

Follow these best practices to increase your arcade revenue

By Frank Seninsky
President/CEO, Amusement Entertainment Management

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted with permission of the author. It was originally published in the Summer 2013 Edition of BCM Entertainment Center News, a trade publication for bowling centers. While the intro references bowling, the tips outlined apply to game/arcade areas within any entertainment center.

Bowling and games go well together, but bowling proprietors know exactly what it takes to improve one's bowling average. A 200/game average is considered very good while a 230 is outstanding. A 100 average is in dire need of improvement. A 130-140 average is the average of most recreational bowlers.

It is amazing, but the very same averages currently apply directly to average weekly revenue per arcade game! \$200/game/week is considered very good while \$100/game/week needs improvement. A large majority of bowling center games are averaging around \$100/game/week.

It should only take a minute to figure out what your weekly game average revenue is. If your number falls in the \$130-\$140 range, there is still room for improvement. If your number is closer to \$100, you are missing out on some very easy money. Below are twelve best practices:

1. Location of game space in center. Game play is an impulse. The more people who pass by and see the games, the better the chances they will play. The most profitable space is to the right of the main entrance (when facing the building); the second best space is to the left of the main entrance. Merchandise dispensing games earn well when placed close to the main entrance or on the concourse in the high-trafficked areas.

2. Doors or half-walls are a 'no-no.' Forcing a customer to open and walk through a door (even a single glass door or double glass doors) to get to the game zone is similar to a foul when a bowler's foot goes over the foul line-0 points. The more 'open' that game space is, the higher the game revenues. Removing the entire front wall when possible is recommended. Removing a second wall (or opening up more entrances to the game space) is also recommended.

3. Ceiling height. Game revenue is also dependent upon ceiling height. Minimum height is 11 feet. Game revenue actually then increases as the ceiling

height increases from 11 feet to 16 feet and then is no longer a factor. In some cases, removing the ceiling tiles and grid works well. Games in 8 foot-high spaces is like bowling a score of 50.

4. Layout as many games as possible in clusters. The games that make the most money are those that are placed in the center of the game floor space rather than lined up against the perimeter walls. Big Bass Wheel is an exception; due to its height it should be placed against a wall. A cluster is one, two, three, or four games that are placed back to back. One multi-player circular game is considered a cluster. Two games of similar height placed back to back are a cluster. A third game placed perpendicular to the two back-to-back games is a three-game cluster. Adding a fourth game or a token dispenser then makes a four-machine cluster. A four-game cluster is used to go around a column (when space permits).

5. Game spacing. Game revenue is higher when each player has enough space to comfortably play while others can easily walk through the game space. Allow three feet for player space in front of each game. Some games require more player space: skee-ball - six feet to allow for the back arm swing; basketball - five feet to allow for players to bounce the ball in front of them prior to taking a shot and jumping backwards. Aisle space between player spaces of up to three feet is recommended.

6. Lighting and glare. Today's game spaces need to be well lighted to attract women and families with young children. Indirect or bounced lighting reduces glare on the games' safety glass or plastic panels. Florescent lighting causes glare unless deflectors are utilized.

7. Redemption is King. Redemption games on average earn five times as much as video games. Not having redemption games is like not having the basics to bowl a strike in a single game. Even a minimum of six redemption games can deliver a significant increase in game revenues. High-end merchandise dispensing games are also great earners, but there are currently 19 states that have prize limit laws in effect ranging from 75 cents to \$25 per play and this trend is growing.

8. Lines of sight. The heights of games must be considered so lines of sight from various spectator positions are not blocked. The patrons must be able to see the redemption prize center (RPC) or automatic RPC from almost any position in the game space or near the game space. The RPC is the 'eye



Frank Seninsky, president and CEO of Amusement Entertainment Management, is considered the leading industry expert in the design, layout, and operations of coin/debit card operated amusement games and family attractions.

candy' that drives redemption revenues.

9. Maximize throughput. Throughput is defined as number of game plays per hour. Having enough player positions and several quick play games is necessary to maximize revenues during peak days and peak hours without requiring additional games. Select games with multiple player positions. A good rule to follow is that the total number of player positions is at least 50 percent greater than the number of games. For example, 30 games should have at least 45 player positions. A Pharoah's Treasurer has four player positions. A Big Bass Wheel has one player position.

10. Token Action Games. Also known as quick coin games, these games that require a token to be rolled, dropped or shot, take in more money when they are placed in the middle of the game space but close to the redemption prize center. When players need to win more tickets to redeem the prize they desire, they are most likely standing at the RPC and do not want to walk far to get to the high ticket payout/quick coin games.

11. Separate game categories. The three main categories of games (redemption, merchandise dispensing, video) need to be separated. Parents with young children are not comfortable being with teenagers. Teenagers like to be in their own space. There will always be some overlap, but try to locate the redemption games in the area of the RPC and the video games in the back of

the game space and farthest away from the RPC. The merchandise dispensing games earn higher revenues when they are near the perimeter of the redemption game space, next to the token dispensing machines, and near the entrance/exit of the bowling center.

12. Heading towards cashless. As of the end of 2012, only 10 percent of consumer spending was by cash. Having an ATM and a credit card token dispensing machine does not guarantee that a majority of patrons will go through the time and effort to obtain what is referred to as 'impulse cash' to play a game that they were just attracted to.

New technology exists (USAT e-port System) that inexpensively solves this problem. Placing a wireless debit/credit swiper unit on a regular token dispensing machine or a game currently costs approximately \$329 for the swiper, 2.5 percent plus 10 cents per transaction, and \$10/month for the open cell line and data management system. The minimum transaction is \$2. A customer could then play a 50 cent crane (located by the main entrance/exit) four times with just a swipe of their debit or credit card.

This is an easy way for proprietors to take advantage of the cashless trend, especially if implementing a debit card system is too costly for a smaller number of games. Splitting the cost of an e-port system with your game vendor makes a lot of sense. For more information about USA Technology's e-port system, go to www.betson.com.

The above list need not be tackled all at once. Work on those best practices where your score is low and check the game averages each week and see if there is any improvement. As the averages start increasing, take on a couple of more steps. When you carry a \$200 average (or above), you know you are doing well! But don't stop there. Some of the top game zones are averaging \$500/week/game.

Frank Seninsky is president of the Alpha-Omega Group of companies, headquartered in East Brunswick, N.J. In addition to having served as president and being on the board of the AMOA and IALEI, Frank is co-regent for Foundations Entertainment University, which is in its 10th year, and editor of The Redemption & FEC Report e-newsletter. With over 44 years of experience, Frank is considered the leading industry expert in the design, layout, and operations of coin/debit card operated amusement games and family attractions. He can be reached at 732-616-5345 or fseninsky@aol.com. His website is www.AEMLLC.com.