

Cover Story:
IT expands
into
growing
videmption
market

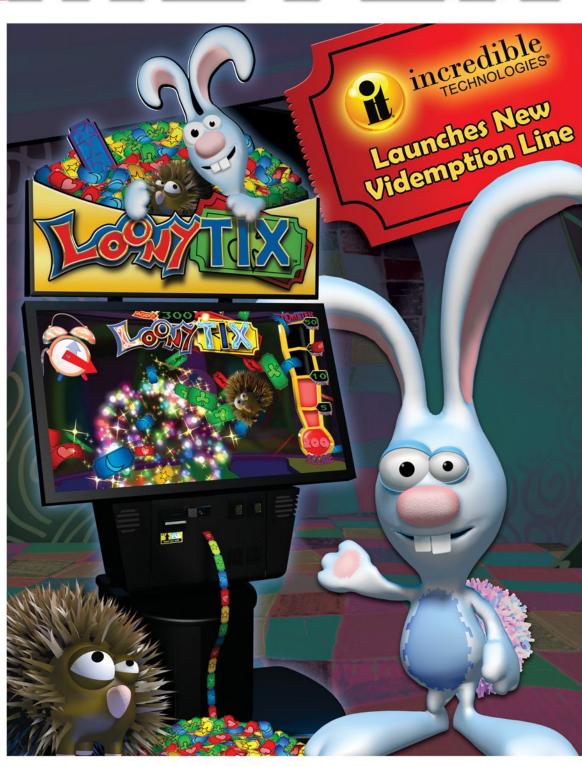
Special Issue: 21st Family Fun Edition

> Focus on: Party scheduling and trampolines

> > **APRIL 2014**

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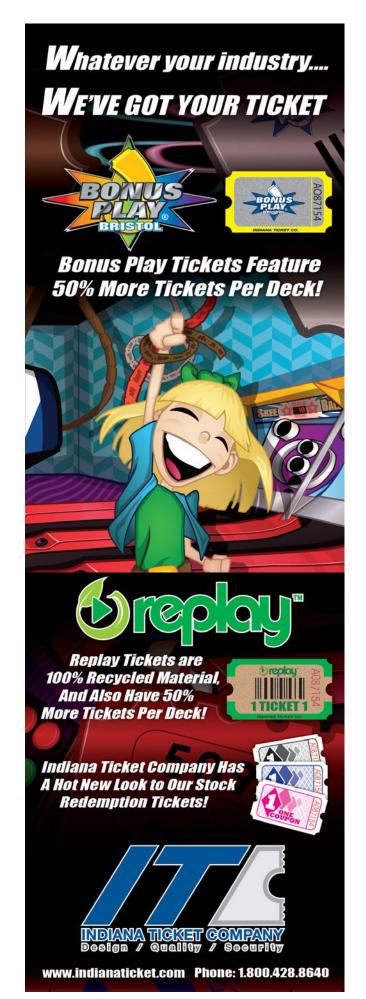














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On the Cover

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24 News Feature: Capitol Hill

The industry is making an impression on Capitol Hill with regular visits to Congress. AAMA and AMOA members who recently journeyed to Washington, D.C., share their thoughts on being politically pro-active.

29 21st Family Fun Edition

This annual special edition explores family entertainment centers (FECs) in today's world and addresses topics such as the emergence and growth of trampoline attractions, retooling an FEC, party scheduling, miniature golf, opening an FEC from the ground up, and much more.

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BONNIE THEARD Editor



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

E-mail:

(editorial@playmeter.net)

e are very proud of our 21st Family Fun Edition, which is one of the largest on record. You would have to spend a considerable amount of time to assemble all the information we have compiled for this special 39-page section devoted to the equipment, operations, management, and trends in family entertainment centers (FECs).

Acknowledged experts in the FEC field have shared their experiences, recommendations, observations, and practical advice valuable for anyone currently in the FEC business or embarking on an FEC project.

We start first with history and information on four manufacturers of trampoline equipment. Indoor trampoline attractions are literally springing up everywhere and represent a growing trend in family entertainment and fitness. Tracy Sarris, Executive Vice President of the new International Association of Trampoline Parks (IATP), chronicles the history and growth of trampoline attractions and why they are becoming so popular.

Our FEC of the Month visits Off the Wall in Coconut Creek, Fla., a 36,000-square-foot facility that has four trampoline courts, laser tag, a rock wall, arcade, playground, restaurant, and a whole lot more.

Jeff Schilling of CreativeWorks discusses retooling, revitalizing, and renovating an FEC. Guest Service columnist Dorothy Lewis of Fun Station Entertainment Group asks us to take a different approach in how we interact with customers to show them how much we care about their input, which pays off in future dividends. And Jim Chapman of Coast to Coast Entertainment provides more helpful tips on how to add pizzazz to cranes and redemption centers in his Redemption Formula column.

Parties are a big part of FEC offerings and *Play Meter* recognizes the importance of party scheduling software that assists FECs in making the party booking experience simple for both fun centers and their customers. Learn more about what programs are available.

Scoring Success, penned by Frank Seninsky of Alpha Omega Group and Amusement Entertainment Management (AEM) and Joe Camarota III of Alpha Omega Amusements & Sales, takes us through the redesign and other changes at the five-acre indoor/outdoor Bob-O's Family Fun Center in El Paso, Texas.

And who better to enlighten us on the enduring value of miniature golf and the reasons it remains a staple attraction than Arne Lundmark of Adventure Golf Services. In addition, Jim Kessler of Lasertron looks at big box entertainment centers versus smaller entertainment venues. In Marketing Matters, Susan Snyder-Davis offers practical ideas for bringing people into your FEC and giving them a reason to come back.

We also introduce a new columnist, Amber Collier, Owner of The Zone Family Fun Center in Kalispell, Mont., who will provide the facility owner's perspective in articles under the title: On the Front Lines. Amber's journey into the FEC world is fascinating reading, and we look forward to learning more about FEC operations from her all year long.

Rounding out the section is a recap of the most recent Foundations Entertainment University (FEU) Class 31 attended by *Play Meter*. The cast of presenters is a veritable who's who of the entertainment world.

Lastly, our regular FEC News section carries information about some of the latest location openings. Combined with Coin-Op News, Critics' Corner, VNEA Vision, and other regular features, this issue is a keeper with a capital K. ▲



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Play Meter and AMOA Are Teaming Up to Share News and Information About/From Industry State Associations.

This Month is a View of the Coin-Op Groups Around the Country:



- 1. Alabama Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 2. Alaska Coin Machine Operators Association
- 3. Machine Operators of Arizona
- 4. California Entertainment Machine Association
- 5. Florida Amusement Machine Association
- 6. Georgia Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 7. Amusement & Music Owners of Idaho
- 8. Illinois Coin Machine Operators Association
- 9. Indiana Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 10. Iowa Operators of Music & Amusements
- 11. Kentucky Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 12. Louisiana Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 13. Maryland Amusement Machine Operators Association
- 14. Coin Machine Industries Association of Massachusetts
- 15. Michigan Coin Machine Operators Association
- 16. Minnesota Operators of Music and Amusements
- 17. Missouri Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 18. Montana Coin Machine Operators Association
- 19. Nebraska Operators of Music & Amusements
- 20. Amusement & Vending Operators of Nevada

- 21. New Jersey Amusement Association
- 22. Amusement & Music Operators of New York
- 23. North Carolina Coin Operators Association
- 24. North Dakota Coin Machine Operators
- 25. Ohio Coin Machine Association
- 26. Oklahoma Amusement & Vending Association
- 27. Oregon Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 28. Pennsylvania Amusement & Music Machine Association
- 29. South Carolina Coin Operators Association
- 30. Music & Vending Association of South Dakota
- 31. Tennessee Coin Machine Operators Association
- 32. Amusement & Music Operators of Texas
- 33. Utah Amusement & Music Association
- 34. Vermont Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 35. Amusement & Music Operators of Virginia
- 36. Washington Amusement & Music Operators Association
- 37. West Virginia Amusement & Limited Video Lottery Association
- 38. Wisconsin Amusement & Music Operators Association
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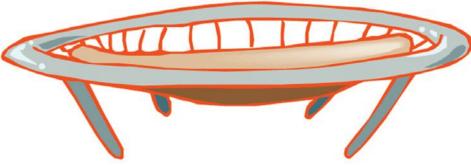


Annual



Jump, flip, and bounce for fun





rampolines are a growing attraction, whether in standalone parks or incorporated into family entertainment centers (FECs).

Trampoline equipment manufacturers have a long history of providing safe, enjoyable experiences in a wide array of trampoline configurations, colors, and styles. Four notable companies share their history and details on their product line.

FUN SPOT TRAMPOLINES

Fun Spot brand trampolines support over 100 global trampoline parks with equipment, supplies, and training. It is a second-generation family business focused on trampoline manufacturing that has been in business since 1971.

Fun Spot trampolines are built in the industry's most vertically integrated factory based in Hartwell, Ga. Besides doing all its metal and fabric fabrication in-house, Fun Spot is unique for weaving its own trampoline fabric.

Fun Spot knows vibrant colors build successful brands and exclusively offers trampoline fabric in fresh colors like orange, lime green, yellow, purple, baby blue, electric blue, and the very popular chrome, plus custom PMS matched colors upon request.

Fun Spot makes springs from American wire, stocking over a dozen models to ensure best performance for each trampoline court.

Fun Spot leverages its trampolines to help build its clients' brands. Its artistic design team includes client branding on the trampoline and surrounding equipment and helps customers select color schemes by providing 3D renderings of trampoline courts displaying colors of interest. This team also provides Web site start-up assistance and full-scale 3D renderings of entire parks.

Fun Spot has the industry's largest staff of full time engineers providing truly custom designs to maximize space utilization and clients' return on investment (ROI).

Superior engineering produces reliable and innovative systems built for safety, enjoyment, and low maintenance expense. Fun Spot's ever-enlarging collection of parkour style elements proves more attractive to jumpers than yesterday's simple grid layouts.

Fun Spot supports its customers with lightning fast turnaround on replacement jumping mats and springs. Mat orders received by mid-day are routinely shipped the same day. Rush mat orders received by 4 pm are custom produced and shipped the same day. CAD/CAM manufacturing ensures unmatched size consistency.

Trampoline park success relies on safe operations. All Fun Spot trampo-



years, we have built long term For over forty S relationships by delivering trampolines parts and FunSpot.con



on safe operations.

line park orders start with training by phone and end with four days of comprehensive on-site training. Fun Spot is committed to success through safety and offers affordable follow-up training to both domestic and international park customers.

Fun Spot trampoline park systems are fully designed in 3D and bolt together on-site with no welding. The company provides experienced installation team leads to ensure projects install quickly and correctly.

Trampoline park customers are supported with facility signage, a private label safety video, start-up Web site and social media content, full park 3D visualizations, full park graphics, manuals, and accessory supplies.

Fun Spot has helped write the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standard to which their products comply and helped found the industry's trade association, the International Association of Trampoline Parks (IATP).

Fun Spot supports the global expansion of the trampoline park industry with installations in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Mexico, U.K., and UAE, with many more underway.

Fun Spot brand trampolines are manufactured by 3 Atoms LLC. For more information, visit (www.Tramp oline ParkEquipment.com).

TRAMPOLINE PARKS LLC

Trampoline Parks has a reputation of cutting edge, customized parks with the highest level of safety. Each park is custom designed to meet the needs of the company's clients and support the entertainment industry in the communities in which they do business.

Val Iverson, Owner of Trampoline Parks LLC, built his first trampoline park in 1994. Since then he has built over 20 trampoline parks across the nation.

In 2011, Iverson decided to take his expertise in the production and manufacturing of trampolines to new heights and created Trampoline Parks LLC. He and his leadership team collectively have over 30 years of experience in trampoline manufacturing and production.

Trampoline Parks offers a variety of entertainment and recreation options for children, families, businesses, athletes, and communities. Safety is the company's number one priority. Its leadership team sits on the board of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

Additionally, Trampoline Parks LLC is committed to developing the best safety innovations in the industry. All materials it uses to produce a trampoline park have the highest safety rating. The company builds safety measures into the design of each park.

Trampoline Parks provides customers with innovative, high quality,

The company manufactures a wide variety of custom trampolines, tracks, low-impact vaulting boards, bungee pits, in-ground trampolines, doublemini trampolines and, since 2009, custom trampoline parks.

The company's latest invention (a 60-foot Tramp Pipe) was unveiled at the Boing Jump Center in Orlando. Trampolines Unlimited also works with Hollywood and the music industry creating custom rebound devises for commercials, movies, concerts, and shows such as "Glee." For more information, visit (www.webounce.com).

BEST AMERICAN TRAMPOLINES INC.

Best American Trampolines has over 40 years of experience in the trampoline industry. The company strives to continuously provide its customers with the highest levels of customer service, product knowledge, and superior product craftsmanship.

Best American Trampolines offers a variety of products catering to both residential and commercial clientele.

Phillip Howell, President, said, "We are fully committed to producing higher quality products at some of the most affordable prices in the industry. All of

reliable and innovative systems built for safety, enjoyment, and low maintenance expense.

safe trampoline parks at a competitive price and at a competitive speed. For more information, visit (www.trampo lineparksllc.com).

TRAMPOLINES UNLIMITED INC.

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The entertainment industry's fastest growing attraction finds a rising popularity in the U.S. and worldwide.

Indoor trampoline parks are "springing" up everywhere!

ust three years ago there were only about 35 to 40 indoor trampoline parks in operation. Today the International Association of Trampoline Parks (IATP) has been able to identify over 280 existing parks or those in the development stages of opening.

Parks are being built on an average of five to six per month. This may not include a number of existing family entertainment centers (FECs) that may have or will be adding trampoline courts to their existing facilities. In addition, inquiries come into the association weekly from all over the world asking for information on how to open an indoor trampoline park.

So what is driving this growth? According to Jeff Platt, Chairman of the Board for the IATP and President/CEO of Sky Zone Franchise Group LLC, parks offer kids an opportunity to exer-

By Tracy Sarris

cise while having fun and parents are looking for healthy activities for their kids and the whole family.

For those who have never been to a trampoline park, the average park is about 25,000-40,000 square feet and houses a variety of "courts" that can be made up of one or any number of trampoline "beds" that stretch from wall-towall and are connected to form one large surface that is enclosed with padded side walls or angled trampolines.

The average cost to open a trampoline park varies dramatically based on size and location, but is estimated to be between \$1 million and \$2 million.

According to Phillip Howell, President of Best American Trampolines Inc., a main court has an average of 40+ beds, but there isn't a maximum number aside from the limitation of the building's dimensions.

Guests are able to jump, flip, and literally bounce off the walls. There are also a variety of trampoline attractions that take physical activities to a whole new level. From trampoline dodge ball courts and slam dunk basketball courts



to fitness classes, kid's areas, and foam pits where you can launch yourself from a trampoline into a giant pit of foam blocks.

HISTORY AND GROWTH

St. Louis, Mo., native Rick Platt, Founder of Sky Zone, created the world's first indoor all-trampoline park based on an idea to develop a game using his patented system for interlocking all-trampoline walled playing fields. The first park opened in June 2004 in Las Vegas and operated under the name of Sky Mania.

To help get the business off the ground, Platt recruited his son Jeff while he was still a student at Washington University. By 2008 they had opened additional locations in Chesterfield, Mo., and Sacramento, Calif., and by 2009 began franchising Sky Zone in select markets across the U.S.

Today, there are 55 Sky Zone parks open, another 85 franchises that have been sold but not yet open, with locations now found in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Mexico. The company expects to open another 35 locations this year, 40 locations the following year, and have a total of 200 franchises sold across the world by the end of 2015.

Howell, whose company provides consulting, full park design and layout, manufacturing, and installation, indicates they are seeing the most growth within the U.S. currently, but suspects the international business will catch up in the next year or two. Best American Trampolines has been in the trampoline business since 1978, but entered the indoor market in 2007.

"We have a park being shipped into the U.K. with a May opening expected," said Howell. "We also have one being shipped to Dubai, UAE, which is expected to open in July."

Sky Zone was the pioneer in indoor trampoline parks, but it didn't take long for other independently owned parks and new franchise brands to start springing up all over the U.S. and beyond.



The first Rebounderz opened in July 2008 in Longwood, Fla. By 2010, Rebounderz Franchise and Development Inc. was founded and there are now six parks in the U.S. and several franchise locations due to be finalized in Canada. Owners Mark Gurley, CEO, and Al Palladino, President, expect anywhere from eight to 10 new franchises to be sold this year.

STANDALONE PARKS VERSUS FUN CENTERS

Sky Zone's brand is focused on having only trampoline attractions in its parks while parks like Off the Wall Trampoline Fun Center in Coconut Creek, Fla., and Rebounderz Extreme Fun Center in Jacksonville, Fla., have incorporated other attractions that bring them closer to the FEC model.

Jeff Platt commented, "I think Sky Zone could evolve, but for the time being our brand is focused on developing core activities around trampolines. Our brand is about "Awesome Healthy Fun" so anything new introduced needs to fit our brand attributes."

Rebounderz is already starting to make the transition with its Jacksonville location being the first true FEC in the Rebounderz family.

In addition to the 10,000 square feet of trampoline attractions, the





40,000-square-foot facility offers a state-of-the-art "Call of Duty" style laser tag attraction, archery tag, mini-bowling, five themed event rooms, and a video arcade, all of which can be reserved for groups or special events as well as open play. It also offers a fullservice cafe with pizza, subs, and other food items as well as wine and beer for non-participating guests.

Rebounderz of Jacksonville's Owner, David Zorn, believes that the trampolines will continue to be the primary source of revenue, representing over 60 percent of sales. The location initially opened in September 2012 as a trampoline park, but completed its planned expansion into an FEC in December 2013, becoming the largest indoor FEC in north Florida.

"At present, the majority of our facilities are trampoline parks," said Palladino. "While the standalone trampoline facility is still a fantastic business offering, one that continues to grow in popularity to this day, the introduction of non-trampoline offerings provides something for everyone when it comes to active entertainment."

Although their styles and philosophies differ slightly in some areas, you will find that the industry as a whole

mon interest in is optimal safety. The popularity and exponential growth of trampoline parks and the potential for injuries sparked concern early on and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) began meeting with stakeholders in 2011 to establish a special task group to develop a new standard for indoor trampoline parks.

seems to echo the same idea of safe,

One area that all parks share a com-

healthy, family fun and fitness.

CHALLENGES

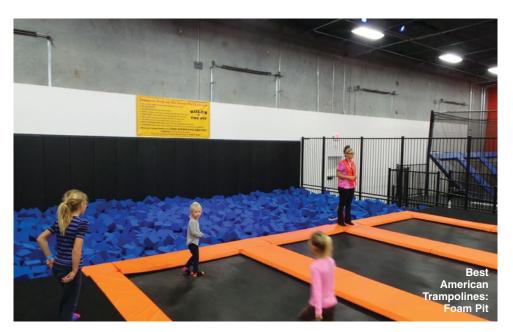
In just 18 months, ASTM F2970-13, Practice for the Design, Manufacture, Installation, Operation, Maintenance, Inspection, and Major Modification of Trampoline Courts was developed by a special task group of ASTM F24 Amusement Rides and Devices. Founding members of the IATP Board of Directors were part of the task group that contributed over 10,000 volunteer hours into developing this standard.

The purpose of the standard is to delineate requirements regarding the design, manufacture, installation, operation, maintenance, inspection, and major modification of commercial or institutional trampoline courts operated with the primary purpose of amusement, entertainment, or recreation. It establishes industry practices for the purpose of reducing potential hazards to patrons, court attendants, and spectators.

Legislation recently passed in Michigan requires owners to comply with the ASTM standard as part of the regulatory requirements. Other states are looking to regulate the industry as well and many park owners, along with the IATP, are actively engaged in promoting optimal industry legislation that includes patron education and responsibility.

"Five years ago, you could open a trampoline park without any regulation, standards, or best practices to point to and you were in business and, for the most part, could be very successful," said Platt.

"The (trampoline) industry as a whole seems to echo the same idea of safe, healthy, family fun and fitness."



"The introduction of non-trampoline offerings provides something for everyone when it comes to active entertainment."

He added, "The industry has evolved, for the better. There are now a set of standards published that operators should be following while the industry is working diligently to retrofit its parks. And, in the face of competition, customer service and strategic marketing becomes that much more important, forcing operators to raise the bar."

From a manufacturer's perspective, Howell commented, "Regulating the industry will bring all of the requirements for manufacturing to a more level playing field. There will ultimately be manufacturers who meet the baseline requirements and then you will have manufacturers who will continue to offer a premium product and build well above the minimum requirements.

"Either way, these regulations should help prolong the life of the industry by heightening the overall design and manufacturing requirements for ALL manufacturers."

So what does the future hold for the indoor trampoline park industry and why the overwhelming attraction?

According to Howell, "Aside from the fun and excitement of jumping on a trampoline, I think the main reason people are drawn to these indoor trampoline parks can be attributed to most people's desire to be around other people.

"When you take a fun action sport like trampolining, and then you incorporate fun games like dodge ball or the slam dunk, and then add a bunch of people into the mix, you create a very fun and energetic atmosphere.

"Indoor trampoline parks cater to all ages, which allow a family with both a four-year-old and a 15-year-old the opportunity to enjoy the same activity. Most entertainment facilities are much more age specific, whereas a trampoline park allows the entire family to join in the fun."

As far as the future is concerned, Platt said, "In the next couple of years, like most evolving industries, I think we will see the trampoline park industry consolidate. Additionally, I do not think we will see the same level of growth that we have experienced in the last three years due to industry standards, government regulations, and challenges with securing insurance."

One thing is for certain, people of all ages, shapes and physical abilities are "catching air," getting fit, and having a great time doing it!

Tracy Sarris is the Executive Vice President of the International Association of Trampoline Parks (IATP). IATP is a 501(c)(6) industry trade association whose purpose is to promote safe operations, facilitate commercial success, and stimulate growth of the trampoline park industry. For more information, visit (www.indoortrampolineparks.org).

Inquiries should be directed to Sarris, (717)533-1945; e-mail (tracy sarris@ indoortrampolineparks.org).



Sarris is the President of INOVA, an association and business management consulting company. She currently manages the IATP and serves as Executive Vice President and provides marketing services to several amusement industry suppliers. For more information, visit (www.inovamanagementsolutions.com); e-mail (tracysarris@verizon.net).



Bouncing "Off The Wall" in Florida

fter knowing each other since a young age and partnering for over 11 years in various family entertainment center (FEC) businesses, Ervin Mendel and Sam Yecutieli noticed the rapid growth of a different segment of the industry: trampoline parks.

The two decided to combine their 20+ years of experience and knowledge of traditional FECs with this exciting new concept in entertainment. The result was Off The Wall trampoline fun center in Coconut Creek, Fla.

ATTRACTIONS

The 36,500-square-foot facility offers 12,000 square feet, divided into four courts (two dodge ball, one slamdunk, and one jump), a 500-

square-foot two story laser tag arena featuring 30 Laser Force Generation 7 vests, a 22-foot rock wall, a game room with around 80 games and a full redemption prize counter, a 1,200-square-foot Kangaroo Jumper, a 1,200-square-foot Playtime playground, Lazer Frenzy from Creative Works, five party rooms, a full restaurant and cafe with 10 50-inch TVs, an adult lounge, and free WiFi.

Mendel told *Play Meter* that the trampoline courts, manufactured by Fun Spot Trampolines, are the biggest draw, bringing in happy customers ready to bounce off the walls, literally.

The best performing games in the facility's arcade are Monster Drop from Benchmark Games and Big Bass Wheel from Bay Tek Games.



Mendel and Yecutieli work with both Brady Distributing and Betson Distributing to supply their game room. The redemption counter is supplied by Redemption Plus, Bonita Marie Merchandise, and Rhode Island Novelty.

The facility is on the Embed swipe system and uses a CenterEdge point of sale and online scheduling system.

Mendel said, "We use the CenterEdge for point of sale because they have a great system for trampoline reservations. I can tell you that the party module works very very nice for us."

The cafe at Off The Wall offers typical FEC food like pizza, burgers, french fries, and hot dogs. It also has good salads and wraps. Mendel said that customers are pleasantly surprised by the quality of the food.

EXPERIENCE

The facility uses Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and Google+ to communicate with its customers. Several promotions are offered including Jump and Play, Jump and Eat, and Off the Wall Experience. Each gives customers different combination options to tailor their experience. Mendel said he and his partner run coupons with print media and specials with Groupon and Living Social.

Mendel said that when someone walks through the doors at Off The Wall they can expect a great experience and lasting memories. He

added that what really makes the facility unique is the team of employees. The "above and beyond" hospitality they offer helps them to stand out

The most significant accomplishment in the business to date is having over 150,000 happy guests; many that have been repeat guests.

For someone getting started, Mendel suggests doing a lot of due diligence. "Know the industry or partner with someone who does," he added.

Off The Wall is in the process of planning new attractions for the summer and the owners are planning to open a new location. For more information, visit (www.offthe wallfl.com).























Online party booking grows in popularity

irthday parties are big business for family entertainment centers (FECs). It's in a facility's best interest to host as many as possible, but scheduling can become a hassle, leaving room for mistakes/double booking and taking time out of a busy employee's day. Enter: party scheduling software. In the last few years, facilities have increasingly relied on this efficient and time-saving online feature. Companies have even introduced add-

ons to upsell or customize a party package, no hard sell required.



Here is some information on party scheduling software offerings from a few top companies (appearing in alphabetical order).

CENTEREDGE

In 2001, CenterEdge Software's owners opened an FEC, Palace Pointe, in Roxboro, N.C., that comprises an eight-screen theater, 20-lane bowling center, skating rink, arcade, diner, bar, and, of course, birthday parties. Palace Pointe originally purchased a software package to run the facility, but management was frustrated with many aspects of the product.

In 2004, after three years of dealing with incorrect reports, poor processes, a lack of control, and missing functionality, the owners turned to Marcus Mayer, an industry veteran, to create a new software package from the ground up. A little over a year later, after the product proved its worth in Palace Pointe, Mayer began to offer the software publicly and the company has grown from there over the last decade.

CenterEdge's party booking software is specifically designed to make the booking process as easy as possible, whether the party is booked online or in-house. In either scenario, an FEC will want the booking process to be quick and simple. If a customer books a party online, they will be walked through the booking step by step to reduce confusion.

First a guest chooses from the different party types, then they indicate the

number of children and adults they expect to attend, then they choose a date and

time, and so on. Small, bite-sized steps make the process manageable. Similarly, when a guest calls a center to book a party, they want the call to be as quick and painless as possible, so CenterEdge works hard to make booking parties in-house just as simple as booking online.

Additionally, CenterEdge's party booking system allows for a lot of flexibility in party scheduling with multiple area types, to allow customers to configure a party booking system to match their business, not the other way

around. This is especially beneficial for trampoline parks and laser tag facilities since those businesses typically have more restrictive capacities.

Also, CenterEdge's system offers a few additional perks, such as sending e-mail invitations and even the ability for the birthday child to send out thank you notes later. One final perk is that CenterEdge's party booking system and POS are all one system, so a customer has one tool to go to for cash management, reports, and other management tasks.

Grey Burnett of CenterEdge said, "We certainly foresee a lot of growth in party scheduling for a number of reasons. As FECs and other locations continue to grow, the need to find a more efficient tool to manage their schedule is a must. The days of being able to track parties with pen and paper are largely gone now. Also, as consumers do more and more online, an increased number of customers expect to be able to book parties online and will be frustrated if they can't, so offering online bookings is quickly becoming a must." (www.centeredgesoftware.com)

CORE CASHLESS

CORE Cashless has been providing solutions to the attractions industry since 1996, when its first arcade system was installed. A few company names and 18 years later, CORE has installations all over the world in a multitude of different environments. The company recently released a new

cloud-based cashless software platform called Paydia that features rich mobile functionality and increased promotional flexibility.

CORE's Total

Park Solution primarily focuses on providing operators with one vendor for all their operational needs. The software does everything from cashless payments





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to employee time keeping; access control to reporting. The company focuses on simplifying the process of building the infrastructure every park or entertainment facility needs. Having the function built in that allows for birthday parties or group bookings is just another key component the company has built in to this comprehensive software.

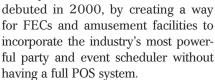
Patrick Frickleton, Director of Marketing for CORE Cashless, said, "The adoption of the Internet is not going anywhere but up, so giving guests the ability to easily book parties online as well as on-site is one of the best things operators can do. It gets their products in front of their customers and makes them easy to purchase." (www.core cashless.com)

IDEAL SOFTWARE SYSTEMS

Amusement facilities and FECs can build their party and event reservations 24/7 with Hosted Reservations, the online booking service from Ideal Software Systems that makes Web-based event reservations a simple, smooth process with no double booking.

Hosted Reservations is a secure, reliable way for FECs and amusement centers with party and event centers to capture more business online, anytime. Hosted Reservations builds on the pio-

neering Ideal Party Scheduler, the POS-based event management system Ideal



"Hosted Reservations is an easy way to increase bookings for parties and events," said David Goldman, Founder and President of Ideal Software Systems.

"Adding 24/7 selling to your event or party business allows you to capture customers who book outside of office hours, and free on-site resources allow your staff to be ready for the party the minute your customers arrive." Designed as the ultimate in flexible resource management, Hosted Reservations allows facilities to define the spaces, capacities, dates, and times available to customers. It will even automatically combine separate spaces into larger halls when a customer requests a capacity that exceeds what

the facility would normally accommodate.

This powerful tool also gives

facilities plenty of options for increasing the number bookings, and even boosting the value of those sales by creating themed packages and offering upsell add-ons like cakes and party bags that can include any items in the site's inventory.

Hosted Reservations is customizable to a facility's branding and can incorporate logo, color scheme and graphics, and connects to an existing Web site as a seamless extension of the business. Customers see an easy-to-use interface that makes booking their next birthday, corporate event, or family reunion simple and fun.

Booking an event using the Hosted Reservations portal is easy and intuitive with the company's attractive user interface. Customers can choose an

> event package, select from available dates and times from a familiar calendar

view, note special instructions such as food allergies for the guests, fill out an event waiver, and make deposits and payments on the event.

Founded in 1983 and still family owned and operated today, Ideal Software Systems has driven technological advancements in amusement business management software throughout its history, from pioneering redemption center management and party scheduling to its leadership in creating hosted and mobile solutions that create more opportunities for growing profits. (www.idealamusementsoftware.com)

INTERCARD INC.

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

and Australia.

The company has been offering its party scheduling software for

the last few months.

Several features make Intercard's system unique: It's embeddable and the form integrates seamlessly into a customer's Web site. There are no redirects and no fake store fronts. It's heavily customizable. Each booking form is considered unique and can be altered at the markup level. Custom scripts and behaviors are possible.

It's responsive. All server interactions have sub-second response times. Every slot visible is verified against upto-the-second reservation information to prevent double-booking.

It's intelligent. The scheduling AI will automatically book around existing events, including custom orders, and can rearrange iteneraries as resourcefully as a human operator to make things fit, all in real-time.

And it's robust. Client software is fully operational even with an interrupted Internet connection. A sophisticated synchronization mechanism ensures all scheduling data is agreed upon once Internet is restored.

Representatives from the company said they don't see new locations opening without this type of software. (www.intercardinc.com)

PARTY CENTER SOFTWARE

Party Center Software has been in business for over 16 years. The company used its party scheduling application at its own center before bringing it to market. The software came out in February 2007.

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Party Center Software apart is that the company has developed its software from the operator's perspective with many of the company's

staff having operational experience in the industry. This adds those "little touches" that really make the software stand out. That difference has allowed Party Center Software to grow to hundreds of customers throughout the world.

Armando Lanuti, Director of Sales for Party Center Software, said, "We continue to grow at a rapid pace even in this down economy. Having recently launched our software in several new countries this past quarter, there is a global need for this type of service. The demand will only continue to grow as the economies of the world get stronger and more entertainment venues are created.

"We recently pulled our numbers and have booked over 850,000 events and \$250 million for our customers through our platform with nearly 40 percent of sales being done online. The amount of customers wanting to book through mobile devices such as tablets and phones has increased dramatically as well, as over the last six months 45 percent of our customers' online bookings have been through mobile devices." (www.partycentersoftware.com)

SACOA PLAYCARD SYSTEM

Sacoa started operating FECs in Argentina 57 years ago, where it currently owns and operates 23 locations, plus an amusement park in Quito, Ecuador. In the early '90s Sacoa developed the PlayCard System, a rechargeable debit card system to control games and keep better track of revenue, for its own use.

Success of the system was such that a couple of years later Sacoa released it to the international market deploying it throughout Dave & Buster's locations in the U.S., and currently totals about 1,000 installations worldwide with presence on all continents.

Since those initial days, the system



has been enriched with a variety of features and modules. Almost 10 years ago Sacoa was requested to develop a party scheduling software capable of booking and managing reservations by date and time for a number of rooms in a facility, and that's when the first version took shape.

Over the years, the ever-growing demand in the industry for this type of system led to the Party Booking module being improved and enhanced, benefitting and taking advantage of the various requests and suggestions from customers across the U.S., until it was finally completely re-designed in 2012 as a cloud based application with the added plus of online booking capability, which took the module to a whole new level.

The user friendly front-end features a seven-step process to guide customers through all options available, which are fully customizable by the operator in a very easy to use online backend.

Additionally, Sacoa recently released an integration to Facebook, allowing users to complete all steps of a reservation process directly from their Facebook accounts as well as to select who to share the invitation to the event with from their friends list, sending those users notifications both on the use of the application and of the party booked, which further allows for taking advantage of the viralization of potential actions carried out within the application.

The backend software allows for multiple store selection as well as setting up availability per store, per date, and per-room. It also allows configuring various party packages and optional food and gift add-ons. Additionally, it supports different types of events (birthday parties or corporate events), allowing the ability to offer different rooms and package options for each type. Also offered among available fea-

tures are: online payment for party deposits, e-mailed copies of party receipts, possibility of applying discounts, as well as service charges, etc.

Sacoa's Online Party Booking integrates seamlessly with the Playcard System, allowing the ability to look up the reservation at the Sacoa POS on the day of the party and change the number of people attending for the software to recalculate totals when more or less people show up.

Attendants can also input the range of cards to be given to the guests either ahead of time or at the POS, so that they can be activated with just a click (no need to swipe each card).

Also included is a tablet-ready mobile extension to view/modify packs or products for ongoing parties and send orders directly to the kitchen, which are automatically shown in the Kitchen Console screen, with requested time and comments, as well as room and host/hostess details.

All features added up, what Sacoa has to offer is more than just a party scheduling system, since it is actually involved and follows the complete process of the party development until it reaches the tender status and is



rience, and the experience acquired from over a decade of marketing the application, ensure both the applicability of the software to real-life scenarios as well as its versatility for adapting to significantly different business models. The highly customizable Sacoa platform allows customers to adapt their whole system to their business needs. (www.sacoacard.com)

At ICT we know that cash flows both ways.



How to build an FEC from the ground up

Editor's Note: Amber D. Collier is the Owner/Operator of The Zone Family Fun Center in Kalispell, Mont., which features an arcade, laser tag, bumper cars, bungee trampoline, zip line, mini golf, bounce zone, krazy zone (climbing and slide area), birthday parties, house-made pizza, and more. She joins Play Meter's contributing writers and will share her experiences on a regular basis.

PLAY METER

Amber D. Collier

love my long 40 minute commute to work. Why? Not only because Montana is a beautiful place, but because for me it's a great time for reflection. Today as I was driving in, I reflected on how I got to where I currently am in life.

For those who don't know me, I have multiple jobs. I am not only a mother of two wonderful girls, but I own and operate The Zone Family Fun Center. I didn't just buy this business or apply for a job here; I built it from the ground up.

Humble beginnings: Prior to 2009, I was a successful real estate broker making a good income from that business until the real estate bubble burst and the market went dry.

I realized that as a younger real estate broker, I didn't have the years of experience or client referral list that would sustain me through the real estate drought and I would get eaten alive by the experienced brokers. I had to find something else to do.

In a chance meeting with our local small business development officer, we started reminiscing about our past military service and about the lack of entertainment options in our area. Then I started thinking (dangerous, I know).

If someone is going to eventually start an entertainment center, why not me? So I started working on a business plan. I had never worked in a family entertainment center (FEC) or a restaurant, but I had been a patron at many. I felt that with the Internet at my disposal anything was possible.

Where there's a will, there's a way. I am a fairly frugal person. I was raised in a family where financial manage-

ment was very important, that no matter how much money you have, thrift stores, coupons, and auctions are a way of life. Some would even call me cheap.

Rewind to when I was 17 and a young Airman in the U.S. Air Force. I purchased my first vehicle from my father. I secured a bank loan to buy it from him because the interest rate the bank offered me was less than the interest rate my father offered me (my first great lesson in financial management: Always shop around for the best price).

After a few months, my engine blew up and I didn't have the money to fix it. I called my dad, and although he had the resources to help me, he didn't even offer. I searched for a solution because I had no other options and decided to try to fix it myself. I didn't know what a dipstick was, let alone how to change oil, but I figured that if someone else can do it, why can't I?

This is the CAN DO attitude that I have carried with me throughout my life and into my FEC. When I called my dad to tell him my solution, he basically laughed, knowing that I had few mechanical abilities. Nothing motivates me more than someone telling me that I CAN'T do something, so I immediately went out and found a junk yard engine and a manual (this was before Google).

I used the tools at the shop on the base and four days and a ton of grease later I drove to my dad's house with five out of the six cylinders firing. It was one of the greatest moments in my life and showed that I could do something that everyone said I couldn't do.

Why is this story important to an FEC owner/operator or someone looking to start a business? It relates to everything in life and comes into play every day in my business, but especially in the start-up phase.

Lesson 1: Don't accept NO or CAN'T as an answer and rather than allowing that to get you down, allow it to motivate you to prove them wrong.

In starting The Zone Family Fun

Center, I invested my hard earned money in a trip to the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo to soak up as much knowledge as I could. It was one of the best investments I ever made.

At the time, I was investing money that I didn't really have in a business that I wasn't certain would ever get off the ground, but I had to take the risk and try. I went to as many seminars as I could and spent every waking moment on the exhibit floor talking to vendors and consultants. I told many of them about my plans and many disregarded me, as they often still do. I don't wear a fancy business suit or look like a high roller, so I often get ignored by vendors at shows.

Lesson 2: Don't judge a book by its cover.

I realize that vendors hear from a lot of people like me, a mom trying to follow a dream or a goal in life. And many of these potential projects may never go anywhere beyond the dream. But are you really going to be able to tell who has the drive, motivation, and resources to get their project off the ground by how they look, how they dress, and their age?

For those vendors that did give me the time of day, and took a few minutes to listen to me and help me, it has repaid them many times over because that is where I brought my business and will bring my future business.

After gathering knowledge, preferred vendors, and pricing, I tweaked my business plan, and conducted my own feasibility study and market research (which, looking back, I would not recommend).

Then I started the next step: financing. This is not an easy part of the process. This is where you have to honestly acknowledge your weaknesses



and find solutions to problems quickly. One of the biggest hurdles I ran into at banks was my lack of experience. So I had to find someone with experience to be on my team.

The entire financing stage goes back to lesson one (don't take no for an answer). For every "reason" the banks would come up with for why they couldn't lend me money, I took it as my personal challenge to solve that problem and try again.

I was turned down by every bank in town, but still wouldn't give up. I couldn't give up. If I quit, I would have lost the money that I had invested in a trip to the IAAPA Expo. I know it sounds crazy to continue with a million dollar project so as to not lose \$1,000, but that's how my mind works.

What I wanted more than anything was to stand in front of these bankers in the future and say, "See, I told you that you should have taken a chance on me." Fortunately, I have had the

opportunity to say that to many bankers and vendors. I won't lie; there were many banking meetings that I left and went to my car and cried. Be prepared to be flexible and tweak your business plan and your ideas to fit your budget (and what risk the bank is willing to take).

Lesson 3: There is a solution to EVERY problem.

I learned quickly during the construction phase that Murphy's Law is very present in my life. Everything that can go wrong WILL go wrong. It seemed like around every corner, someone or something was trying to stand in the way of getting where I wanted and needed to go.

Sometimes you have to think out of the box to solve these issues. First, the building that I had planned on leasing became unavailable just after I got funding. I started looking at other buildings, some of which would seriously change my attraction mix based on ceiling height and size.

Having funding and being unable to secure a location was really frustrating. I kept hitting brick walls with every lease offer I made. Then, the deal for the first building I had wanted to lease fell through. Knowing that I was now in the power position, I re-negotiated a lower rent payment than my original offer and I secured the location.

Murphy visits again: Then I ran into the government, which said that I needed a new septic system due to a change of use and unfortunately that responsibility fell directly on me and not my landlord. So now I had an unexpected \$30,000 bill that popped up and no contingency money in my budget for it.

If I was to open, cuts would have to be made. I cut one-half of my exterior paint budget and decided to only paint the prominent corners that were most visible from the highway. I bought a paint sprayer and painted the entire interior myself. I chose to use carpet tiles and personally put down almost 20,000 square feet of carpet.

In between interviews for staff, I learned how to operate a concrete sawcutting machine to trench the ground for the electrician to lay in-ground wiring and avoid power drops and poles in my arcade. When I didn't have enough in the budget to afford actual pole padding for my Ballocity unit, I had to get creative and purchased boxes of swim noodles.

I was running out of time, so I recruited the help of some teen youth groups that offered to volunteer in exchange for free laser tag when we opened (I hired two employees out of that group as I could see how hard some of them worked).

None of these labor intensive projects are things that I had any experience in or had ever done before in my life; however, between the Internet and humbly asking contractors and others for guidance, I saved and cut enough to launch my project despite the set-backs.

Opening Day: I remember this day vividly. I was SO unprepared. While making my long commute, I remember an Eminem song called "Lose It" coming on the radio that said, "If you have one chance, one opportunity, to seize everything you ever wanted, one moment....would you capture it?"

I never really listened to rap or Eminem before, but it was exactly how I was feeling. I was so nervous I thought I would throw up. I had no idea what I was doing, and if I didn't know what I was doing, how was I going to lead a group of employees?

Once I got to work, I realized that I didn't have time to be nervous anymore because my good friend Murphy raised his ugly head and I had problems to solve. I ended up dealing with a not so honest company when purchasing my arcade games and most of them arrived just before our VIP opening date without any keys to open them and in non-working condition.

You just can't find an arcade tech in northwest Montana, so we ended up opening with only our attractions and no arcade. It took us about a month to get all of the games up and working and for the company to ship the rest of the games that I had paid for.

Lesson 4: Know the vendors you are dealing with. Call references



and Google search for reviews. Pay attention to the bad ones.

The air compressor for our Ballocity unit also did not arrive before our opening date as had been promised. We were once again forced to think outside the box. We ended up renting a portable compressor that we piped out back of the building and twice a day for about a month I had to run to the gas station, fill up gas cans, and fill the compressor with diesel.

A life; what's that? For several months, I worked 12 to 15 hours, from open to close. I put a bed upstairs in one of the offices and slept here on many nights. This was my baby (and still is). Three years later I still work seven days a week. I'm not sure that I necessarily need to, but I love what I do and love this place. I love my customers and employees (even the pain in the rear ones).

I still take it personally when customers have complaints or don't have a great time (even if it's for reasons out of my control). I try so hard to make sure everything is perfect that it hurts my feelings when it isn't. I have trained my staff to embrace our friend Murphy and go with the flow.

We try to find things to laugh about every day and overall have FUN. Just like a child who falls and scrapes his knee, usually if you laugh about it, it doesn't hurt as bad. We try to do that with our customers. When something is going wrong or not working, we try to fix it quickly, but don't panic because it will create anxiety in the customer.

I love this business and this industry and I think I get more excited about going to the annual IAAPA Expo than I do about Christmas. I still don't feel like I fit in with some of the more experienced operators. I look at them as celebrities and I get a little star struck when they talk to me.

I am super excited about attending other industry events to learn even more. I start every day trying to figure out what I can learn from those around me, including my staff. I can't imagine doing anything else with my life than being in this business.

I feel like some of the everyday issues and grind that I deal with on a daily basis are not only entertaining but can be universally appreciated by many across this industry and I'd love to share them with you.

Until next month, remember to have fun, laugh, and don't take yourself too seriously. You couldn't possibly be luckier than to be working in this industry.

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Do big box centers have feet of clay?

"The owner or manager of a big center tends to think their smaller competitors aren't a significant threat, which is a big mistake."

n my last article I posed the question, "Why are many family entertainment center (FEC) attractions so mediocre?" In the article, I discussed over a dozen reasons why mediocre attractions exist. What's scary is that any one of the reasons can cause an attraction to be mediocre.

Over the last few months, I have visited several large entertainment centers. As I walked through these centers, I became more than a little bit disheartened by what I saw. There was definitely something amiss, but I couldn't figure out what it was.



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); for LASERTRON Mfg., visit (www.lasertron.com); for Cyper Sport Mfg., visit (www.cybersport.us); e-mail (jkessler@lasertron.us).

It seemed like the more a center tried to do the more mediocre the overall experience. While one or two revenue generators were good or maybe even great, the other pieces were either mediocre or conflicted with other parts of the center. It was difficult to identify the core reason for the center's existence or the target market.

The one key thought that kept popping up was the following: As the number of moving parts increase (i.e. more attractions, more eating areas, more bars, more services, etc.), the ability to effectively market, manage, and operate the center decreases. This realization is how the title of this article came about.

There is no proof that big and more = better and more profitable:

Indoor entertainment centers have been around for 25+ years, but not one big box chain with multiple attractions and revenue generators has been able to scale to 100 or more profitable locations. Maybe it just isn't possible or maybe bigger is only better up to a certain size and/or a certain number of core revenue generators.

In addition, what if a significant part of the problem is that big centers have a hard time competing with the smaller entertainment venues that are focused on being very good at one or two core revenue generators that are also present in the larger entertainment centers?

There are multiple restaurant chains that have 100 or more locations that are profitable. There are multiple retail stores that have 100 or more locations that are profitable and there are also multiple sports bar chains that have 100 or more locations that are profitable.

Why hasn't even one big box operator with multiple attractions been able to open 100 or more profitable centers? Maybe focus is the key element required to scale a business.

While there are a decent number of big box single unit centers and small big box chains that can be pointed to as being profitable, does the complexity of a big center destroy it's ability to roll out dozens of stores that are solidly profitable?

Ability to replicate a model validates resiliency: The only large and profitable entertainment concept to open over 65 locations is Dave & Buster's. What's interesting about the D&B's business model is that it focuses squarely on two primary revenue gen-

family fun

erators, which are a large restaurant with a bar and a giant arcade.

Most of D&B's newer locations are between 26,500 and 40,000 square feet, whereas many of the older stores are over 50,000 square feet.

Has D&B's focus on two core revenue generators as well as scaling down the size of their newer stores been two of the key reasons why they have been able to expand to over 65 locations?

If an entertainment center is managing five or more revenue generators under one roof, does that make the business so complex that only a really great management team can make it work for one or even a few locations?

If more is better, why hasn't a single big box chain been able to roll out 100 or more profitable locations? I'm kind of surprised that the fragility of these large centers hasn't been recognized sooner.

Too many complicated parts within a system will create fragility: It needs to be understood that a system built with complicated parts reduces resilience to outside events.

Operating a business comprised of complicated parts significantly increases the likelihood of a catastrophic event due to unforeseen and often undetectable outside events. If a business becomes too complicated, it's time to re-evaluate the core focus of the business.

Large centers are fragile: Our company worked on several designs for our own big box entertainment center for about two years. We spent an enormous amount of time laying out different types of centers with varying attractions and revenue generators. The centers varied in size from 45,000 to over 65,000 square feet.

The cost and complexity of putting together a large center caused us to reevaluate the ultimate long-term viability of a big box entertainment center.

The one entertainment center that I was told was a huge success by several different sources in the first year or so

that it opened is probably the perfect poster child for why big is not better.

This large center demonstrated how each additional revenue generator compounds the complexity of marketing, managing, and operating the center. Complexity ultimately dooms a large center to mediocrity and makes it fragile to outside forces.

To make a large center work, management has to dumb down the operation of each revenue generator, which ultimately opens the door to competitors that are more focused on being the best at two or three core revenue generators.

Thinking a big center is more resilient than a small center is dangerous: The problem with operating a large multi-venue facility is that the operator doesn't believe a smaller cen-

"The goal is to build the best most profitable businesses that can stand the test of time."

ter with one or two attractions is a significant competitor.

In reality, a smaller more focused operator can inflict significant damage to a large center's profitability especially if their main attraction is bigger and/or better and provides a superior overall experience.

A more focused competitor realizes that its core revenue generators have to be the best and must always function at 100 percent or they can be put out of business. Knowing they are venerable often makes them stronger, because they know they have to be the best at what they do. Most importantly, they take proactive steps to make sure they are the best.

The owner or manager of a big center tends to think their smaller competitors aren't a significant threat, which is a big mistake.

Look at it this way: If the smaller center is attracting 30 birthdays and 10 groups per week, then those are groups and parties the big center won't get. If there are multiple competitors focusing on their unique niche in the same market area, the damage continues to multiply and eat away at the larger center's customer base.

Decisions based on ego instead of profitability and resiliency are dangerous: If we didn't have strong egos, we wouldn't have started our own businesses. Recognizing that our egos are sitting next to us at the decision making table is very important. Our ego often pushes us to do more and bigger when more and bigger may actually make our entertainment center less resilient to outside competition.

Trying to impress our friends or the people in our industry is not smart; it's dangerous. The goal is to build the best most profitable businesses that can stand the test of time as opposed to getting destroyed by more focused competitors.

The most important question to ask is: Which core revenue generators can we successfully develop to be the best of the best in our market area for the long-term?

If we can't be the best of the best, we have to realize our limitations. Otherwise, we leave the door wide open for those who can.

Picking resiliency over size: After thinking about and debating the pros and cons of big versus resilient, we decided to revisit a space that we previously looked at. The space available was now less than half the size we originally wanted to acquire. The smaller space forced us to focus on what we could create and operate that would be the best of the best.

The design process quickly morphed into a center that would be unique and capable of dominating its niche. More importantly, we could open right across the street from a big box entertainment center and it could still generate strong profits.



Most importantly, the big box centers would never be able to effectively compete against our strengths, because they can't (or won't) devote the same amount of resources that we will continuously invest to maintain our core competitive advantages.

Part of what got me thinking about the fragility of these large centers was a book that was written by Malcolm Gladwell called "David and Goliath."

As Gladwell points out in his book, Goliath should have been the one who was afraid, because David was the one who picked the winning strategy. David chose to exploit Goliath's weaknesses by focusing on his unique strengths. Goliath probably knew he was going to be destroyed right before he died. He had unfortunately put himself in a position where he could do nothing to stop his defeat.

While I wasn't thrilled with all the time we spent designing our own version of a big box entertainment center, I do feel like we dodged a bullet. Maybe we never would have understood the problem if we didn't spend so much time trying to design a large center from the ground up.

I still believe that the adult market is the best target market, but building a large, complicated, multi-revenue entertainment center is too risky. Ultimately, it will be eaten alive by more focused alternatives.

The hard part about identifying a concept that is too complicated to roll out is that you may not even know it is too complicated until you get to 20 or even 30 locations. Only after a business model has exceeded its structural integrity will cracks in its feet of clay grow large enough for all to see.

The reverse is also true for entertainment centers that don't have enough core revenue generators. If you create an entertainment center that is too one dimensional or too easy to copy (i.e. too low of an entry point as far as cost goes or you don't develop strong enough revenue generators), then rolling out a simple entertainment center concept will also be fragile.

It is important to note that each revenue source must be designed and operated to maximize the revenue and profits generated from each one.

By designing and building the best core revenue generators, the profit potential of each revenue source will be much greater. Higher revenues enable the operator to devote more resources and hire better managers and staff members to maintain and maximize each revenue source.

If an attraction is but one revenue source among many in a big center, the resources allocated to promote, operate, and maintain the attraction will be just another line item on a spreadsheet that too easily gets cut. Lack of focus accelerates the downward spiral to mediocrity for each revenue generator as well as the overall center.

As always, we need to fully comprehend what we are capable of accomplishing. Then, we must focus all of our resources on those things where we can be the best in the world. If we do this, we will be successful.



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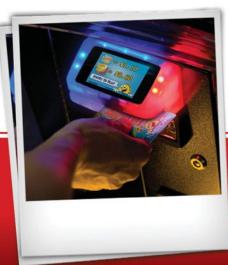


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COVER STORY







Incredible Technologies innovates into "videmption"

Makers of Golden Tee to introduce LoonyTIX ticket game.



ncredible Technologies (IT) is best known for its popular and enduring sports games like Golden Tee Golf and Silver Strike Bowling, which have found a lasting home and avid audience in street locations

everywhere. These games have become an industry staple, and IT is committed to keeping these iconic brands exciting to players and profitable to operators for many years to come.

But the street market is not the only amusement genre that IT has support-

ed. In its 28 year history in the amusement industry, IT has designed and manufactured a wide range of arcade-style games, fighting games, and even a diverse line of ticket redemption games.

Titles from the early '90s like Arlington Horse Racing, Peggle, and DynoBop were some of the first

"video redemption" games available, and enjoyed success in arcades and family fun centers.

Today's technological advances in affordable video solutions have had a huge impact on the amusement industry. With the proliferation of smart phones and other portable devices, player habits and preferences of all age ranges are now trending toward fastaction, easy access, touch-screen games and apps. This trend is the perfect recipe for "videmption" games, making them an affordable and approachable option to arcade and FEC floors.

IT has big plans to expand on this growing market segment with a new line of unique video ticket redemption games. Internal design teams are developing a new hardware platform and versatile touch screen cabinet to house new and innovative ticket redemption games for the FEC market.

The first game, entitled LoonyTIX, is slated for release this July. A sneak preview prototype of the game and

COVER STORY





cabinet were unveiled at the Amusement Expo in March.

WIN TICKETS WITH LOONYTIX

LoonyTIX is a colorful, fast-paced action game designed for all ages. Players are initially greeted by Grabbit, an energetic, cartoony rabbit who acts as host and helps players learn the game.

When play begins, the screen fills with colorful tickets flying randomly around the screen. Players are encouraged to tap the screen and "grab" as many tickets as possible before time runs out. The more tickets you touch, the more tickets you win!

To add to the excitement, obstacles like Piney the Porcupine can slow your progress, while numerous power-ups add to your score. Special tickets light up the LoonyTIX marquee, where you can win the big bonus jackpot!

When the frantic fun finally ends, Grabbit tallies the player's score and converts it to the number of tickets won. While the tickets are dispensing, Grabbit encourages the player to give the game another try.

Game software will offer a variety of operator adjustable settings, making it a perfect fit for any ticket location. Settings for tickets awarded, game time, jackpot amounts, and hit frequencies can all be tweaked to achieve optimal performance. Comprehensive audit screens are available, in addition to hard meters, for a complete picture on collections and income.

A CABINET WITH IMPACT

The new videmption game cabinet, dubbed the IMPACT, is being designed with an emphasis on player approachability and easy maintenance. A sturdy 46-inch HDTV with a six-point touch screen will be hard to miss on a family entertainment center (FEC) floor, and can be adjusted to any height to

accommodate appropriate age players.

Cabinet components, including hardware and speakers, are located in a modular, fully configurable housing just below the TV, making it easy for younger players to insert tokens, bills, or swipe cards, as well as collect tickets.

When the locked vault is open, all components are easily accessible for collections and service. An attractive, sturdy base and colorful oversized marquee round out the package for maximum impact.

eight years later, IT is still supporting this same platform at little to no additional expense to the operator.

Considerable cost and effort has gone into keeping older versions of the Nighthawk hardware in operation, while at the same time introducing rolling changes to keep up with outdated components and technological advancements. As cabinets with old CRT monitors finally become obsolete, IT will move away from

MORE TO COME

But IT isn't stopping at a single product. Plans are already in the works for a line of new and novel videmption games that will be sold as both dedicated units and as affordable conversion kits for the IMPACT cabinet.

A second title is just getting underway, with more inventive designs waiting in the wings. The future is bright for this growing market segment, and IT stands ready and able to take it to new levels of innovation and success.

STAYING IN THE STREET

IT's expansion into videmption will by no means impact its commitment to the street market. Golden Tee has become an important product for thousands of amusement operators and IT is committed to keeping the game fresh and relevant to

The Nighthawk hardware platform was originally introduced in 2005, with a promise of a three to five year lifespan. Now

their routes.



COVER STORY





supporting them in 2016.

That way, internal development resources can move past support and maintenance mode, and refocus on exciting new features that will attract players and make money for operators well into the future.

EVEN MORE TO COME

IT makes a considerable effort to keep Golden Tee in the minds of players everywhere, and 2014 is no exception. The LIVEWIRE (www.golden tee.com) is a dynamic and informative player Web site loaded with current news and helpful tips. Golden Tee also enjoys a popular presence on Face-

book, Twitter, and YouTube.

Enhancing this media exposure is a "Golden Tee Caddy" app for both Apple iOS and Android devices that will be released later this year, giving players instant access to their player stats, contest status, YouTube videos, and more. More features will be added to the free mobile app in the future, such as selecting clubs, dress your golfer, and even player invitational contests.

Promotions from IT will keep players engaged throughout the year, including the recent "Bottomless Bag"

weekend that allowed players full access to unlimited balls, clubs, and Golden Tees. The popular Designa-Hole promotion will run through the spring, with special events on Classic Courses slated for the fall.

GOLDEN TEE LIVE 2015 AND BEYOND

The Golden Tee team is already hard at work on the next course

> update, slated for October this year.

Golden Tee LIVE 2015 is the first part of a three-year plan that will introduce and update game elements for play-

ers of all skill levels and increase cash boxes for operators.

Golden Tee LIVE 2015 will of course feature five all-new courses, bringing the total number of selectable courses to a staggering 50. A new "King of the Hill" game mode will be introduced for casual play, and a Daily Prize Contest will be added to online play.

In addition, Prize Play will be expanded to a Classic Course each week starting in the summer of 2015, to add freshness and variety as the courses mature. Even more moneymaking features and improvements are already being planned for 2016 and 2017.

COMMITMENT TO FUN

IT continues to be bullish on coinop amusements and has high hopes for a bright future. Internal development teams are enjoying a refreshing and enthusiastic outlook and are already hard at work. The result is sure to bring fun, innovative, and profitable products and features to both street and FEC operators for many years to come.

For more information, visit (www.its games.com).





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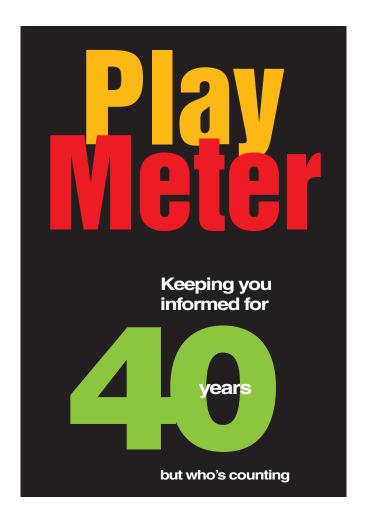
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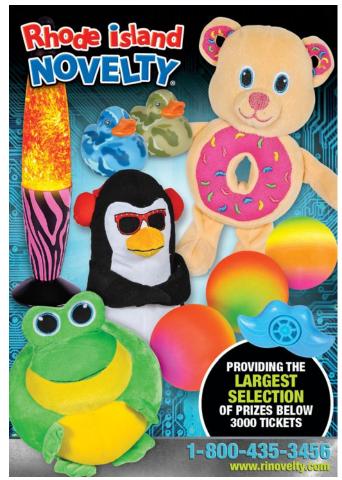
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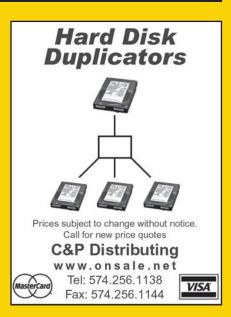
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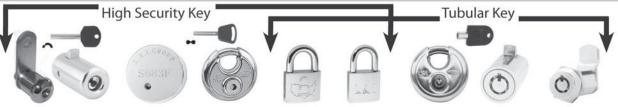
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