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20th Annual  
Family Fun Edition

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PLAY METER, (USPS 358-350) (ISSN 1529-8736) APRIL 2013, Volume 39, No. 4. Copyright 2013 by Skybird Publishing Company. PLAY METER is published monthly. Publishing office: 6600 Fleur de Lis, New Orleans, LA 70124. MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 337, Metairie, LA 70004, USA Phone: 888/473-2376. Subscription rates: U.S. and Canada--\$60. Advertising rates are available upon request. NO PART OF THE MAGAZINE MAY BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT EXPRESS PERMISSION. Play Meter reserves the right to edit submitted materials. The editors are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. PLAY METER buys ALL RIGHTS, unless otherwise specified, to accepted manuscripts, cartoons, artwork, and photographs. Periodical postage paid at New Orleans, LA 70113 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER Send Form 3579 to Play Meter, P.O. Box 337, Metairie, LA 70004. Canada Agreement number: PM40063731.



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 April 2013  
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## 39 Family Fun Edition

The Annual Family Fun Edition is now in its 20th year. This year's issue is chock full of features and quality information relating to family entertainment centers (FECs).

## 41 Cashless Systems

Cashless Systems are an increasingly popular and efficient way to manage an FEC. We caught up with big players in the cashless industry to talk about the benefits of these systems.

## 72 FEC Phoenix

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) hosted its first FEC conference this year in Phoenix. *Play Meter* was on hand to cover the event.

## 30 AAMA and AMOA visit Capitol Hill

Representatives from the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) and the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) traveled to Washington, D.C., in February to discuss small business, the industry's rating system, and taxes.

## On the Cover

Universal Space, known for its colorful games, is stronger than ever in 2013 with a packed game portfolio. With a new Service Center in Dallas, the company is able to work more efficiently with its stateside customers.

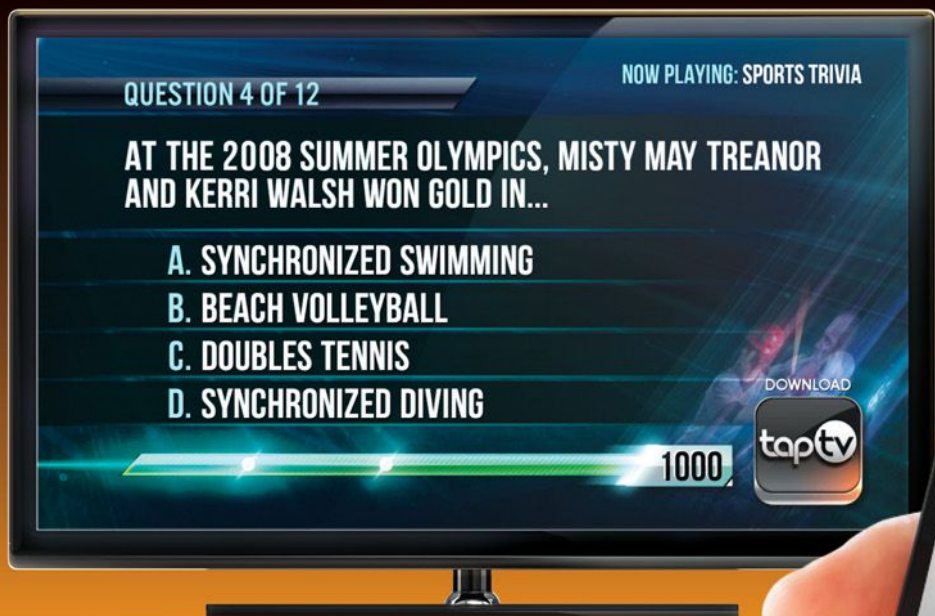
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**M**ore than 20 years ago *Play Meter* recognized the emergence of family entertainment centers as a growing segment of the amusement industry. Small, medium, and large scale projects were underway across the country and for several years FECs were considered a major growth market.

Existing facilities expanded and some offered franchises. The rapid growth did eventually cool down, and some facilities closed due to a number of reasons, including over-expansion and a lack of extensive pre-planning and preparedness for the long haul.

It was easy to walk into an FEC on a Saturday and see all the activity and a full parking lot. Surely this was the business to be in. It was another thing to walk in on a Wednesday morning or afternoon and see a completely different picture.

Facilities that planned correctly, added attractions on a gradual basis, adapted to changes in their marketplace, and understood their customers have thrived. FECs are an integral part of the amusement world and new, carefully thought out centers are a testament to the longevity of the FEC concept.

One of those changes in the marketplace has to be the move from tickets to cashless systems. Today the world works on plastic, not cash. I observed a perfect example the other day when I was getting lunch at a cafe close to the office. The young man next to me, in his early 30s, purchased one cup of black coffee with a debit card.

We are proud to say that this month is our 20th Family Fun Edition, which focuses on FECs. *Play Meter* has a regular Family Fun section each month, but for this special issue we have expanded that section to include, among other things, two articles on cashless systems: one on companies that offer the systems and one with comments from operators using the systems.

Steven Herbert, CEO of USA Technologies, said, "Interest in cashless systems is being driven by consumers who no longer want to use cash as their favorite method of payment. A number of years ago credit outstripped cash as a payment method. Consumers have embraced that in a big way. Demographics of customers show they are going increasingly to mobile phones and paying with the tap of a phone."

There is an old adage in vending that the price per item must match what a typical consumer has in his pocket. Herbert predicted: "What customers will have in their pocket in the future is just a smart phone." And so the market changes again.

FEC-centered articles in this issue include a feature on the recent FEC Phoenix conference, FEC of the Month, Scoring Success, FEC Focus, Guest Service, Redemption Formula, FEC Target Topic, FEC News, and a feature on pizza as a staple food item in FECs. Combined with all our other features, news, and columns it makes a remarkable edition. ▲



**BONNIE THEARD**  
Editor

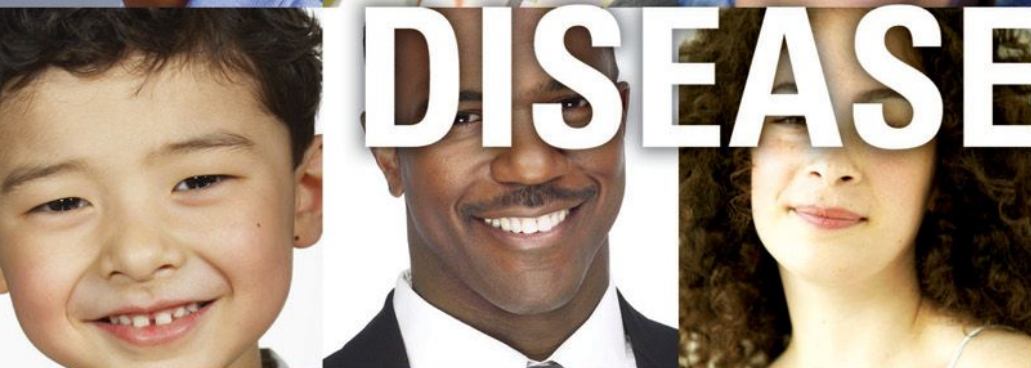
**We want to hear from you about any of the articles in this issue or topics you'd like to see.**

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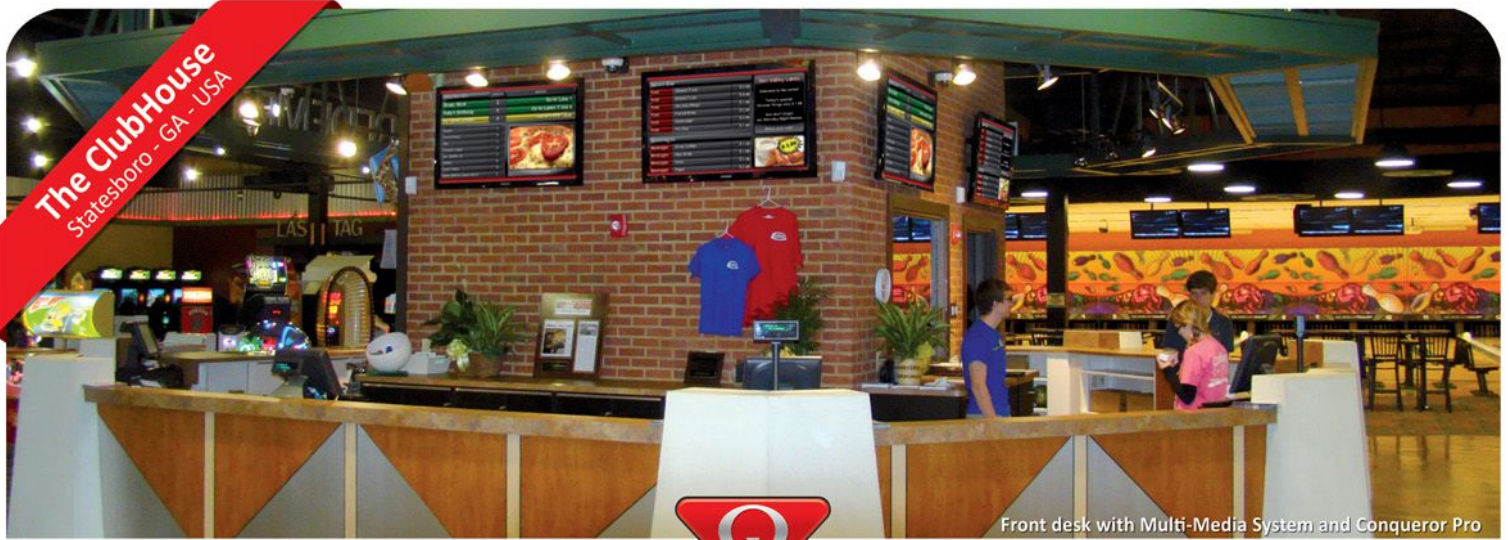


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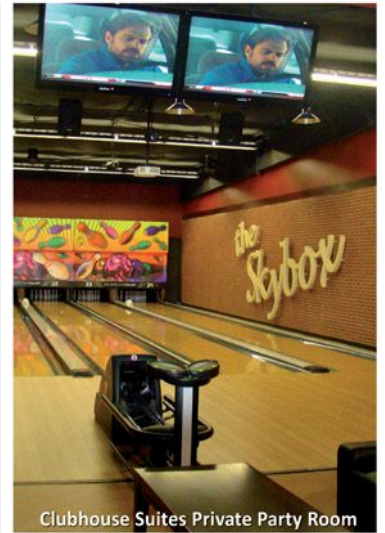
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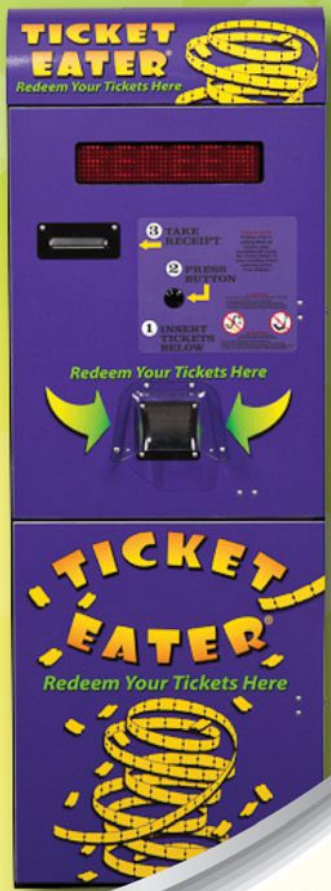
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New directors will be elected at the next AMOA Annual Membership Meeting, which will be conducted March 21, 2013 in Las Vegas.

To learn more about the eligibility requirements or if you have any questions about serving on the AMOA Board of Directors, call Association headquarters at **800-937-2662** or email Jack Kelleher at: [jackamoa@aol.com](mailto:jackamoa@aol.com).







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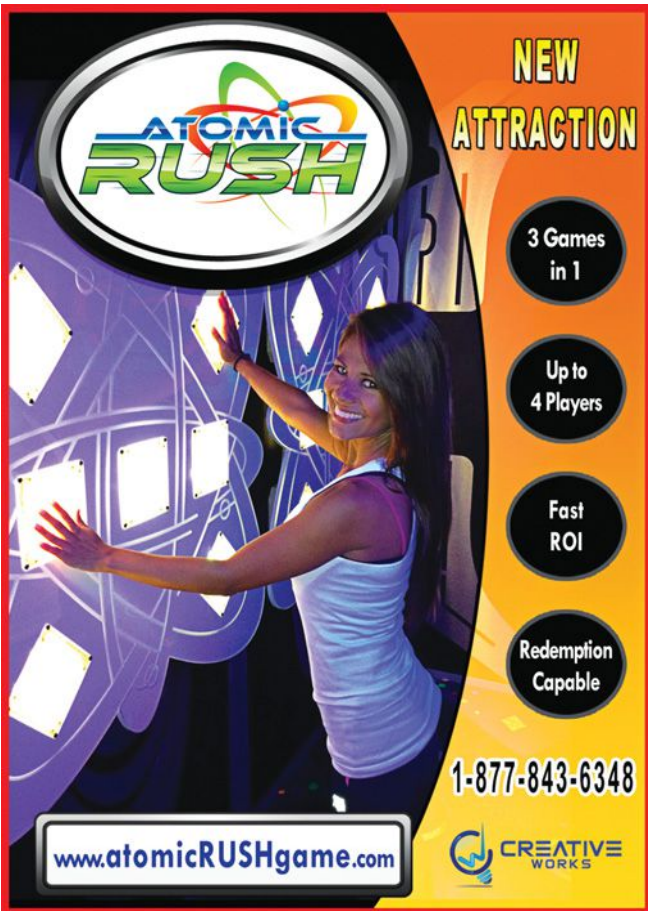
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**Michael Getlan** began working in his family's business at six years old. He has been working full time at Amusement Consultants Ltd. since 1979, running the daily operations of amusement facilities with his father, uncle, cousins, and sisters. He lives in New Rochelle, N.Y., just outside of New York City, with his family. He manages Funfuzion, a 125,000-square-foot family entertainment center (FEC) and runs a charitable organization, the Smiling Hearts Clown Squad, which visits the sick in various hospitals in his area.

My first job was:

making change and sweeping the floor in my grandparents' arcade at six years old. Games cost a dime to play and the dimes were pure silver back then.

My favorite type of music is:

THE BLUES!

I wish I had the nerve to:

sky dive. It looks like a lot of fun, but when you say "I'm going to jump out of a plane" it just sounds crazy, even for me.

If I were invisible, I would:

go into as many places as possible! The choices are endless! Just use your imagination.

If money and time were not obstacles, I would:

I would travel constantly.

One word that describes my personality is:

LOUD!

The best advice I ever got was:

take care of your health.

My favorite TV show is:

I don't have one currently. I used to watch Star Trek. I almost never watch TV except when I'm sick. I'm too busy.

If I could have dinner with a famous person that person would be:

the Dalai Lama. I have many questions.

My most cherished inanimate possession is:

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# Cashless systems come of age



**Society is embracing cashless payment systems in greater numbers, resulting in increased usage at entertainment facilities.**

Above: A card is scanned at the midway games at Cliff's Amusement Park in Albuquerque, N.M., which uses a CORE Cashless system.

There are two schools of thought: stay with a traditional approach that awards tickets to customers for success on redemption games and charges separately for other games, attractions, and food; or embrace the latest technology and utilize a cashless system that provides convenience for customers and greater accountability and flexibility for locations.

Why so much emphasis on cashless? According to Steve Herbert, Chairman and CEO of USA Technologies, "Interest in cashless systems is being driven by consumers who no longer want to use cash as their

favorite method of payment. A number of years ago credit outstripped cash as a payment method. Consumers have embraced that in a big way. Demographics of customers show they are going increasingly to mobile phones and paying with the tap of a phone."

There is an old adage in vending that the price per item must match what a typical consumer has in his pocket. Herbert predicted: "What customers will have in their pocket in the future is just a smart phone."

*Play Meter* checked with 13 companies that provide cashless systems for a variety of applications to find out more about the companies and how their systems work (companies appear in alphabetical order).



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The Axes Network system can be stand alone or networked, is WIFI capable, and completely manages a location/equipment from anywhere with Internet access.

Features include the ability to generate thousands of reports, real-time player tracking and employee tracking to eliminate theft, a player reward system, and customizable text and e-mail alerts for different functions set by the operator. Several models are available for different applications.

**CenterEdge Software  
[www.centeredgesoftware.com](http://www.centeredgesoftware.com)**

The first goal of CenterEdge Software was to develop software for Palace Pointe, a large FEC in Roxboro, N.C. It features a movie theater, '50s themed diner, bowling alley, and roller skating rink. Once the software was developed for this facility, the company was off and running.

What makes the system unique? Johnny Loftin of CenterEdge said, "A couple of years ago we decided to develop an integration with Embed card systems. We were so impressed with the company that we decided to forego our cashless system and work with Embed exclusively.

"Together we have pushed to make this integration seamless and one of the strongest available. One of the unique features is being able to handle deferred revenue correctly. This allows you to easily see on sales reports exactly where customers are spending their money. Without deferred revenue you only know that money was added to a card; you don't know if that money was spent on something in concessions or on a video game."

Loftin added, "With the integration to Embed we are able to take advantage of a lot of great features. You can use the normal features: add cash value, add time play, and add a privilege. In addition, you can set up different pricing structures depending on the time of day and the day of the week. The most exciting program option is being able to set up loyalty programs that provide your frequent customers with specials."

CenterEdge recently debuted its access control mobile app that mimics a card reader for use in attractions access control. The new app allows employees to scan barcodes on tickets, customer cards, or wristbands to validate a ticket, pass, or card value.

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Coin Tech is celebrating two decades of development in the payment solutions arena, beginning in the early '90s with cashless operations in South American countries. Coins and

**C.B. Sales & Distributing  
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C.B. Sales & Distributing has an agreement with Debittek Inc. to provide smart chip readers to the amusement industry to give operators the capability to report revenue to their states or local governments. The systems are being utilized in adult arcades that allow amusement with prizes. The Debittek system has a family fun center unit currently testing.

According to C.B. Sales, "As technology and laws changed, reporting methods became more intricate and a more advanced reader system became available." At that time C.B. Sales also became a development consultant and distributor of the Canadian-based company Axes Networks Inc., which offers a real-time online reporting system.

Offering both systems enables C.B. Sales to give its customers the best system to fit their needs. The company motto has been, "If the customer is successful, we will be successful."

The Debittek system is a stand alone system, no networking required. It fea-





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tokens were eliminated and replaced by a magnetic card that provided control over every transaction.

CoinTech's newest product is the Xperience debit card reader, which is designed to upgrade the entire interactive experience.

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CORE Cashless was founded in 1999 (then called Applied Resources Inc.) and began as CORE Cashless in 2007. CORE's technology has its roots in the arcade and gaming industries.

CORE first developed its revenue management system and card readers to operate in environments that require

tight controls and efficient points of sale (POS).

CORE's Total Park Solution™ was built to the specifications of the amusement and recreation industries. The company works to provide solutions for everything from admissions to employee tracking, from ride access to ride control, and from QR code services to mobile payments.

One key feature of the CORE system is its high level of security. CORE currently offers a PCI-compliant POS suite that can help any operator fortify his customer data. CORE systems allow operators to see their equipment, devices, and transactions in both real-time and in a customized reporting format.

According to CORE Senior Director of Product Development, Wes Hedrick, "We believe that the future of cashless is here today. Our new technology is answering the questions that customers don't know how to ask about how their business works."

CORE software and hardware is installed in over 350 sites around the world, including at Palace Entertainment, Sea World, Carnival Cruise Lines, Royal Caribbean Cruises, and Fun Spot attraction parks.

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Embed USA is a subsidiary of the multinational entertainment company Leisure and Allied Industries (LAI). Embed has benefited from extensive

exposure to site development and operations in the FEC market.

Originally developed for the LAI chain of entertainment centers known as Timezone in the mid-'90s, Embed has more than 225 operating locations in regions across the globe. According to the company, Timezone is the largest user of debit card systems and is powered by Embed. Embed products are used in more than 1,000 locations around the world, both chain and independent operations.

The Embed product delivers a fully integrated POS solution complete with Redemption Prize Management and integrated Event Scheduler. The Embed System is scalable and can benefit smaller locations looking for strait coin/token replacement up to large format venues that require complete revenue, inventory, and event management.

The company states that many locations enjoy the flexibility of Embed's ticketless and dual-ticket abilities, which allow redemption game operators to drastically reduce their operating costs. In addition, guest loyalty features reward guests for their frequent play and help drive repeat visits.

**Gatemaster Systems**  
[www.gatemaster.com](http://www.gatemaster.com)

The Gatemaster cashless debit card system does more than allow operators to replace tokens with a debit card. It enables them to monitor and maintain their equipment and remove bottlenecks along with complete POS integration.

Smartgates enable customers to access their account anywhere in a facility using just about any type of card or wristband. Smartgates operate turnstiles and video games as well as track and cancel tickets. They are mini-computers with the ability to store data and monitor the status of equipment while continually reporting to the back office.

When attention is needed and/or equipment is repaired, Smartgates





Photo courtesy of Heidi Janke, Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association



*“As we become even more data-driven in our business, EMBED’s comprehensive data compilation and reporting helps us make smarter, more informed business decisions better to serve the needs of our guests, the heart of our business. We need partners who have our business needs top-of-mind and EMBED delivers on that commitment.”*

**Todd Moore, Chief Operating Officer**  
Big Al’s – Multi-site Operator

## I’m with Embed



It’s clear why Embed continues to be the leading choice for top entertainment centers all across the world for debit card, redemption and point of sale solutions.

### Are you with Embed?

[www.embedcard.com](http://www.embedcard.com)



Scan the QR code with your smartphone to read what other Embed customers are saying.

UK & EUROPE  
ph. +44 1225 311 323  
[sales@embedplaysafe.com](mailto:sales@embedplaysafe.com)

MIDDLE EAST  
ph. +971 6 557 9140  
[salesME@embedcard.com](mailto:salesME@embedcard.com)

NORTH & SOUTH AMERICA  
ph. +1 866 440 1212  
[sales@embedcard.com](mailto:sales@embedcard.com)

ASIA PACIFIC  
ph. +61 8 9340 0100  
[sales@embed.com.au](mailto:sales@embed.com.au)



sends messages to the back office and e-mails the appropriate staff for immediate action. Players can instantly view their play card history at any Gatemaster point of sale station.

Reports indicate the return on investment for each game, the total dollar value paid out in redemption prizes, the most popular prizes at each ticket price level, and much more.

**Greenwald Industries**  
[www.greenwaldindustries.com](http://www.greenwaldindustries.com)



**PinMate**  
Greenwald Industries

Greenwald's SmartCard Reader Systems are designed to upgrade current coin-based systems. Microprocessor-based readers offer secure data storage and confirmation of proper transactions. Greenwald offers a full line of laundry vending products: coin, SmartCards, and Access Control Systems.

All SmartCard data is securely stored and easily retrieved using Management System reporting tools.

Greenwald's PinMate provides a low-cost solution for registering and adding value to SmartCards. The Pin Generation System accepts a cardholder's payment by Web interface and provides a secured pin number to encode a purchased value. PinMate is lightweight and mounts to any surface.

**Ideal Software Systems**  
[www.idealss.com](http://www.idealss.com)



**Ideal Flash Reader**  
Ideal Software Systems

Ideal Software Systems is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Ideal has a history of providing quality integrated hardware and software systems to the amusement industry.

Since 1983 Ideal has developed business management systems that include a robust point of sale system featuring inventory control, restaurant operations, food costing, customer database, and flexible loyalty plans; as well as redemption management software, party scheduling software, cashless systems including multiple access control products like turnstiles and mobile scanning devices, and hosted solutions for online tracking, reservations, and retail sales.

Ideal provides two different paths for customers who want to go cashless: Ideal NSite and Cashless Express.

Ideal NSite is comprehensive system that integrates all customer sales points and business functions and includes full POS redemption, party scheduling, restaurant, cashless, access control, customer database, reporting, and e-commerce features that allow customers to download bar-coded e-tickets and lets owners get real-time reports on a mobile phone.

Cashless Express is designed specifically for arcades that only need a card-swipe system and not the benefits of a full POS. Cashless Express includes the Ideal Flash Reader IR (also part of NSite), a wireless four-way optical scan card reader that uses lights, audio, and

full motion to create a fun customer reward environment. The system is scalable and optimized for ease of use and affordability.

**Intercard Inc.**  
[www.intercardinc.com](http://www.intercardinc.com)



**iTeller**  
Intercard

Intercard began providing management solution systems in 1979 and has grown to be a leader in stored value cards for the casino and amusement industries and other applications in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and South America.

The company provides systems to clients all over the world. Management via its secure Cloud Service technology is available anywhere, anytime for multiple locations.

Intercard designs and implements Cash Management and Marketing System solutions through cutting edge technology POS systems and by providing the most added value cash management solutions to the markets it serves.

Intercard saves amusement and entertainment operations tremendous costs by reducing theft, tracking customers, and monitoring inventory and



# **INTERCARD.**

## **THE ONLY FULLY INTEGRATED GAME ROOM MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**



### **A REAL GAME CHANGER**

How's this for a game changer?  
scan to find out.



Get the superior cash management and marketing system solution that improves your profitability and enhances the customer experience. InterCard provides cutting-edge technology with 24/7 access to our revolutionary centralized InterCloud database, unparalleled customer support, and seamless system integration and installation. With millions of cards, thousands of readers and hundreds of systems in use today, InterCard is the leader in the industry.



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**AT THE TOP OF YOUR GAME**



**InterCloud**  
Revolutionary  
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**InterGrate**  
Seamless Integration  
& Installation

Contact us today at 1-800-732-3770 or visit [intercardinc.com](http://intercardinc.com)  
and experience a real game changer in your business.



revenue streams over time using one integrated cash management system.

The product line includes the iReader Eclipse and the iTeller kiosk for purchasing and recharging cards and checking account history.

**Magnetic Cash**  
[www.magneticcash.com](http://www.magneticcash.com)



The Magnetic Cash card system helps manage, control, and improve business. It's easy to install and operate and delivers detailed reports from either local or remote access. The system allows customers to manage prices, retain customers with promotions, and accelerate sales with self-service kiosks and mobile terminals.

Features include self-install software, modular hardware based on PC (without server), wireless installation, and technical support. The system is ideal for arcades, FECs, parks, and shopping malls.

The debit cards feature unique coding and can be customized. Redemption game control is improved because it's easy to track prize inventory and see which items are the most popular.

**Sacoa Playcard System**  
[www.playcard.com.ar](http://www.playcard.com.ar)

Sacoa started its FEC operation in Argentina in 1957 and currently owns and operates over 30 venues in Argentina. In the late '80s the company realized it needed a much better way to control the business, keep track of revenue, modify prices to compen-



Recharging stations at the main entrance of Castles-n-Coasters in Phoenix, Ariz. Sacoa Playcard System

sate for inflation, and avoid theft.

The solution began to take shape and in the early '90s the first Sacoa entertainment location that replaced traditional tokens for a computerized debit card system went online. There was an almost immediate 30 percent revenue rise in less than a year derived from the system being installed at all of Sacoa's venues.

Sebastian Mochkovsky of Sacoa said, "One of our biggest strengths is that we operate our own FECs, thus our products are developed in-house with a true knowledge of the business and marketing needs of operators.

"Our company is known for its outstanding performance and reliability as well as for its post-sale service and flexibility for product customization, which accounts for the constant evolution and improvement of features." Sacoa has a 24/7 help desk at no extra cost and offers free software upgrades.

The Sacoa Playcard System is an integrated and complete solution to operate all aspects of a family entertainment business. Besides the HD ColorShot readers and controllers on games, or the automated and manned POS, the system offers a wealth of other modules and tools to manage a successful game room.

Modules include the Multi-Session Program for the redemption counter that allows up to eight attendants to

serve up to 64 guests simultaneously and that interfaces directly with all major brands and modes of ticket eating units and scales.

The Redemption Inventory Control module allows for full audit and accounting of the redemption operation while it also offers labeling capability and more for all major redemption suppliers.

The Sacoa Loyalty Program and Online Party Booking module provides everything needed to manage party reservations online. The Online Sales module enables operators to offer instant credit recharges to customers right from their Web site. And the Customer Registration module includes a special newsletter feature for designing tailored mailing campaigns for specific groups.

Locations using the Sacoa system include Dave & Buster's, GameWorks Entertainment LLC, McDonald's, Universal Studios hotels, Xtreme Karting, Castles N' Coasters Ltd., and many more.

**TokensDirect/Alpha-Omega Sales**  
[www.AlphaOmegaSales.com](http://www.AlphaOmegaSales.com)

The GameAlert system from the TokensDirect Division of Osborne Coinage Co. is a business information system for entertainment centers that offers managers real-time data without losing the play value of the coins and



# Don't leave money on the table

Limiting customers to the cash in their pockets is like leaving money behind.



Increase sales by 20% or more by adding the ePort cashless payments system to your amusement games.

Betson Enterprises recently partnered with USA Technologies to bring customers its best-in-class ePort® cashless payments and telemetry system.

USAT's unique, turnkey payment service can be easily retrofitted into existing games. Call your Betson representative and ask how the ePort cashless payments and telemetry system can help:

- Promote** increased play and more credits
- Entice** with higher-end products that support higher price points
- Appeal** to the "cashless" generation of players
- Increase** sales by 20% or more
- Gain** visibility into machine sales and data with a comprehensive online reporting system



Call your Betson representative today & start putting your money into the bank where it belongs!

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Canton, MA 800-274-6326  
Syracuse, NY 800-541-1142  
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Hayward, CA 800-526-7906  
Marietta, GA 877-758-9601  
Orlando, FL 877-487-2222





**Game Alert optional harness and power harness.  
Tokens Direct/Alpha-Omega Sales**

tokens their customers know and love. GameAlert is exclusively offered by Alpha-Omega Sales.

TokensDirect is headed by CEO Jeffrey Stegman, a third generation owner running this 175-year-old minting business. His vision is to offer a low cost information system that's easily retrofittable to any video game, redemption piece, or merchandiser in today's FEC.

No tools needed; no drilling or cutting; no need to install or maintain servers and software; and no fear of business interruptions when a network connection goes down.

GameAlert monitors and alerts; it is connected to all games via wireless mesh network and tracks each coin played and every ticket dispensed. Counts are continuously uploaded from each game via secure Web link to an online dashboard displaying real-time information about game performance.

The system uses a built-in logic and sends early alerts that warn shift managers of issues like low tickets or when a game has been inactive too long. Bill changers are monitored as well. Their built-in error codes are reported by GameAlert as in "bill stacker full" or "hopper needs service."

GameAlert is also a promotional tool. Owners can easily manage the token selling price to incentivize volume purchases (example: if you want all changers to pay 23 tokens instead of 20 for a \$5 bill). Users with the proper security access can set up bonus pricing remotely with a few keystrokes. GameAlert updates all changers at

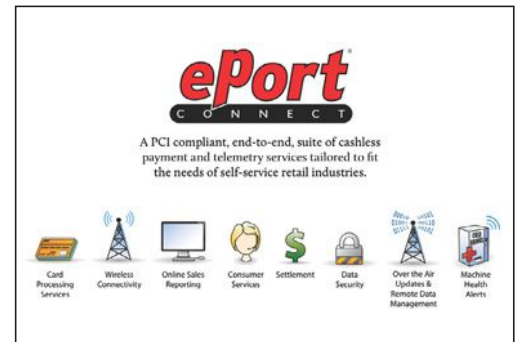
**e-Port Connect  
USA Technologies**

once, and you don't even have to open a cabinet.

Promotions can be created to encourage visits on slow days with time of day based token specials. With GameAlert's patented controller system, token prices in changers can all be automatically adjusted at the same time.

For instance, to encourage customers to visit on slow Tuesday mornings, changers can be programmed to dispense double tokens starting at opening and then automatically reset to normal pricing after lunch. Operators then use the reporting tools to measure a promotion's impact on revenue.

**USA Technologies Inc.**  
[www.usatech.com](http://www.usatech.com)



USA Technologies' e-Port Connect network. The software is installed on the assembly line (and sometimes in the field) so it's easy to make a machine credit card and debit card capable.

Steve Herbert, Chairman and CEO, said, "One of the things that has worked well for us in amusement and vending is that we made our service turnkey. When a customer signs up for e-Port Connect service they get wireless connect service, merchant service,

24/7 online reporting, and cash and credit accountability. There is also a feature where consumers can check their transactions."

Herbert added, "With cash and cashless accountability, operators know how much money is going through their locations. Most



**Android Tap  
USA Technologies**

USA Technologies, founded in 1992, is a leader in the cashless movement in the small-ticket, unattended retail market for vending and continues to expand into other areas including amusement, laundry, coffee, and general kiosk applications.

USA Technologies' e-Port Connect® service can be integrated into any application in the amusement sector. The company is currently working with AMI Entertainment and recently announced a distribution agreement with Betson Enterprises to expand the use of cashless payment within the amusement industry (see separate article in Coin-Op News).

AMI's Megatouch machines are already e-Port enabled to be in the

want to see both cash and credit transactions. We have 186,000 connections where results of cash and cashless transactions are gathered as an option."

He made another point: Through the use of loyalty programs and mobile payments, amusement locations could help abate some of the impact of smart phones on business by driving people back to the locations.

"We are well equipped to roll out mobile payments. We want to bring that capability to our customers," said Herbert. "We have one of the largest bases of near field communications (NFC) capable payment acceptance terminals. It puts our customers in a good position to be the initial beneficiaries of the exciting possibilities of mobile payments." ▲



# Spring into action

*Put these tips to work for you this spring to dress up your machines and bring more kids into your location.*



## TIP 1

Add a little twist to your crane! I came across this crane in a local store and it stopped me in my tracks. The tubes with the prizes look great and adding the different colors sets this crane apart even more.



## TIP 2

Laundry bags are not just for laundry anymore! An operator from Minnesota shared this tip with me a couple of weeks ago when I was out on his route. His team uses the nylon laundry bags to better carry their bulk and plush items. The bag is strong and can be placed in almost any game in a given location. This sure works better than trying to find a place to store a box within a game.

## TIP 3

Here is a great way to display a mid-level prize in your merchandiser. Place a licensed T-shirt/jersey/sweatshirt in a clamshell. This is a sandwich-sized



clamshell and holds the item perfectly. It is easy to hang and shows off the prize very well. This opens up more possibilities for your merchandisers.

## TIP 4

All the kids sports leagues are starting to form...are you part of this process? Have the leagues do their sign-ups at your location. This brings families into your location and promotes your business for no real charge.

Are you sponsoring any sports teams this year? They are all filled with your customer base, so go after them. Give them a reason to come back after the game.

For example: If the team you sponsor wins, they receive half off a pizza within two days after the victory. If they lose, have them come in for half off a frozen drink.

You can also do a promotion where the first player to score receives 20 tokens. Use your imagination and have fun with all the sports teams in your area. Lastly, work with the coaches to have a party for the team at your location. Coaches need help and you can gain so much by being their partner. ▲



Jim Chapman has been a part of the coin-op industry for over 25 years. His experience ranges from manufacturing cranes, merchandisers, redemption, and video games to operational experience in FECs. You can find him at trade shows sharing his passion and experience when giving redemption seminars. He can be reached via e-mail ([jimmychaps@aol.com](mailto:jimmychaps@aol.com)).



# Escape to fun in British Columbia

When deciding to purchase a particular piece of equipment for a family entertainment center (FEC), it's a comforting thought to know that the manufacturer you're purchasing from has a pretty good idea of how its product will perform on location. That's the reason International Play Company, manufacturers of modular playgrounds, opened The Great Escape in Langley, British Columbia.

International Play Company created The Great Escape as a "showcase center" of sorts in order to understand different situations that customers might come across. The facility has done well and can serve as inspirational model for any FEC, regardless of the attractions it employs.

The Great Escape has quite a mix. The centerpiece of the facility is the three level jungle themed indoor playground. Within the playground are different components including a customized EyeClick system light space, a Ballistics Gallery ball system and a variety of different events. Outside the playground, the facility has mini sized bowling, a games area, redemption and sales counter, a 5D Journey to Extreme theatre, a three level laser tag arena, an adventure course and a themed black light miniature golf course.

The facility's restaurant, Coba Cafe, offers combinations outside of your typical FEC food. The menu includes gourmet sandwiches, salads, various platters, pizza, fruit, and more.

Scott Forbes, President of International Play Company, spoke about the attraction mix at the facility, "It's hard to define the best performing or main attraction. With these facilities, sometimes operators try to break them into pieces. I'm not sure if we can do that with the way we combine different things.

"Although it's not a single item you pay for, the playground is one of the bigger draws. That comes with the admission price, but on top of that the laser tag is very popular, along with the air track and bowling combination. We package things in different ways for different parties and groups to play. Each of these works in cohesion with others to become a total draw."

The game room at The Great Escape fluctuates between 20 and 30 games. Forbes said the best performing game is

Typhoon from Triotech. Kids play for items at the redemption counter like facility branded T-shirts and teddy bears. Other popular items include everything from iPods to candy and jewelry.

The Great Escape employs virtually every social media aspect you can work with. The facility hosts contests, promotes concerts, and gives away prizes on its Facebook and Twitter pages. "It tends to keep people's attention," Forbes said.

Parties are a big deal at the facility. The Great Escape has the option for themed parties in one of its seven dedicated party rooms. There is also a mezzanine area for larger groups of up to 80. That area can also be split up for smaller parties.

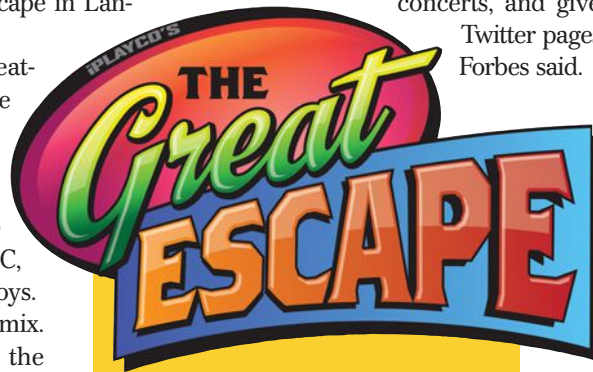
Forbes said, "We're very flexible with a lot of different packages. I think people like the fact that we're flexible. We have packages for small parties with only a few kids. We've got packages with a lower price point for people hoping to fit a party into their budget."

Operating an FEC has given the company a unique perspective on what works and what doesn't for its customers. For someone getting started or thinking of operating modular play equipment, Forbes said, "There's a few things I would definitely suggest from

an equipment standpoint. It's obviously important to work with a supplier that's good for service and quality and meets current standards. We found that from a supplier standpoint there's a lot of specific requests from government to make sure products are tested and meet certain structural and fire ratings."

He added, "Make sure you have a good maintenance and cleaning schedule. We're always cleaning and making sure the facility is in good shape. Testing products to make sure they're working properly is a must. It's the impression that you give."

Forbes concluded, "When people are looking to get into the business it can be very fun and beneficial and rewarding but it does take a lot of hard work. You can't just open the doors and expect it to be busy and profitable if you don't invest in it. You always need to improve the business and customer experience." ▲



**Facility:**

The Great Escape

**Location:**

Langley, British Columbia

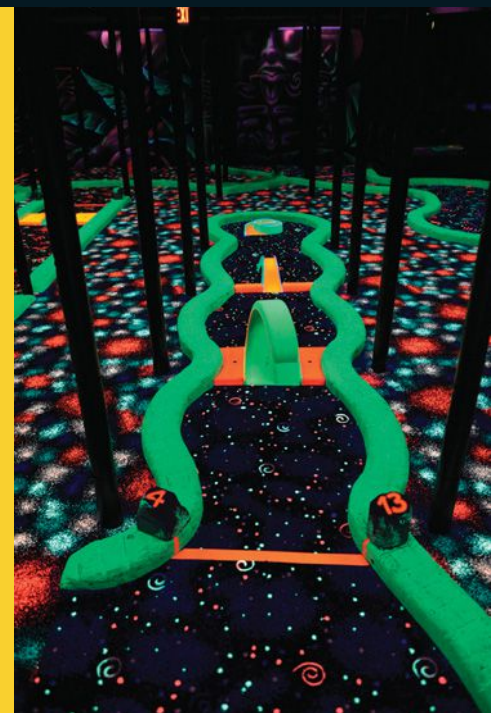
**Attractions:**

Laser tag, bowling, modular playground, game room, miniature golf, ropes course.

**Contact:**

604-533-1432; www.thege.ca









*Customers are still asking for pizza and it's the number one food item in amusement locations.*



# Pass the Pizza!

What's cheesy, doughy, delicious, and sells more than three billion units per year in the U.S.? Pizza of course, and this amusement standard is more popular than ever.

According to a study conducted by Technomic, 93 percent of Americans eat pizza at least once a month, with the average consumer eating pizza three times per month.

One-fifth of consumers between 18 and 24 years old said that new items influenced where they buy pizza. Many American consumers (41 percent) say they would like to see pizza restaurants offering healthier ingredients, such as whole-wheat crusts (42 percent), organic toppings (30 percent) and organic crusts (28 percent), all-natural ingredients (50 percent), and locally sourced ingredients (38 percent).

Darren Tristano, Executive Vice President of Technomic, said "Operators and suppliers will want to consider what they can do to elicit consumer cravings through adding new items to their menus and emphasizing them through their marketing message."

He added, "Differentiation through pizzas that feature unique flavors and taste combinations that consumers cannot purchase elsewhere or make at home will likely help support this effort. Positioning pizza as a meal solution that is easy, convenient, and affordable will resonate with many consumers."

*Play Meter* spoke with two notable pizza providers for a look into how pizza is selling in the family entertainment

center (FEC) environment.

Anne Reilley of Perky's Pizza said, "Pizza is more popular than ever. Pizza is the most popular food in most FECs. Pizza is great to use as a single serve slice or personal size, as well as an easy solution to offer as a part of birthday party packages. It appeals to a wide range of ages and provides an excellent platform for either traditional toppings or fancy specialty items."

Jim Storner of Nation/Connie's Pizza, said "Pizza is actually more popular than ever."

As far as popularity of particular pies goes, Reilly said, "Traditional Pepperoni Pizza is by far the most popular pizza. For younger children's events cheese pizzas are often ordered as well."

Storner said, "Thin crusts are the big thing right now. The best selling flavors have always been first pepperoni, then cheese, then supreme, and all specialties after those."

Regarding trends, Reilly said, "Operators are always looking for ways to improve the quality of their offerings and simplify their operations. Pizza flavors and platforms often follow trends that come and go but pepperoni pizza is always the best seller."

Storner said, "All natural is a trend that operators are asking for."

For more information on Perky's Pizza, (800)473-7597; Web ([www.perkys.com](http://www.perkys.com)).

For more information on Nation Pizza/Connie's, call (630)399-7311; Web ([www.nationpizza.com](http://www.nationpizza.com)). ▲



I have yet to meet anyone who is operating an entertainment center who has too much free time on their hands or too much money in their checking account.

In reality, none of us have enough time to get everything done or enough money to complete them.

So what's the solution? First we have to figure out what's truly important to our success and what's not. We must then focus all of our resources on what is truly important.

As Jim Collins describes in his book, "Good to Great," the companies that successfully became great had a list that was just as important, and maybe even more important, than their "to-do list." This other list was described as a "stop doing list."

The good to great companies rigorously focused on eliminating tasks and projects that were not squarely focused on each company's **core stuff**. Time and money that was being used on **non-core stuff** was ruthlessly reallocated to focus squarely on the company's core stuff. In other words, the core products and services their customers wanted to buy and the company could sell at a profit.

This article is all about the core stuff that attracts customers to our centers

# Core Stuff:

*How and where to focus time and money.*



A unique laser tag experience.

and causes them to willingly give us lots of their money.

It is important to realize that spending time and money on non-core stuff

is causing us to neglect the core stuff that makes our centers successful in the first place.

If we don't focus most, if not all, of our time and money on our core stuff, then we will sooner or later put ourselves out of business.

In order to understand what our core stuff is, we must first understand the difference between core stuff and non-core stuff.

## NON-CORE STUFF VS. CORE STUFF

Non-core stuff is all the things that fill up our workday and especially our to-do lists. They are important (or at least we think they are), but no customer would ever pay us to actually do them. In fact, many of our customers probably wouldn't even care if we stopped doing them and some might be very happy if we did.



Pool tables appeal to an older crowd.





Guests enjoy a game of Cyber Sport.



Outside attractions include mini golf and go-karts.

Some possible examples of non-core stuff are all the Twittering, Facebooking, and E-mailing we do. Non-core stuff can also be the time and money we spend on motivating our staff and teaching them to learn even more elaborate ways to go above and beyond from a customer service standpoint.

It's not that these things aren't important. The problem is that we don't have the time or money to do all of them.

We have to understand that choices must be made. If we want to add something new to our to-do list, then we must also remove something from our to-do list and move it to our stop doing list.

To be very specific, we have to focus our time and money on the core stuff that actually compels or stimulates our customers to jump off the couch, drive to our centers, and happily give us their money.

Core stuff is all the things our customers actually pay us a lot of money to do or experience when they visit our entertainment centers.

Each of our centers is different in some way, so we have to take the time to identify what our core stuff is or should be. We must make sure our core stuff gets the time and money required to make it the best it can be. Our core stuff has to be so good that it drives people into our entertainment centers and allows us to generate strong and consistent profits.

It's important to note that our success directly corresponds to our customers' response to our core stuff. If our customers are consistently attract-

ed to return to our centers, then our core stuff is working.

The following quote popped out of a conversation I recently had with Neil Hupfauer, one of the two founders of Main Event. I can't remember the specific reason he said it, but after he said it I couldn't stop thinking about what it really meant. I knew it was important, but it took me several weeks to digest its full meaning. Here's the quote:

*"Customers will put up with an amazing amount of poor customer service to have fun."*

At first it sounds like we were talking about an entertainment center that didn't care very much about providing its guests with even a reasonable level of customer service, but that's not what it meant to me. This quote also helps us to understand what an entertainment center's core stuff really is.

Here are two examples that validate the quote:

The first relates to the amusement park Cedar Point in Ohio. If you have ever been to Cedar Point, then you should be able to easily identify Cedar Point's core stuff. If you said roller coasters, then you would be 100 percent right. I believe Cedar Point has more roller coasters than any other amusement park in the world.

However, Cedar Point has long queue lines especially for its biggest, fastest, and newest roller coasters. People sometimes stand in those lines for up to three hours. That's right: A guest actually stands in line for up to three hours to have three minutes of fun. This example basic-

ly validates the quote above.

This doesn't mean Cedar Point doesn't care about customer service. What it does mean is that Cedar Point created such an awesome roller coaster experience that its customers are willing to stand in line, which isn't exactly fun, for up to three hours for just three minutes of totally awesome, exhilarating fun.

Now, based on the example above, think about a visit to Disney World or Disneyland during peak vacation time. I think most of us can quickly visualize and "feel the pain" of what this specific day at the park would be like.

A visit for a family of four, even with a couple of fast passes, would mean standing in line or waiting to stand in a line for five to six hours of an eight-hour visit to experience 45 to 60 minutes of fun.

Here's my point: Disney's core stuff is creating these unbelievable themed experiences that attract people from all over the world. Customers are so committed to experiencing Disney's best attractions that they are willing to stand in line for five to six hours during an eight-hour visit. Why? Because Disney's core stuff is worth the wait.

What does this mean for us?

This means we can suck at a lot of little things or even one or two big things. BUT, and this is a very important BUT, we can't suck at the core stuff that attracts customers to our centers.

## STRIVE TO BE FAMOUS

In fact, we have to strive to be world famous for the core stuff that we



do for our customers.

If not world famous, then we have to be at least locally famous for the core stuff that we do for our customers. If we are locally famous, then we don't even have to worry about Twittering, Facebooking, or E-mailing to get our customers to visit our centers.

If we become world famous or even locally famous, then our customers will be doing 99 percent of our selling for us.

What's your core stuff?

It's probably different for every entertainment center, but here is a sampling of ideas that will help you think about what your core stuff may be for your entertainment center:

- Playing, riding, and experiencing your attractions
- Venue to hang out with friends
- Cool place to have a party with friends, family, or co-workers

- Hot spot to meet new people
- The place to create shared experiences
- Quick escape from home or work
- Good times, laughing, and lots of smiles

It's important to remember that when business gets tough, we tend to focus more on the non-core stuff. Non-core stuff is more time focused or just busy work. Our core stuff requires both time and money to maintain. To save money, we stop spending it on the one

thing that can save us, which is our core stuff.

Please don't forget your core stuff and never stop investing the majority of your time and money on continuously improving it.

And don't forget: "Customers will put up with an amazing amount of poor customer service to have fun."

So, please—don't kill the FUN! It's the only thing keeping our doors open! ▲

Photos from LASERTRON's BLOCK PARTY Entertainment Center in Buffalo, N.Y.



Jim Kessler is the Founder/CEO of LASERTRON's BLOCK PARTY Entertainment Center, celebrating its 25th year of creating great attraction experiences. For more information, visit ([www.lasertron.us](http://www.lasertron.us)); for LASERTRON Mfg., visit ([www.laser-tron.com](http://www.laser-tron.com)); for Cyper Sport Mfg., visit ([www.cybersport.us](http://www.cybersport.us)); e-mail ([jkessler@lasertron.us](mailto:jkessler@lasertron.us)).

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The UNIS main office building in Zhongshan, Guangdong, China



UNIS office in Toronto

# UNIS celebrates 20 years of universal fun

Universal Space Video Game (UNIS) is one of the world's largest amusement machine manufacturers based in China. Since its very beginnings 20 years ago, UNIS has developed and manufactured redemption games, video games, kiddie rides, and outdoor small/medium size amusement machines.

*Play Meter* checked in with UNIS officials to gain more insight into the history of the company, its products, and the challenges of today's market.

"We first entered the U.S. market working with a few highly regarded and prominent U.S. companies on original equipment manufacturing (OEM)," said Steven Tan, International Sales Manager.

"We partnered with Family Fun Companies on some great OEM products; some of the earlier games included Hungry Dragon and King's Castle. OEM manufacturing remains an important part of our business and we have had the opportunity to work with many excellent U.S. companies and to manufacture some very innovative products."

Tan continued, "Over the past two decades we have streamlined our product lines. Each and every year we improve our designs and introduce new technologies to keep at the forefront of the market. Testing our machines in selected venues ensure that players find them user-friendly and easy to play before they are launched into the world market."

## RAPID GROWTH

In the early years, UNIS worked with many overseas manufacturers and developed rapidly to become the largest manufacturer and distributor of international amusement equipment in China. Today there are over 1,200 UNIS employees globally.

"We have approximately 600 employees at our main manufacturing facility in Zhongshan, 120 employees in our information technology department, and 550 employees in operations," commented Tan.

"Beyond our own factory R&D unit, we have external design studios in Toronto, Japan, Shanghai, and Shen-

zen, which amount to about 30 employees."

The Toronto office was established in 1990 and is integral to the company's success globally. Responsible for designing games that are suitable for North America, UNIS's Toronto office has developed well over 30 product lines, from game concept to cabinet design to sound effects and music. Having game designers in Canada enables UNIS to launch products that are suited for the American market and the American player.

In September 2011, Debbie Gonzalez joined the UNIS team as U.S. Sales Manager. Having been in the amusement industry for over 19 years, Gonzalez has expertise with the American amusement industry and works with an excellent group of distributors including American Vending Sales (AVS), Brady Distributing, East Coast Amusements, Lieberman Companies, Shaffer Distributing, and Specialty Coin-Op.

Vince Gumma of AVS said, "Our experience with UNIS has been noth-





Main showroom



Unisland Daixing in Zhongshan City, China



Steven Tan, General Manager



Debbie Gonzalez (l), U.S. Sales Manager, and Kathy Li, Customer Service Manager



Tim Snelling, Parts and Service Manager, UNIS USA, Dallas



Victor Chan, R&D Director, Toronto

ing less than professional. Reliability, fair pricing, and most importantly game earnings of the UNIS product line is unmatched in our industry today.

“These three ingredients are the recipe for success. It is our pleasure to be working with Debbie Gonzalez and the entire UNIS team. We look forward to a long and prosperous relationship.”

Jon W. Brady of Brady Distributing commented, “We have proudly represented UNIS since 2005 and we have never been more excited about its upcoming product line.

“The product is backed by even more domestic service and parts now and the quality is fabulous. Couple that with some excellent titles that we now have in the portfolio, and you truly have a first class and first rate manufacturer that is bringing more great content to the marketplace.”

Brady added, “We’ve been extremely happy with their carousels, Ducky Splash, and most recently Pirate’s

Hook. We are excited to take them to the next level and are thankful for their commitment to the marketplace.”

Another distribution partner is East Coast Amusements. Dick Donlan of East Coast said, “Unique ideas combined with innovative design work—that adds up to tons of fun for the players and great earnings for locations. That is the story of UNIS. East Coast Amusements is very proud to be a distribution partner with them in the U.S.”

Scott Shaffer of Shaffer Distributing offered, “UNIS has proven to us time and time again that not only can they make innovative and profitable equipment, but that the company is run by trustworthy people who value the backup and support of their equipment so that our customers can maximize their profits.”

### SERVICE AND SUPPORT

To better support the growing market in the U.S., UNIS launched its new

Service and Support Centre in Dallas at the end of 2012, and just recently established its own warehouse in Dallas to ensure that stock can be on hand and shipped quickly from the U.S.

“UNIS is thrilled to have Tim Snelling as our Parts and Service Manager of UNIS USA in Dallas,” said Tan. “Tim has more than 25 years of experience in the coin-op entertainment industry and brings with him a wealth of background knowledge to the UNIS family.”

Today, UNIS is a truly an international company with sales and support throughout China, the U.S., Latin America, and Europe, distributing to over 50 countries. Sales and support staff globally numbers over 60 employees, with offices in China, Canada, Hong Kong, and the U.S.

### POPULAR GAMES

UNIS has produced many top games over the years, some of these





Ducky Splash



After Dark STD



Photo Ride



Space Ship



Fruit Mania



Pirate's Hook



Hammer Froggy

being OEM products. A few notable games include the Basket Fortune series and Pharaoh's Treasure from Family Fun Companies.

UNIS has had a strong working relationship with Chuck E Cheese's (CEC) for over a decade and currently supplies a range of over 20 games designed for family entertainment, which is the typical for CEC throughout the U.S.

"As their U.S. partner, we see benefits everyday of the UNIS brand," stated Gene Cramm, President of Amusements Worldwide in Dallas. "We are maximizing our partnership to design, develop, and manufacturer quality products for both proprietary use and the general market.

"By collaborating with UNIS, we have been able to react quickly to the marketplace by developing relevant items such as Mini Train with Smoke. Coming soon to the U.S. market are exciting pieces such as the Space Ship kiddie ride, Hammer Froggy, Bike Rally, and others."

Cramm added, "Domestic in-stock parts and customer service support has always been the goal. Through UNIS USA we can execute that for all customers on a daily basis."

"We introduced a Family Series of games a little over two years ago and this range has been a tremendous success," said Gonzalez, U.S. Sales Manager.

"The Family Series includes Dino Pop and Cheeky Monkey, both of which are designed for young families and provide fun game play, but the most popular of that series is Ducky Splash. This product line up has been so popular that we are introducing a new game to this lineup, Astro Invasion."

Tan added, "We continue to develop products for our Family Series because the response is so positive from around the globe. Ducky Splash can be seen in venues around the world and is now being recognized in the U.S."

UNIS recently launched three new games in November 2012: Fruit Mania and After Dark (in standard and deluxe

versions), and Pirate's Hook. "We can already report that these three products are starting to gain traction in the U.S. and we are quite confident that they will gain momentum as the year progresses," remarked Gonzalez.

**OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Ten years ago UNIS branched out into family entertainment center (FEC) operations.

Tan explained, "We have a wide range of equipment and it was a natural business progression to introduce centers where our machines could be placed within China. This created an even greater demand for a larger range of games, hence enlarging our R&D unit and our manufacturing facility.

"Owning our own entertainment centers also gave us the opportunity to learn at the grass roots level what our customers want and what types of games excite them. Currently we operate over 45 UNISLAND centers throughout China."





The UNIS booth at IAAPA Expo 2012

**“Unique ideas combined with innovative design—that adds up to tons of fun for players and great earnings for locations.”**

Since its inception, UNIS has been eager to work with other companies as a buyer and a manufacturing partner so they could introduce new products to the Chinese market.

UNIS procures game kits and assembles/manufactures products for the Chinese market. For many years, Raw Thrills has been one of its best suppliers.

Mark Struhs of Raw Thrills said, “Raw Thrills enjoys a very successful, strategic partnership in China, select countries in Asia, and other parts of the world. As Raw Thrills becomes more involved in exporting arcade games, the relationship with UNIS will become even more important. Several major new game projects are planned for 2013.”

### STRONG LINEUP

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo 2012 was a tremendous success for UNIS last year.

Gonzalez commented, “Every year we strive to outperform the last, and every year we expand our booth size so we can exhibit more products. We had a very strong lineup of 2012-2013 machines going into the IAAPA Expo including Fruit Mania, After Dark, Pirate’s Hook, Tubin’ Twist, Astro Invasion, and Mini Train with Smoke.

“The deluxe version of Fruit Mania was a big draw. The product ‘flash’ package, as well as the game play, attracted crowds. The feedback we received during and after the IAAPA Expo was tremendous. For many U.S. customers Pirate’s Hook and Fruit Mania were definitely the products to buy.”

### CUSTOMER KNOWLEDGE

UNIS has a keen sense of what customers want. “We have a wide range of

customers with different types of venues, from parks and FECs to arcades, bars, bowling centers, restaurants, shopping malls, and even hotel resorts,” said Tan.

“UNIS’s extensive range of products gives versatility to our international customers, and this is very important. We have products designed for all age groups, from sports machines to family games to unique kiddie rides. We aim to provide a wide range of pieces for all buyers.”

Tan said the three most important things to remember about UNIS purchases are: 1) easy to play machines that are visually appealing; 2) good service and support; and 3) value for your money (games are affordable and provide a quick return on investment).

### MARKET CHANGES

*Play Meter* asked Tan about the biggest changes UNIS has seen in the amusement industry since it opened its doors.

Tan said, “Over the last two decades there has been much change throughout China and the rest of the world. Changes in legislation are constantly challenging our whole industry; UNIS is not alone in this. Redemption machines are very strong in the marketplace whether they use a points system or solely tickets.”

When asked if players are looking for more for their entertainment dollar, Tan replied, “Society is so much more geared to an instant win. Players want immediate gratification, something to visually see and attain; therefore, UNIS games are continually evolving to meet this expectation. This is not so much a problem for UNIS; it is a challenge that we are used to and we are happy to

develop and adapt to the market.”

### PRODUCT PLANS

How many new games does UNIS plan to bring to the market this year, in which categories? Tan said, “We are passionate about developing new products and that’s why you can expect to see as many as 10 new UNIS products every year!

“Some of these products are designed for specific markets, while others can be for worldwide distribution. We know the U.S. market has a specific standard, so we take extra care when reviewing products to ensure that we bring only the strongest and best products to market in the U.S. Products that are selected for U.S. distribution go through thorough feasibility tests to ensure the potential is strong.”

“Companies that design and manufacture machines with worldwide distribution in mind currently have a big challenge to be ahead of the game in terms of all the different gambling and gaming laws and regulations in each and every country,” said Tan.

He continued, “At present, in many countries these are in flux and therefore it can mean that an investment that you have made in the development of a machine can be squashed overnight. To get it right you have to look to the future and anticipate what may change that can directly affect your sales, for instance in the U.S. or in Italy.”

In conclusion, Tan said, “These are exciting times, and at UNIS we love to rise to a challenge.”

For more information on UNIS, call (905)477-2823; e-mail (sales@universal-space.com); Web (www.universal-space.com); sales (714)377-0508. ▲





Dorothy Lewis (l) of Fun Station and Beth Standlee of TrainerTainment.



From left: Pete Gustafson of Sega Amusements, Rich Long of Benchmark Games, and Richard Oltmann of Family Fun Companies.



Sebastian Mochkovsky of Sacoa Playcard System (l) and Steve Krongard of Nickel City.

# FEC Phoenix:

## Share, Engage, Grow

*FEC owners flocked to Arizona for the first ever FEC Phoenix summit to share information, tips, and more.*

“We have all come to this conference for one purpose,” International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Family Entertainment Center (FEC) Specialist Ben Jones said, “and that is to make more money! It is all about sharing, engaging, and active participation. The energy here is incredible and exactly what we hoped for.”

FEC Phoenix, hosted by IAAPA and held for the first time this year, was designed to improve individual job performance, to make more money, to save more money, and to further the FEC industry. This conference was for FEC operators by FEC operators.

Meetings and social events were on the agenda at the Millennium Resort and Villas in Scottsdale, Ariz., on Feb. 26-28. Eighty operators representing approximately 500 FEC locations were there to network and hopefully find that one product or idea that could improve their businesses. Total attendance was 150, including IAAPA officials, sponsors, distributors, and trade press.

The FEC Phoenix forum brought together veteran and senior level operators/owners with suppliers and vendors to share ideas and best practices in the FEC industry. The true value of this relationship building experience was networking and shar-

ing ideas. The conference included a welcome reception, plated dinners, a keynote address by generational humorist Megan Johnson, and prize drawings.

Rick Iceberg of C.J. Barrymore’s and IAAPA FEC Committee member remarked on this year’s theme: Share, Engage, Grow, “By sharing information with each other and engaging in new relationships at this event you can grow your business and make more money.”

Will Morey, 2013 IAAPA Chairman of the Board, told attendees, “This is a tremendous success. It is exciting that the FEC Committee and IAAPA have been able to bond and





Jeff Wilson of Extreme Engineering (l) and Amber Collier of The Zone Family Fun Center.



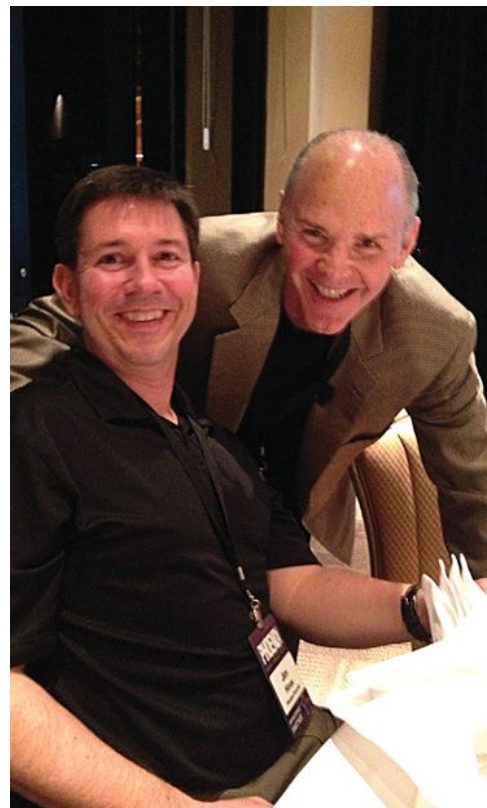
Jim Chapman (l) of Coast to Coast Entertainment and Frank Cosentino of Namco America.



Ben Jones, IAAPA FEC Specialist, and Michael Getlan of Amusement Consultants Ltd.



Matt Heller of Performance Optimist Consulting (l) and Michael Murphy of Triple Play.



Jim Hines of Firestone Financial (l) and Ben Jones, IAAPA FEC Specialist.

work so well together.”

He continued, “We face many common challenges together such as safety, healthcare, and minimum wage. This year IAAPA will be having a member service campaign and is committed to focusing on membership in North America. The heart of IAAPA is its members and their passion. In order for it to be strong and productive it is critical that we collaborate together and create the One World One IAAPA phenomena. We are pushing the gas pedal down and it is full throttle now to go forward.”

Paul Noland, IAAPA President and CEO, welcomed everyone to FEC Phoenix and was thrilled to see that the conference had sold out.

Noland said, “We are so glad you are here. We are excited about the format. Our members want education and training. You are experiencing the best in the FEC world here. We all need to set aside time to prepare for the task ahead.”

## EQUIPMENT

Rick Iceberg kicked off the first session of the day sharing his FEC’s financial performances on his top earning games: Pharaoh’s Treasure, Monster Drop Extreme, Connect Four, Smokin Token Extreme, Monopoly coin-pusher, Big Bass Wheel, and Key Master.

He mentioned the outstanding job game manufacturers have done so far and named the distributors that were present. Distributors were there to support the FEC operators with any questions or concerns they may have regarding equipment.

Family Entertainment Group’s George Smith stressed the longevity factor of game equipment. According to him, the most important division in an FEC is the arcade as it is the foundation of any FEC. Smith favors using debit card systems because of their efficiency.

“Efficiency is important in any arcade,” he explained. “How do you

decide what to purchase for your arcade with longevity in mind?” Smith used *Play Meter’s* Equipment Poll to answer this question. In his presentation he discussed each poll category and commented on them.

He said, “Cranes are absolutely critical. They are our staple. We are upgrading our alley bowlers; they are big for us. Coin pushers can be huge earners if they are placed in the right place and played the right way. Our prize vendors are huge as well.”

His session continued with discussion of win ratios, gift card ideas for prize vendors, and prize case design. “Cutting costs is a recipe for disaster. Game reinvestment is important. We use 10 to 15 percent reinvestment. When you don’t invest you fall behind bit by bit. Modern centers are keeping up and roaring ahead.”

## HEALTHCARE AND SAFETY

Brenda Jones of ADP Totalsource dis-





cussed healthcare reform. She spoke of the impact of The Affordable Care Act and what it means for you and your business. She advised attendees to take an assessment of what has to be done today to be in compliance for 2014.

With the ever-increasing threat of violent shootings, Christine Figueroa of Homeland Security urged everyone to set up an emergency active shooter plan. One option is to familiarize yourself with IS-906 and IS-907 Workplace Security Awareness at the following Web site (<http://training.fema.gov/EMI-Web/IS/IS906.asp>).

At the site you can download “Active Shooter” and “How to Respond” booklets and video presentations. You need to prepare your staff and share your plan with your local first responders.

**PERFORMANCE  
AND TEAM BUILDING**

Afternoon sessions continued with Rick Iceberg discussing staff financial issues. “Always reassess what you’re

paying your employees. The keys to any FEC are your employees.” Topics of discussion were wages, paid vacations, and bonus programs for hourly employees.

The next presenter was O. Lee Mincey with Live Nation. His session covered the topics of teambuilding and how to create a high performing team. Ken Whiting, Chairman of the IAAPA Food and Beverage Committee, spoke about case studies done on

two large facilities concerning their food and beverage challenges, opportunities, and solutions.

The day closed with Bernie Campbell of Whirley Drinkworks giving insight on beverage souvenir vessels and how lucrative they can be. He spoke of retail and refill strategies for perceived value. “Your beverage container should be a reoccurring revenue stream.”

The next day’s morning session



Will Morey, IAAPA Chairman of the Board, speaks at the conference opener.



Session speaker George Smith of Family Entertainment Group.



Attendees



Rick Iceberg of C.J. Barrymore's Entertainment addresses attendees.



Jim Kessler of LASERTRON speaks at his session.





began with Rick Iceberg sharing financial performance benchmarks on his go-kart tracks, miniature golf, batting cages, school field trips, and birthday parties.

“The groups and parties that come into your facility feed your concessions, your arcade, and your go-karts. Birthday parties will not only give you customers but they will also bring you repeat customers. That is why we love group parties so much.”

Iceberg asked the audience their thoughts on adding bowling to their facility. Many said yes if you have the footprint to do it. Miniature bowling is an option for those with less space. An audience member said that if you add bowling you need to add alcohol. The consensus was that adding bowling to your facility is a tremendous opportunity if done correctly.

It was Iceberg’s opinion that bowling is worth exploring. According to Iceberg, it reaches the adult demographic and expands your food and

beverage revenue.

Adding zip lines was the next topic covered. Iceberg reported that adding zip lines is a very labor intensive and expensive endeavor. Whether or not it is worthwhile depends on your location.

An attendee commented, “Once a customer is inside your facility they often forget about what attractions are on the outside. That is why I am cautious about adding a zip line.” Another FEC owner had already tested the possibility of adding a zip line and received great feedback.

Another topic was leadership. Matt Heller of Performance Optimist Consulting stressed, “If you are not taking care of your employees, you are not taking care of your business. If you are not taking care of your business you are not taking care of yourself and your community. If you are not taking care of yourself and your community you are wasting your time. You must take time to think about the critical

areas of leadership in your business. You need to communicate your vision with your employees, mentor your employees, and motivate them.”

## NEW TECHNOLOGY

Smart phones and iPads can transcend space and time in your facility. They can transform your life as an operator.

You no longer have to go to your facility to access information. It is now in the palm of your hand. Apps such as iAuditor, Easy Release, Interview Assistant, and YappBox can be very useful to FEC managers. There are also waiver apps that store your waivers in a cloud.

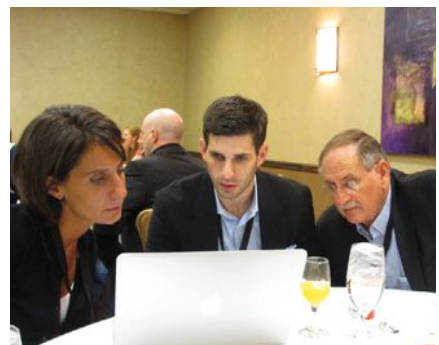
Bruno said, “These mobile devices are the future of point of sale systems. You cannot be afraid of it. You can give an iPad to your staff to help customers on sight by registering cards, checking cards, and refunding money. Your customers will soon be able to shop for their redemption items on



From left: Richard Oltmann of Family Fun Companies, Carol Ann Lally of *Play Meter*, and Bucky Mabe of S&M Amusements.



Mikel McGrath (l) and Janet Dibrell of Fun-trackers.



From left: Luciana Periales of Neverland Argentina shows Rusty Mabe and Clarence Mabe of S&M Amusements pictures of her facilities.





their mobile devices.”

Promotions can be very helpful to generate additional revenue. Session speaker Robert Araiza of Mulligans uses stocking stuffer promotions, token promotions, daily deals, and lock in nights at his facility. He also uses local billboards to advertise his promotions.

Bringing adults and corporate groups into your center can be very lucrative.

Jim Kessler of LASERTRON gave his thoughts on ways to attract these groups to your facility. Some points made were: allow alcohol; use large screen TVs; do not paint balloons and cute characters on your walls; keep noise level low; include adults in your promotional photos; and use games that are not just for kids. Design your environment the way an adult would want it.

Social media was the final topic.

“Know why you are using social media,” said Scott Brown of WDD online. He feels social media is strictly social and should not be used primarily for advertis-

ing. If you are a vendor or an operator, you need a YouTube channel.

Tools and apps to help manage your social media are HootSuite.com, Vine app for a six second video, 360 Panorama app for a visual tour, and Woo Box for legal online contests.

***“This is a tremendous success. It is exciting that the FEC Committee and IAAPA have been able to bond and work so well together.”***

Sponsoring partners of the event included: American Vending Sales, AMI Graphics, Art Attack, Bay Tek Games, Benchmark Games, Betson Enterprises, Brady Distributing, Brunswick Bowling & Billiards, Coin Tech, Control Play, Extreme Engineering, Family Fun Companies, Firestone Financial, Fun Express, Haas & Wilkerson Insurance, ICE, InterCard, J&J

Amusements, Laserforce, Lasertron, Moss Distributing, Namco America, Nexus Laser Tag, Northeast Insurance Center, Party Center Software, Pinnacle Entertainment & Redemption Plus, Playtime, ProVantage, Quibica AMF, Rhode Island Novelty, Sacoa Playcard

System, Sega Amusements, Shaffer Distributing Co., Sureshot Redemption, The Toy Factory, TrainerTainment, Whirley Drinkworks, Your Perceptions & Chime In Time, and Zone Laser Tag.

IAAPA plans to hold other FEC summits in the future in differing locations. For more information, call (703)836-4800; Web ([www.iaapa.org/events-education/events/fec-phoenix](http://www.iaapa.org/events-education/events/fec-phoenix)). ▲



Bernie Campbell of Whirley DrinkWorks (l) and Ken Whiting of Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk speak of food and beverage case studies.



Gregg Borman of Palace Entertainment shares his thoughts.



Attendees pick up manufacturer and supplier brochures during a break.



## Move it!

As a street operator or even a family entertainment center (FEC) owner, there's always equipment to move. To keep this necessary job from becoming a pain in the neck (literal-ly), proper moving equipment is required. Check out these "hot clicks" for the right product to get your machines from point A to point B.



[www.lectrotruck.com](http://www.lectrotruck.com)

Innovative Moving Systems is the manufacturer of LectroTruck system for stair climbing, lifting, and moving heavy, bulky items.



[www.tommygate.com](http://www.tommygate.com)

Tommy Gate features different gate options for trucks, stakes, and vans. The Original Series liftgates fit compact, mid-, and full-size pickup trucks.



[www.ultralift.com](http://www.ultralift.com)

Ultra Lift supplies the power so you don't have to. One person can safely move most vending machines, even up or down stairs. ▲

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# Perspective: views from factories and suppliers

The Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) Council of Affiliated States Meeting, recently held in San Antonio, Texas, featured a number of informative sessions including a Factory Panel titled: “Stronger Through Collaboration, The Factory/Supplier Perspective.”

Chip O’Hara of Midwest Coin Concepts in Waite Park, Minn., served as

Sega Amusements, Phil Cohn of TouchTunes Interactive Networks, and Dave Courington of Valley-Dynamo.

Each panelist was asked a different question:

**ATMs:** *The ATM industry has experienced tremendous growth over the last few years. What opportunities do you see on the horizon?*

Jason Downs, National Sales Manag-

Ted Furkin, Sales for Pyramid Technologies, said, “Dollar bill acceptors are not a growth industry anymore. They are here today but won’t be here tomorrow. People are using their cell phones to make payments, and that trend will continue. It’s a changing business, and if you don’t change with it you die.

**Dollar bill:** *There is talk of the dollar bill being abolished. What is your opinion?*

Chris Felix, National OEM Manager-Amusement for MEI Group, said, “I would rather talk about the facts than share my opinion. The facts regarding the dollar bill, and what it costs to make it, are the issue.

“We should go with a dollar coin because it is cheaper. The problem is, when you take the lower currency and go to a coin, you need to mint 50 percent more coins than bills. It’s not a one-for-one ratio, so it actually costs more to get those coins out in circulation.

“If the U.S. Mint went to a dollar coin, it would be hard to get rid of the bill validator. You would have to add a coin validator to your machine and that cost is pretty significant.”

**Market segment:** *What segment of the market is the operator missing, and what do you see as your equipment’s future?*

Chris Owens, Southwest Sales Manager (Music/TV) for AMI Entertainment network, said, “A lot of operators are not taking advantage of ATMs, self-redemption, and photo booths. The outlook in the music segment is very positive.

“Looking five to 10 years down the road, the basic premise of the jukebox



Chris Felix (l) of MEI Group and Chris Owens of AMI Entertainment Network.

moderator. Panelists included Chris Owens of AMI Entertainment Network, Rick Rochetti of Bay Tek Games, Jim Hines of Firestone Financial, Don Pesceone of Incredible Technologies (IT), and Chris Brady of LAI Games.

Additional panelists were Chris Felix of MEI Group, Jason Downs of Payment Alliance International (PAI), Ted Furkin of Pyramid Technologies, Mark Struhs of Raw Thrills, Vince Moreno of

er for PAI, said, “The ATM business is absolutely amazing. Make sure you raise your surcharges to \$2.50, \$2.75, or \$3. Our best locations are convenience stores, bars, and nightclubs. Our new locations are mobile events such as carnivals and fairs, and even high schools.

**Bill acceptors:** *Where do you see the technology in bill acceptors evolving in the next three to five years?*



## *“Sustaining revenue requires more than just rotating equipment.”*



Joe Franz (l) of H.A. Franz and Rick Rochetti of Bay Tek Games.

will not change; patrons will still interact with the jukebox. But the medium may change as it did from 45s to CDs to digital, and the way that music is provided may change slightly.

“There is competition from Rhapsody and Pandora in some locations. It’s something we need to watch, but we do not need to be overly concerned because that type of product costs the locations and doesn’t generate revenue for the locations.”

**Money trends:** *What money trends do you see for the industry in the months ahead?*

Jim Hines, Vice President of Sales for Firestone Financial, said, “We’ve worked on many initiatives that we brought to operators in 2012 and we will continue to provide them in 2013.

“We created a master document for our customers. When signed once, each subsequent transaction is streamlined, which allows us to fund contracts much easier and quicker. In 2012 we started Firestone Rewards, which is our loyalty program. We are continuing to offer our finance programs in 2013.”

**Pay-for-play:** *Do you see much opportunity for free market penetration? What are the biggest obstacles for the pay-to-play industry?*

Phil Cohn of TouchTunes Interactive Networks, said, “There is tremendous opportunity for market penetration, but it is going to take ownership on the operator side and the manufacturer side.

“After traveling the last year I learned that there are a lot of operators who don’t know how to use a mobile

phone and/or discuss social apps. I also learned that a lot of operators don’t go into the bars to understand who their patrons are.

“I continue to see many parallels between the consumer electronics industry and the coin-op industry. Technology changes constantly. In order for us to remain relevant we have to keep up and look forward.

TouchTunes continues to innovate, focus on how to make the experience better for the end user, and learn about the consumer.

“Our Mobile app has been incredible in adding to the bottom line. The point is that while music continues to be a great revenue stream for all of us, we need to anticipate the threats to that revenue stream. That is why we think out of the box and continue to build product that delivers opportunities. For example: placing Virtuo units in yogurt shops and other new channels, which has been a huge success.

**Product and locations:** *What product should operators embrace? What are some of the new locations?*

Vince Moreno, Regional Sales Manager for Sega, said, “Operators should embrace our Key Master and all other merchandisers. We have expanded far beyond video games; we now sell ticket redemption games, basketball games, kiddie rides, and a unique photo booth, SuperBooth.

“The newest locations for us are cruise ships, convenience stores, and gas stations with food marts. Machines are also being placed in independent grocery stores (not chains), and shopping malls.”

**Redemption opportunities:** *What do you see as the biggest opportunity for redemption today?*

Rick Rochetti, Director of Sales and Marketing for Bay Tek Games, said, “Redemption is our heart and soul. We define redemption in two ways: one is prize merchandisers and the other is ticket redemption. We’ve seen substantial growth in both categories.”



*“Networked games give you the ability to promote and use different payment methods.”*

“Over the last several years I have seen operators expand in both directions. Although I like to see operators expand their business in redemption, it is going to be a big challenge to get into new venues.

We see new opportunities on cruise ships, which create game rooms with a redemption component. That is a huge deal for our distributors. We are working very closely with the card reader companies, which are ticket-less systems. We have also worked with prize merchandise companies to develop kits for operators.”

**Self-redemption:** *The life cycle of self-redemption is much longer than many other products. What ideas can you give an operator to sustain revenue?*

Chris Brady, Sales Manager for LAI Games, said, “Sustaining revenue requires more than just rotating equipment. Players want to win the branded high-end prizes. You need to have stock merchandise all across the board, not only items for children but also items for the parents as well. Know the trends and know what’s hot.

“We are hearing about machines being broken into for their prizes, especially machines in remote locations. There is an alternative to awarding prizes on the spot: the player calls a phone number to redeem his prize. Also, a number of people are putting credit card processors on their machines.”

**Technology:** *What do you see as the future of technology as it relates to video on the street?*

Don Pesceone, Vice President of Sales for IT, said, “Online connectivity is something we have pushed. We have about 23,000 games currently online. We went wireless with our cellular modems; we have Ethernet and WiFi. The public is now using non-cash payment options and as a result our credit card play is nine percent of our cash box.

“Web presence is something we try to communicate to the players as often

as possible. We also have an active newsletter, ‘Live Wire,’ which engages the players. Our social media side has really exploded. We have over 30,000 participants on our Facebook page and we are getting very active with Twitter.

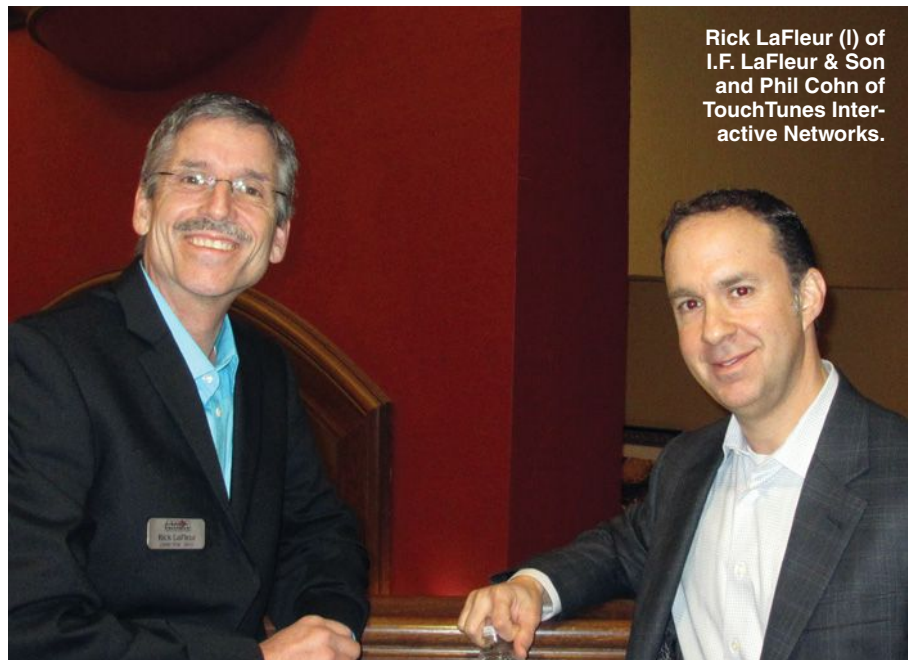
“The challenge we face in today’s economy is balancing the cost of technology with what operators are willing to pay and what the return on investment (ROI) will be.

“From a technology standpoint, what we could implement in the next

leagues are very important, and it’s very hard work. My advice is for operators to become involved in leagues and junior leagues. Use the junior leagues to expand your route and build a loyal player base for the future.

**Video games:** *What do you see as a key point in the survival of video today? As a manufacturer, do you see an expansion and why?*

Mark Struhs, Sales Manager for Raw Thrills, said, “Raw Thrills has the ability to reach customers and is totally



Rick LaFleur (l) of I.F. LaFleur & Son and Phil Cohn of TouchTunes Interactive Networks.

couple of years is the control interface. We have contemplated using touch screen and similar technology. The next control interface is not touching the screen but touching the air in front of the screen instead.”

**Tournaments and leagues:** *The state of Texas just completed its first state pool tournament. What advice can you give other states to help them build their association tournaments and draw players to the games?*

Dave Courington, Director of Domestic Coin-Op Products for Valley-Dynamo, said, “State tournaments and

committed to you and your success. We want to help you make money.

“Regarding expansion, we invest two to three million dollars in the titles we develop. We have to stay in step with technology or be a step ahead and show you how you can make money with those titles. This is our challenge.

“Where is video going? Networked games are the answer. They give you the ability to promote and the ability to use payment methods such as credit cards. Sixteen percent of the revenue on over 800 Big Buck HD games currently online is from credit cards.” ▲





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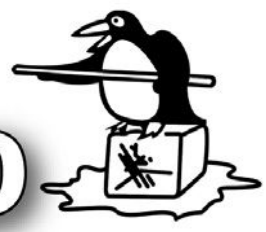
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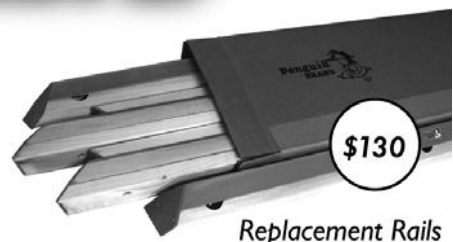
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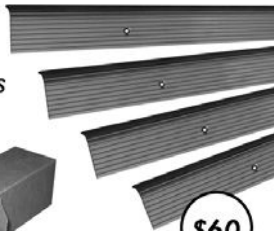
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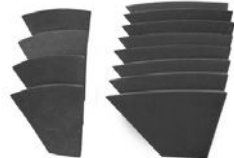


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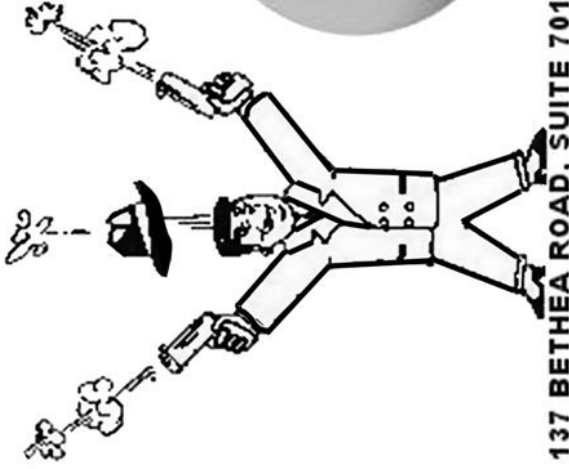
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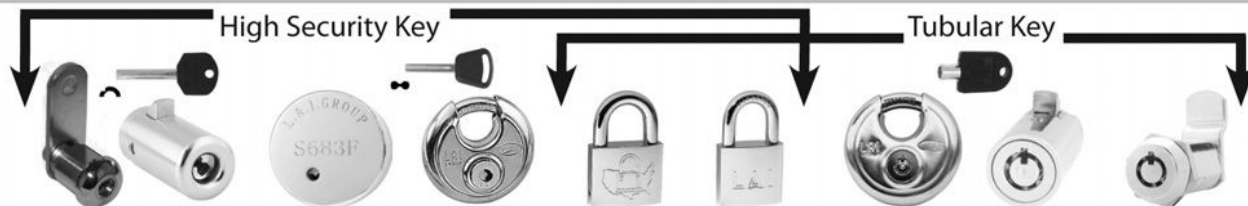
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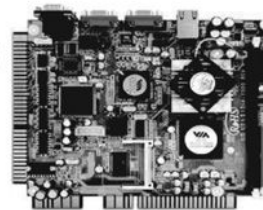
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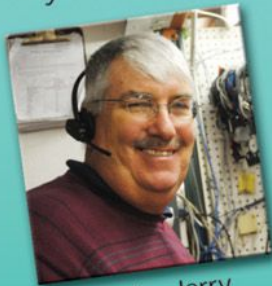
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