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Fostering Evidence-Based Decision Making in Responsible Gambling Programming

Introduction to NSGC

- NSGC is the Crown Corporation that manages the gambling industry on behalf of the government of Nova Scotia
- NSGC is the expert on gaming within government
- BUT...Government makes all policy decisions about gaming
- Most effective way to influence those policy decisions is with evidence (i.e. facts and figures)
- Research provides our power base to continue to obtain government commitment to invest in responsible gambling programming
- Research makes our programs more effective, engaging and efficient



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Overview of Gambling in Nova Scotia

- Regulated gambling includes ticket lottery, video lottery and casino gambling
- Two casinos in the province
- More than 2,200 VLTs in 419 licensed establishments
- More than 1,000 people directly employed
- In 2006-07, \$162.3 million in general revenue generated for Government by gaming
- Nova Scotia has among the lowest rate of problem gambling in Canada
- In 2006-07 NSGC contributed more than \$7.8m to responsible gambling programs, treatment and prevention



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History of Research

- NSGC began doing Responsible Gambling research in 2002
- Desire to learn more about Responsible Gambling, its applications and potential impacts
- Desire to help Government make the best possible decisions about gaming
- Back then - limited access to mature research and little proven industry expertise
- Through our practice we learned important lessons that informed our research approach



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The Beginning

Research on Responsible Gaming Features (2002)

- Breaking new ground - no one else in the world had these features
- Consulted with experts to design features
- Four features incorporated into new VLTs (pop-up, time, cash, cash-out)
- Features were put on all VLTs and rolled-out across the province
- Then NSGC did research to assess their effectiveness
- Features did help some players, but not overly effective
- *Lesson:* Better to gather information first, then implement



The Beginning

Research on Responsible Gaming Features Enhancements (2003)

- Study on RGF enhancements suggested by first research project
- Used a pilot - first time NSGC employed this methodology
- Effectiveness of enhancements was marginal
- Decision made not to implement enhanced features across the province
- First time research informed a proactive policy decision on RG
- *Lesson:* Research can help ensure limited resources are allocated where they will have the greatest impact

The Evolution

Research on Video Lottery Self Exclusion Pilot (2004)

- Piloted video lottery self exclusion program 45 locations over three months
- Anti-VLT groups called for this program so NSGC agreed to test it
- Found bar staff were only able to identify excluded players 23% of the time
- Concluded this was not a workable and effective system
- Decided instead to follow the researchers recommendations and pursue card-based player management tools
- *Lesson:* Pilot projects save time, money and inform decision-making



The Evolution

- Our approach was based on instinct and sound business and management principles
- The advent of the *RENO Model* confirmed we were on the right track
- Informed and developed our approach even further
- Our tactical approach includes:
 - ▶ International jurisdictional scans
 - ▶ Third party expert review
 - ▶ Evaluation and monitoring
 - ▶ Conducting pilots before launch
 - ▶ Original research
 - ▶ Social Responsibility Assessments
 - ▶ Academic/Industry research partnerships



Current Approach

- Accountability is paramount – to the citizens of our province and to best practices in our industry
- We want to be a world leader in RG – that means we take appropriate risks (i.e. try things first) and we dedicate significant resources
- Before launching any major initiative, NSGC researches the potential impact on players, social responsibility and revenue
- We ensure government has the most complete social responsibility and business case to guide, inform and influence decisions
- In addition to conducting large-scale, original research to inform policy and business decisions, research and evaluation is built-in to daily operations



Current Approach

- Launched NSGC's Social Responsibility Charter in October 2006
- Publicly formalized the commitment of NSGC and its operators to making social responsibility part of everything we do
- But SR is a subjective topic and we needed an objective way to apply it in our business operations. Also needed a mechanism to ensure it is considered at the outset of every project



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Current Approach

- Social Responsibility Assessment was developed in response
- Tool to ensure that SR is top of mind in everything we do; used for 100% of all projects
- Provides objective guidelines to measure the social responsibility of all initiatives
- Mechanism that aligns all players in Nova Scotia's gambling industry and focuses them on common standards and a common goal
- Three levels of assessment depending on the scope or size of the product or program
- If they do not pass they are not launched



Research Example #1

Multi-Draw Keno Research Project

- Lottery operator wanted to introduce this game
- NSGC conducted research to determine the social impact
- Researchers set up a fake bar in their office
- Posed as waiters and bartenders, served alcohol and pizza
- Found that the game would be played by more higher risk players and would be particularly attractive to VLT players
- Decided not to introduce this product in Nova Scotia



Research Example #2

Responsible Gambling Device (RGD) Research Project

- Largest research initiative to date
- Nine retailers with 51 machines in Windsor and Mount Uniacke
- Testing a console attached to every VLT called an RGD
- Need a card to play the VLT and access personalized RG features that allow players to track time and money spent, self-exclude during certain times or days and set time and money limits
- Goal is to determine whether these features help players keep their gambling responsible



Research Example #2 (cont'd)

Responsible Gambling Device (RGD) Research Project

Stage 1: 120 pre-recruited players tested the RGD

Stage 2: Evaluation and technical refinements based on Stage 1

Stage 3: 7 months of field testing involving almost 2,000 players

Stage 4: Independent review and evaluation of data by three independent research firms resulted in a recommendation to Government to move forward with Informed Player Choice System (IPCS)



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Evaluation Example #1

- More than one dozen responsible gambling and prevention programs
- Each one is independently evaluated against pre-determined outcome measures
- Responsible Gambling Awareness Week
 - ▶ Reached 28,000 people
 - ▶ 95% of people were more aware of the issue of youth gambling
 - ▶ 86% achieved a score of 3/5 or higher in the “myths vs. realities” quiz
 - ▶ \$0.001 cost per person reached



Evaluation Example #2

Know The Score (KTS)

- This problem gambling awareness program for post-secondary students visited 18 campuses across the Province from September 2006 to March 2007
- 84% of respondents agreed participating in KTS increased their awareness of the signs of problem gambling
- 91% of respondents agreed participating in KTS increased their awareness of ways to limit their gambling risks



Evaluation Example #3

Friends4Friends (F4F)

- This multi-media social marketing campaign targeting young adults ran from November 2006 to March 2007
- 76% of respondents said the ads made them think twice about the consequences of gambling
- 78% of respondents said they would now know where to go for advice on how to help a friend with a gambling problem



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The Future

- Continue to expand and grow our commitment to research
- Exploring innovative partnerships with experts, academics and industry
- Expanding our funding to university researchers in Nova Scotia to develop more capacity and local expertise to conduct research on gambling issues in our province



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QUESTIONS?

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