this sector. Lucrative gains await those who can adapt quickly and obtain systems with a number of future generations built in.

What's in your CMS? Hopefully, all you'll ever need.