



SIGA Modernizes Casino Operations with a Complete Systems Overhaul

By Riley Meredith



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUSTOMER:

Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA)
– A First Nations' owned and operated non-profit corporation, SIGA is the largest casino operator in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan with six casinos, 1,870 slots, and 52 live table games.

BALLY TECHNOLOGIES SOLUTIONS:

SDS™, CMP™, Business Intelligence, CMP Cage, Elite Bonusing Suite™, and TableView™.

BUSINESS NEED:

SIGA's core casino system needs were extensive. To remain competitive with other casino operators and go a step further by gaining a strategic advantage, SIGA sought a system provider offering the latest in player tracking, slot management, business intelligence, loyalty, bonusing, and more.

SOLUTION:

Implement a host of Bally's award-winning core casino systems across all six of SIGA's properties to increase profitability and operational efficiency.

RESULTS:

The array of systems technology deployed at SIGA's various properties delivered significant return on investment in a number of ways. Player loyalty increased among carded players and increases were seen in new-player card sign-ups. Staffing efficiencies have been created across multiple areas, including players club, tables, slot tournaments and promotions, customer service, and more. SIGA now enjoys real-time data from their floor, automated functionality in many respects throughout their operations, new bonusing and promotional features at the point-of-play, and enhanced levels of data to provide them with the tools needed to conduct business more efficiently and profitably.



TABLEVIEW™



Change is a Good Thing

Core systems for a casino operator are akin to a central nervous system in humans. They collect and process data, make decisions, and implement them. They calculate, coordinate, and create. In other words, the ability for a casino to operate efficiently and profitably is tied directly to its core systems.

With six casinos, 1,870 slots, and 52 live table games, the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) reached the point where they knew it was time to bring their outdated systems up to speed. A selection committee of key stakeholders within the organization, including representatives from IT, marketing, and operations, gathered to evaluate providers of possible replacement systems. With 15 high-level criteria items and a host of lower-level gauges, Bally Technologies came out as the clear winner, scoring particularly well in areas such as user-friendliness and features offered from both a quality and quantity perspective.

"You see the Bally system in Vegas, and those are huge properties – anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 machines – and they were able to bring it here to Dakota Dunes. We opened roughly six years ago and we've always had Bally products here. Once the choice was made for the Bally slot operating system, I was pretty happy," said Gary Daniels, General Manager of Dakota Dunes, the largest of the SIGA properties and one of the key decision makers on the project.

SIGA chose to move forward with an array of Bally system products, including SDS, CMP, Business Intelligence, CMP Cage, the Elite Bonusing Suite (EBS), and TableView.

Reaping the Benefits of Progress

For more than 35 years, SDS has set the standard as the gaming industry's most accurate, reliable, and innovative slot-accounting and player-tracking system. SDS continually monitors slot machines, other gaming devices, and customer gaming activity, enabling operators to integrate their entire slot accounting, player tracking, centralized reporting, database marketing, and cashless functions on a single network.

In SIGA's case, SDS allows them to fully integrate data from guest services, the player's club, live table games, and slots into one neat package. They now draw superior and far greater amounts of information about players' preferences and then put this information into practice on the casino floor. For instance, SIGA has driven incremental revenue by optimizing slot placement on the gaming floor. Many of SIGA's patrons also visit casinos in Las Vegas and California and are used to the level of performance,

convenience, and service the Bally system delivers. They're now able to get this in their local casino.

"It was like going from the 1950s to 2013," Daniels said. "Everything is in real time now. With our old slot operating system, everything came at least 24 hours later." One of Daniels' favorite and most-used features of SDS is the "flash" report, which gives him a dashboard view of everything he needs to know in his role as general manager on a daily basis.

From an operations standpoint, SDS allows SIGA to use staff more efficiently on gaming floors to cover peak periods. With better and timelier data, they are now able to see the complete picture of a patron's visit, tailor marketing and promotions, and drive repeat visits.

Improvements and efficiencies aren't seen solely from the operator's side either:

"From a guest perspective, it is things like reducing lineups, bonus offerings at the slot machines where guests can directly interact, and improved slot tournaments where you can get 200 people participating instead of five or six. It's just better offerings all around for our patrons," said Michael Garr, Operations Analyst for SIGA.

SIGA has also deployed Bally's Business Intelligence solution, an advanced application that allows operators to analyze and visualize the extensive data gathered throughout their business enterprise.

"Before, we had different cage systems, different guest services systems, and others. Being able to integrate all that data into one source allows us to better understand what our patrons actually respond to and the efficacy of our actual promotions. It's just better data all the way around."

Real Time Means Real Results

Perhaps the largest improvement seen on and off the casino floor for both SIGA employees and guests came through CMP and Elite Bonusing Suite.

CMP is Bally's advanced player-tracking system that

allows casino operators to manage and evaluate their player database. With a user-friendly interface, this system lets casinos of all sizes gather, track, and report critical data.

"One of the main reasons we decided to go with Bally's CMP was the data collection – the information we can gather on a player is very extensive. From a central standpoint and executive level, we are able to view the operations as they are happening in real time, monitor our players, and actually use the system to provide a much higher level of customer service to our most valued players," said Tennille Grimeau, SIGA's Director of Player Relations. "From an operational standpoint, CMP has helped us virtually eliminate all of our paper, which is a huge advantage to us and our players. Our systems are much faster now and our lineups have decreased."

From a guest services standpoint, CMP delivers increased customer satisfaction as well. Michael Ross, Guest Services Supervisor at Dakota Dunes and SIGA's player's club subject matter expert for the project, touted CMP's benefits:

"It's a tremendous step forward. Our old system was a bit archaic. We're now pushing promotional credits directly to members' accounts. There is so much less paperwork and everything is tracked in the system so well. As a guest supervisor with our old system, you were always either printing or reconciling something to do with free play. Now the reward is set up in CMP and you're pushing it directly to the player's card."

A simple and often overlooked functionality of CMP is also delivering significant benefits to guests.

"The ability to scan photo IDs is also huge for us," Ross said. "We have an older demographic and it is often a struggle for them to get their IDs out or they may have forgotten it. Now we only have to do it once, and then we have a stored image so they don't have to worry about that anymore. CMP has been a huge benefit. Everything is just more efficient now."

The benefits of CMP goes beyond slots, free play, and

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IDs though. Bally's CMP Cage has also been deployed at all six SIGA properties. The Bally CMP Cage module is an inventory-management system that integrates, collects, and manages all back-of-house cage locations and business operations. The application allows casinos to track the flow of inventory into and out of the cage area both to patrons and between different locations of the cage or pits. CMP Cage has brought the SIGA staff several advantages, including not having to scan tickets in one application and bring it back to the cage and enter the information again in another application. Cash-outs go much faster now and things are even running smoother in the count room. These benefits translate to efficiency and improved service.

"We don't have the data entry we had before. No more scanning tickets and then taking them back to the cage. Everything is done at the cage in one application. And it isn't just the cashiers or supervisors who have seen the improvement. Everything is faster now and we don't have the customer lineups like we did before. We just complete the transaction and they're gone," said Bear Claw Casino Cage Supervisor Stacey Faber.

Creating a Winning Atmosphere

During the selection process for a new system provider, it became evident that many of the other vendors were capable of offering the basic operational needs that any casino has, but where Bally stood out was in the marketing component. Bally's Elite Bonusing Suite allows casino operators to reward players right at the device using the iVIEW™ player-user-interface and iVIEW Display Manager™ (DM). With this technology, they're better equipped to retain current players, attract new ones, and increase player value.

"We were very excited to choose the EBS product. That was a no-brainer for us and we went with virtually all the features that are offered. For us, it's changing all of our existing promotions by allowing us to execute them throughout the slot machines. In essence, we are targeting the exact people we want to target. We're rewarding and recognizing the exact people that deserve it. EBS ensures

our most valued players are enjoying the promotions and benefits we're offering them," Grimeau said.

EBS lets SIGA roll out a promotion and monitor it live from hundreds of miles away. They can push the promotion out, pull it back, or change it on the fly. EBS gives SIGA management incredible flexibility as well. Promotions can be run at one casino, several casinos, or even different banks and individual machines.

Most importantly, EBS has actually changed the mood on the slot floor.

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Tennille Grimeau
Director of Player Relations,
SIGA

"EBS is creating a winning atmosphere at the slot machines. With the sound, excitement, visuals, and bonusing, we just know it's really going to work for us. We anticipate it will increase loyalty as well. When a guest at a slot machine sees their neighbor qualify for a bonus they aren't receiving because they're not a member, it's a powerful incentive to join. And when a patron is not having the best day, we're still able to give them a good experience in the end because they're getting these bonuses. They're playing these fun games with their friends, participating in that community

environment within the casino, and they're having fun and being entertained. We're sure it's going to significantly increase our carded play and membership," Grimeau said.

Upping the Ante

SIGA has six properties across Saskatchewan with 52 tables now using Bally's TableView. SIGA previously had no formal rating process in place for table games. TableView table-management system and CMP allows them to track and rate their table players and provide them all of the rewards that go along with it, such as earning club points and tiered membership benefits. Table players are now on equal footing with the slot players and can even participate in hot seat draws and other features previously available only to slot players.

Table play has been in a slow decline over the past few years, but TableView is on track to remedy that.

“EBS is creating a winning atmosphere at the slot machines.”

Tennille Grimeau
Director of Player Relations,
SIGA



“We hope to bring those table players back to the table games by giving them player club points and all of the benefits of being a carded slot player,” said SIGA Live Games Supervisor Cliff LeDoux.

The properties that have had TableView installed for the past few months have already shown an increase in play, and he’s hoping that trend will continue going forward.

“I believe it’s going to allow us to separate ourselves from our competitors. We are offering table players club points for the first time, and that is something that is new to western Canada. I’m hoping it’s going to separate us from the pack and increase our table revenues as we move forward,” LeDoux said.

The Power of Partnership

There are many great systems products and services on the market for casino operators. While Bally’s products and services are excellent, there is a far more important element at play in the success of Bally’s systems customers – partnership. Large systems implementations are incredibly complex, especially those as extensive as those deployed at SIGA’s six properties. A strong partnership is key in meeting goals.

“Our relationship with Bally has really grown and developed over the last two years of working very closely with them, from the trainers that came out ahead of time to help us develop all of our new policies and procedures, to the support team they provide for every go-live. We’ve spent so much time with them over the last year that it really feels like family,” Grimeau said.

“The trainers were all great – very friendly and professional. You never felt like you were asking a stupid question. I still keep in contact with the trainer I had. He actually is in a different role now with Bally, but I can still shoot him an email and say ‘What’s your opinion on this?’”, Ross said.

Bally’s commitment to the success of their customers is reflected not only in the implementation, but also in the ongoing support and pledge to continually improve its products.

“The technical support has been really good as we’ve launched site to site. Bally had staff there to respond to any issues, minimizing downtime during the transition and in turn, minimizing the impact for our guests. The other nice thing is that Bally seems to be committed to constantly improving their products so you’re getting those evolutionary changes. As new things are developed, we get to benefit from them,” Garr said.

“You always expect the worst, but it went really well and we had no issues at all. We had great support. We had Bally techs, Western Canada Lottery techs, and SIGA IT people here. They all worked as a team. After the launch it was roughly four-and-a-half weeks of having the Bally people at six sites across Saskatchewan. They’ve just done a fantastic job and they’ve worked well with the local people. It’s been great,” Daniels said.

