

Placement testing

Casino Metrics finds the right fit for gaming employees with a little strategy and analysis

By Steven Marlin

Casino Metrics, based in Coral Springs, Fla., has created a solution to one of the more vexing problems facing casinos—high employee turnover. The company, a division of Performance Group LLC, is launching a hiring tool that not only screens applicants but also predicts how they'll perform on the job, and which job they're likely to be suited for.

The statistics are telling: Some 2.5 million candidates are interviewed for hourly jobs at casinos in the United States each year; over 200,000 hourly workers leave their posts after an average of 100 days—a 37 percent turnover rate; the average casino recruiter will talk to over 20,000 candidates a year, spending six to 10 minutes with each one.

Casino Metrics provides a screening tool that identifies an applicant's competencies and matches them to specific jobs. Making sure the right people are hired for the right job pays dividends—in employee satisfaction, increased retention, reduced administrative costs, improved operational efficiency, and enhanced guest experience.

The questionnaire and interview guides developed by Casino Metrics are designed to ferret out the characteristics of each applicant, something that's lacking in most hiring tools.

"A lot of companies provide applicant tracking software, but none of them screen for behavioral attributes," said Casino Metrics President Greg Calvert.

Getting started

Casino Metrics' first casino customer, Hooters Casino Hotel, recently went live with the product. Calvert is also aggressively pursuing the Native American gaming sector and independent casinos, which unlike some of the larger casino enterprises, have not developed screening tools of their own.

Axiom International, a Los

VENDOR PROFILE

Angeles-based provider of payroll and financial services specializing in the entertainment industry, has integrated Casino Metrics onto its platform, and plans to start rolling it out to clients.

"We needed a strategy and methodology to hit the casino market. Casino Metrics fills the bill," said Bill Inman, Axiom's vice president of strategic solutions.

The Axiom platform, which processes hiring, timekeeping, paychecks, and other personnel tasks for companies such as Amazon and Citibank, was capable of receiving resumes from staffing firms, but lacked a way to effectively screen applicants.

"Our application is great," said Inman, "but the casino market is special. We had a hole in our application that we looked for Casino Metrics to fill."

Because of the extensive validation work that went into Casino Metrics, the questionnaires provide a high degree of predictability on an applicant's success.

"The hiring manager knows instantly if the individual is going to

be effective on the job or not," Inman said.

The test is fast and easy to administer. "It asks 16 questions, takes five minutes, and spits out a score that a hiring manager can easily read," Inman said.

Clients are able to conduct their own validation of the test by comparing the results of new hires with those of seasoned employees. By fine-tuning the questionnaires, they can create an even higher level of predictability.

"By correlating test results [of new hires] with those of tenured employees, you can see how well somebody's going to do before they're hired," said Inman.

Finding the formula

Calvert brought 20 years of test development expertise to his job as president of Casino Metrics. After earning a master's degree in organizational development from the University of Maryland, he focused his career on improving organizational performance by developing methods and processes that link the work to the worker.

He began in 1986 working for an international test developer in the United Kingdom. He worked there seven years, the last two-and-a-half as director of business development for entertainment, which led him into the casino and hospitality industries.

"There are two things casinos strive for: employee retention and good customer service," said Calvert, adding that the two are strongly correlated.

Upon leaving the international test developer, Calvert began developing psychometric tests for hourly workers in customer service industries. He launched Casino Metrics in 2002, building online and paper-and-pencil questionnaires and behavioral interview guides that screen applicants for front- and back-of-house positions. The project took two-and-a-half years to complete, during which time Calvert and his team validated the test scores of applicants against scores of experienced employees. >>

Casino Metrics at a glance

Company: Casino Metrics

Business: Designs, markets and distributes employee selection and screening tests for the gaming industry.

Year founded: 2002

Executive: Greg Calvert, president

Key benefits:

- Screen out applicants that don't merit an interview
- Increased quality of recruitment efforts
- Increased employee retention
- Fewer training days required
- Satisfied employees

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"Our objective was to reinforce the hiring process," Calvert said.

Independent test developers underscore the importance of Casino Metric's practice of validating an employment questionnaire—a significant undertaking of personnel and resources that many casinos don't bother with. Instead, they take it on faith that a test will work.

"There's a lot of junk out there," warns David MacAlpine, director of HR at Consolidated Resorts Inc., and a former executive at Horseshoe Gaming. "Most of these tests work on the assumption that if an employee says they like this kind of work, they'll be successful. Not true."

The right questions

The Casino Metrics questionnaire was developed and validated over a two-year period beginning in 2002, utilizing a job analysis of 75 positions, including buffet server, cage cashier, dealer, culinary, front desk, pit, food

Casino turnover by the numbers

2.5 million—candidates interviewed for hourly jobs at U.S. casinos each year

200,000—hourly workers leave their jobs after 100 days

20,000—applicants are interviewed each year by an average casino recruiter

Source: Casino Metrics

server, etc. Key tasks from the job analysis were extracted and matched with jobs that matched either front- or back-of-house positions. Finally, the tasks associated with each position were linked to the specific work style attributes and abilities that form key customer contact competencies.

For direct customer contact positions, the attributes are: relating to customers, resilience, reliability, communication and knowledge of the industry. Attributes for indirect cus-

tom contact positions include customer focus, results driven, fact finding, organization and teamwork.

Each questionnaire consists of 16 competency blocks of four statements.

Applicants are asked to select the statement that most closely resembles him or her. For example, one question includes the statements: a) enjoys talking to customers; b) can see both sides of a disagreement; c) can be relied on to follow up; d) always review my work.

The questionnaires can be administered in either a paper-and-pencil format or online. Online administration is fast and efficient. What's more, with the online version, employees can be simultaneously scored against a variety of positions. The online version not only has front- or back-of-house options, but can be programmed to score against five to ten additional positions, such as cashier, cage, bartender, and others. **CJ**

