

THE INNOVATION GROUP OF COMPANIES



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Market Conditions Emphasize the Importance of Third Party Feasibility Studies

By Stephen J. Szapor, Jr.

A few weeks ago, I contributed to a panel entitled, "Retaining and Understanding a Feasibility Study," at the [Pier Conference Group's semi-annual Tribal Casino & Hotel Development conference](#) in Las Vegas. As you would expect, there was extensive interest in the topic given the existing crisis in the financial markets.



Stephen J. Szapor, Jr.
President
The Innovation Group

In the current environment, lenders have shifted their mindset to one that considers only the most favorable and comprehensively researched opportunities. As a result, a feasibility study to assess (or reassess) a proposed project's viability is a must-have for every owner and management team considering an expansion, renovation or repositioning effort. By evaluating such components as sizing, amenities and competition, a feasibility study will help reveal whether or not to proceed with a project, and (if it is determined to be a "go") to help ascertain the likelihood of the project's success. [more »](#)

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PROJECT PROFILE: Mohawk Casino Sports Bar a Winner

The food and beverage recommendations made by Innovation Project Development (IPD) for the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino seem to all have been right on target, both on the culinary side and in the dining rooms and service areas. While IPD was engaged to consult on improvements for the property as a whole, the recent opening of Sticks Sports Bar and Restaurant is a great example of what the right F&B consulting can do for a casino operation. The overall objective of the project was to review all aspects of the casino's F&B operations, including



Robert F. Kelly, Jr.
President
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The Innovation Group of Companies Recent Conference Appearances

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and Construction Essentials, Las Vegas, Nevada [more »](#)
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Michael Soll on the ABC's of F&B branding

In the upcoming issue of *Casino Design*, The Innovation Group Executive Vice President Michael Soll will have an article published on the power of branding as it applies to F&B. In "Creating the signature restaurant," Michael explores the relevance of image issues such as whether to grow your own culinary talent from within or bring in a known chef with an established brand, a reputation.

Read more of Michael's article as soon as it's published, along with other Innovation Group of Companies-penned articles on our website at: <http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/articles.asp>

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equipment, training, processes and even physical location. According to IPD's President Bob Kelly, "Our job was to troubleshoot the whole operation and find ways to save money. As in all operations, it is important to know what your guests are looking for and to deliver on the promise of good service, hot food hot and cold food cold. We worked closely with design consultants and casino F&B operations staff to create the right environment that would be pleasing to the eye, we selected great menu items and delivered great recipes and equipment for a successful restaurant."



Quint Hanson
Director of
Food & Beverage
Innovation Project
Development

To create Sticks, Bob and Quint Hanson, IPD's director of food and beverage worked closely with Mohawk Casino's Food and Beverage Operations Manager Phil Sawyer to bring to life Phil's suggestion to utilize the bus greeting area as a restaurant operation. IPD took the concept and moved forward to turn this idea into reality, functioning as the owner's rep through the various processes of design and construction. Despite its 18 TV screens, expanded menu, and upscale ambiance, Sticks actually was developed with a minimum amount of remodeling of the existing space. And while the development of the 90-seat sports bar involved the elimination of the casino's lounge and deli, this relocation served to beneficially increase the seating capacity of the buffet. [more »](#)

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Dino Guilliano covers Latin America, country by country

The March 2007 *Global Gaming Business Magazine* published another in a series of articles on Latin American gaming by Dino Guilliano, The Innovation Group's director of Latin American Operations, based in our Costa Rica office. In this analysis, Dino points out that while many Latin American governments are trying to capitalize on the global boom in gaming, not all are taking the same approach. In "A Study in Contrasts," Dino explains in detail the differences in Chile's and Peru's governmental approaches to licensing, monitoring and taxing gaming in those countries. In the June 2008 issue of the *Global Gaming Business Magazine*, Dino had another article published, this time covering the current state of gaming in Central America. In his article, "Meet in the middle: An update on gaming in Central America," Dino focuses primarily on the reasons behind the tremendous gaming growth in Panama, as well as discussing how gaming regulation in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua is still less than adequate and fraught with unknowns. Find both of Dino's articles on our website in our archive of staff articles at: <http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/articles.asp>

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Paul Girvan sizes up the big challenges in the Canada gaming industry

Paul Girvan, The Innovation Group managing director had the cover story in *Global Gaming Business Magazine's* April 2008 issue with an overview of the current climate and challenges facing the Canadian gaming industry. In "Conflict in Canada: The Great White North faces new and more pronounced challenges than ever before," Paul provides a comprehensive look at the stage of growth in which the industry now finds itself. With the Canadian Government functioning as "owner, regulator, public policy trustee and political partisan" it finds itself challenged to raise and allocate revenue while remaining responsive to public gaming opposition. Paul likens the growth of the industry from being a "cute little chimp" that's become the "800-pound gorilla." Read the whole story with other Innovation Group penned articles on our website at:

<http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/articles.asp>



Matt Sodl has capital ideas on financial markets



Matt Sodl, president of Innovation Capital will be published in the upcoming issue of the annual *Casino Design* magazine. In "Financing in the credit crunch environment," Matt goes into detail over the causes of the current tight credit markets and explains how each class of debt is currently behaving in the gaming market. He also presents what he sees as the nature of the capital market going forward, with a modest increase in aggressiveness. Matt suggests that developers should proceed with caution, but that quality projects will find their financing. When it's published, you can read the whole overview on our website at:

<http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/articles.asp>

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Bob Kelly fits creativity into small spaces

Robert Kelly's keen design understanding was shown in an article he'll have published in the new issue of *Casino Design* magazine. Bob is president of Innovation Project Development and in "Designing the Small Casino: Making the Most Out of Space," Bob suggests a way of looking creatively at small casinos with space limitations to maximize profit. Bob covers such ideas as designing for today's technology which is having impacts on casino floor utilization, developing multiple uses for the same space at different times, and other ways to get more profitable use of existing space without major renovations. Read more of Bob's "outside-of-the-box" approaches at:

<http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/articles.asp>

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Steve Rittvo and company have been there, done that

Steve Rittvo, chairman of The Innovation Group of Companies, was profiled and interviewed in *Casino Enterprise Management* magazine's July issue, in a feature entitled "Where to go when you don't know." The focus of the feature is to serve as a "buyer's guide" for those times when owners and management feel it's time to consult an expert who's 'been there and done that.' Steve explains how the four affiliates of The Innovation Group of Companies are the go-to resource to tackle a wide array of advisory, management, financial, development and marketing issues. To accommodate his client needs, Steve says his secret has been to hire "industry superstars with extensive relationships, proven market knowledge and an appreciation for the client perspective." Read more from Steve in this feature in the July issue of *Casino Enterprise Management*.

http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/maint/docs/Expert_Advice_0708_CEM.pdf

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Scott Fisher says proceed with caution

At this year's Southern Gaming Summit in Biloxi, Scott Fisher, Ph.D., The Innovation Group's managing director, advised developers to build "in phases" and "slowly develop up." Despite the fact that Gulf Coast gaming revenue surpassed pre-Katrina levels, financial markets have lately been bearish on gaming stocks. As a panelist in the conference session, "Fighting for Finance," Scott illustrated that the proposed casinos hurt most were those with a condominium component. Scott's quotes were picked up in the Gulf Coast's *Sun Herald* article, "Casino financing turns tough due to slowdown," by journalist Mary Perez. "These are projects that really fell apart," Scott stated. "For every one project that makes sense down here, there are five that we looked at that don't." Read the whole story while it's still online at:

<http://www.sunherald.com/casinos/story/550675.html>

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Paul Girvan has the ticket on parking



In Barden's "Options are few for casino garage," Mark Belko of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* covers the arguments, pro and con, over a proposed Pittsburgh casino garage. The planned 3,800-space garage will be 10 stories tall, and while critics challenge its impact on the

skyline, Paul Girvan, managing director of The Innovation Group, offers a different opinion. "You have to build a parking garage for Easter Sunday," Paul stated. "You build it for your weekends, your peak day and your peak month." Paul justifies the amount of spaces with an extensive list of reasons in the article. In addition to customer preferences, Paul touches on considerations he normally evaluates such as number of slots and other amenities, proximity to the gaming floor, cars in transit, etc. Read the whole article while it's still posted online at:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08063/862074-336.stm>

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Studying if it will play in the Poconos

Impact reports have been filed by Pocono resorts vying for the two available hotel resort licenses in Pennsylvania. Fernwood Hotel and Resort in Bushkill engaged The Innovation Group to complete the gaming market assessments and traffic and environmental studies that were part of its comprehensive application. The Innovation Group's work for Fernwood is credited in "Pocono resorts make pitches for slots license," by Robert Swift in the *Scranton TimesTribune.com*. Also cited in the article is our market study of Pennsylvania casino locations, which led to the enactment of the 2004 slots law. Read the story while it's still posted online at:

http://www.thetimes-tribune.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19435530&BRD=2185&PAG=461&dept_id=415898&rfi=6

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Aztar values the opinion of Innovation Capital



Innovation Capital was engaged to render an opinion on the agreed-upon sale price of Casino Aztar, the Tropicana Casino and Resort's riverboat gaming and hotel property in Evansville, Indiana.

Valuations and fairness opinions are an area of specialization for Innovation Capital. A recent release on Business Newswire described the \$245 Million sale to Eldorado Resorts, LLC in detail. Read the

whole story in "Tropicana Entertainment enters into definitive agreement to sell Casino Aztar," while it's still posted online here:

http://www.hotelinteractive.com/index.asp?article_id=10256&page_id=5000

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Bob Kelly keeps the channels open

Bob Kelly, president of Innovation Project Development is quoted in a *Casino Enterprise Management's* article covering the opening of the new MGM Grand at Foxwoods. In "MGM Grand at Foxwoods: A sublime escape" by Krista Reiner, the article spotlights the architecture, design and construction aspects of the resort. Bob comments on the

importance of the communications channels during the process, especially in a situation such as Foxwoods, where the challenge was to "simultaneously add a program to the scope and caliber of the MGM Grand expansion while maintaining the daily operations of a facility the capacity and volume of Foxwoods." Bob credits the project's completion on time and on budget due to the "exceptional lineup and a casino/tribal management team well versed in the design and construction process." Read the entire article in the July issue of *Casino Enterprise Management*:

http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/maint/docs/MGM_at_Foxwoods_0708.pdf

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MGM Grand at Foxwoods making headlines



The opening of the new \$700 million MGM Grand at Foxwoods in May culminated a strategic move by its owners, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal

Nation, to position itself in carefully chosen directions. Not only does this new resort offer fabulous new gaming space, but the 825 new luxury hotel rooms are planned hand-in-hand with the new conference space and other amenities to balance maximum weekend and weekday occupancy. In "Doubling down with a sexy new convention magnet," Mark Peters of Courant.com gives a detailed description of the

new facility that includes 115,000 square feet of new meeting space and a 4,000-seat Broadway-style theater that can also be used for meetings. The Innovation Group of Companies began working on this expansion project years ago, working closely with MPTN top management. We studied the composition of visitors to Foxwoods, and Innovation Marketing did several series of focus groups to analyze different demographics to see what which types of restaurants and other amenities would make Foxwoods even more appealing. Innovation Group did market assessments to determine what the numbers would support, and Innovation Project Development provided owner's rep construction management oversight for much of the expansion. Find Mark Peter's article while it's still online here:

<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/courant/access/1441339631.html?>

[dids=1441339631:1441339631&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+6%2C+2008&author=MARK+PETERS&pub=Hartford+Courant&edition=&startpage=E.1&desc=D+OUBLING+DOWN+WITH+A+SEXY+NEW+CONVENTION+MAGNET](http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/courant/access/1441339631.html?dids=1441339631:1441339631&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&type=current&date=Mar+6%2C+2008&author=MARK+PETERS&pub=Hartford+Courant&edition=&startpage=E.1&desc=D+OUBLING+DOWN+WITH+A+SEXY+NEW+CONVENTION+MAGNET)



Branding an expansion

The expansion of Foxwoods means more than an increase in gaming floor space, the number of hotel rooms and amenities. It's an innovative partnership of two giant gaming and hospitality industry brands. As Glenn Haussman puts it in his article, "Gaming goliaths unite," on *HotelInteractive.com*: "For MGM MIRAGE Corp, it gets the company into a new market for its hotel management division. And Foxwoods' marketers will get access to a brand name that more fully resonates in the consumer mindset across the globe."



For Foxwoods, the expansion was part of a strategic move to appeal to different demographic segments as well as target the lucrative conference and meetings market. Read this article while it's still posted online at: http://www.hotelinteractive.com/hi_index.asp?page_id=5000&article_id=9927

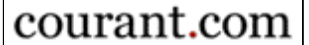
The Restaurants are their own story

International Yacht Vacation & Charters also has been running articles on the new resort expansion, with special emphasis on the high-end amenities. In their article, "MGM Grand at Foxwoods now accepting reservations for soon-to-open luxury hotel," the publication lists the MGM Grand's celebrity restaurants such as Michael Schlow's Alta Strada, Tom Colicchio's critically acclaimed Craftsteak and the landmark New York eatery, Junior's. The article also says the new property will have a 5,500-square-foot outdoor swimming pool and a 21,000-square-foot spa, featuring 12 treatment rooms. Shopping at the new resort expansion features stores and boutiques such as an authorized Apple reseller, Dunhill and Bally's. Read this article while it's still posted online at: <http://new.yachtchartersmagazine.com/read/510167.htm>



Hotel Interactive also reports that Foxwoods has appointed veteran chef James Wierzelewski as the new executive chef at both Foxwoods Resort Casino and the MGM Grand at Foxwoods. Wierzelewski has an international reputation with 20 years of experience working in France, Belgium, Thailand, Malaysia, Micronesia and the United States. In addition Wierzelewski has been awarded several prestigious awards including the Golden Siam Award for best French Restaurant (Ma Maison) in Bangkok in 1993; and in Kuala Lumpur, he received the Bonlac Great Chefs of Asia Award, naming him one of the Top Twelve Chefs of Asia in 1996. His most recent success was the restaurant, "Vix", at the Hotel Victor in South Beach, Miami, which Zagat awarded "Best New Restaurant/Newcomer 2005." Read more about Chef Wierzelewski while the article is still posted online at: http://www.hotelinteractive.com/hi_articles.asp?func=print&article_id=10713

And the *Hartford Courant* also reported details of another dining option In "Shrine to open at Foxwoods MGM." Shrine, an Asian inspired nightclub, lounge and dining venue occupies a 20,000-square foot space that includes an outdoor terrace overlooking one of the resort's pools. Read this article while it's still posted online at: http://www.courant.com/entertainment/dining/hc-shrine.artmar19_0_7038085.story



Getting it built on time and on budget

The architecture, design and construction aspects of the project are covered in the July issue of *Casino Enterprise Management* magazine. Among those interviewed in the article was Bob Kelly, president of Innovation Project Development, who comments on the exceptional lines of communication that existed during the construction process. The 2 million-square foot expansion had to be constructed with a minimum of interference to Foxwoods daily operation. Bob credits the team that was put together to manage the project and the experience of the casino management and tribal leader. Read the entire article in the July issue of *Casino Enterprise Management*. http://www.theinnovationgroup.com/maint/docs/MGM_at_Foxwoods_0708.pdf



A showbiz opening

Even the performers who take the stage at the resorts grand opening and beyond are big news. Gloria Estefan performed in a three-day concert series in the 4,000-seat MGM Grand Theater. The sold-out concert series is described a hit for all in attendance In "Gloria Estefan opens MGM Grand at Foxwoods," by Tony Schillaci & Don Church of *Resident.com*.



According to *Ticketnews.com*, booked for later in the year are Cyndi Lauper, Bob Dylan, Larry the Cable Guy, Sarah Brightman and the Steve Miller Band/Joe Cocker. The MGM Grand Theater becomes Foxwoods' main entertainment venue, complementing the 1,400-seat Fox Theater. *Ticketnews.com* reports that Foxwoods expects to book "as many as 120 acts a year into the MGM Grand, which can be reconfigured to a more intimate 2,200 capacity if

needed." Read these articles while they're still posted online at: <http://www.theresident.com/2008/06/11/gloria-estefan-opens-mgm-grand-at-foxwoods/> and <http://www.ticketnews.com/Kanye-West-Bob-Dylan-tickets-onsale06811554>

While each publication's appreciation for the new resort is focused on its own readers, a fuller description of the amenities can be found on the MGM Grand at Foxwoods' own website. There you'll find more detail on highlights from the articles above such as: -The spa has 12 treatment rooms, a swimming pool, men's and women's Jacuzzis, and features an array of massages, body treatments and facials. -The 4,000-seat Performance Theater features state-of-the-art acoustics and ergonomically designed seating. Plus there is a nightclub and four other lounges. The website also goes into more detail about the new restaurants at the MGM Grand, even providing profiles of some of the chefs. <http://www.mgmatfoxwoods.com/>

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Wildwood Casino hopes to cure Cripple Creek



In "Firm hopes new, glitzy casino can win over Cripple Creek," published in Colorado Springs' *Gazette.com*, journalist Andrew Wineke describes how the site of the new Wildwood Casino has gone from "the favorite hangout for the local herd of wild donkeys" to "an imposing palace of brick, wood and steel." Wildwood Casino has recently completed its \$80 million expansion, which added nearly 700 slot machines, three restaurants and five floors of covered parking. Innovation Capital acted as placement agent and financial advisor on \$75 million of the debt and equity capital that was raised to capitalize American Gaming

Group.

Hopes are that the new Wildwood Casino will grow the market by making Cripple Creek a more attractive destination for visitors. Read more about the new Wildwood Casino in this article while it's still posted online at:

http://www.gazette.com/articles/casino_36677_article.html/wildwood_creek.html

Another story on the new property is, "City of Cripple Creek hopes new casino boosts economy." This new report, by Rachel Hoffenberg of *KOAA.com* quotes Cripple Creek's mayor, Dan Baader. "From what I've seen, the success of Black Hawk and Central City was building larger casinos so people would have more opportunities," stated Baader. "Nothing's been new here for 12 years." Baader added that the opening comes at a much needed time for the city's economy. Read this report while it's still posted on online at:

http://www.koaa.com/aaaa_top_stories/x1331638177

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NEW HIRES

Gail McDonald, Director of Construction Administration, Innovation Project Development

Gail McDonald has joined the staff of Innovation Project Development as Director of Construction Administration. Expanding the scope of IPD services, Gail will provide an experienced approach to project coordination and construction administration with a keen focus on building a strong team between client and consultants for successful project development and implementation.

Before joining Innovation Project Development, Gail worked with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe as Project Director for the Tribe's casino project in Monticello, New York where she coordinated activities related to the design, development and operation of a \$650 million dollar project, with duties ranging from contract administration to financial management and serving as liaison with project partners and developers, architects and design consultants, financial and legal advisors and federal, state and local government officials.

Previously, Gail gained considerable gaming experience while employed at the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino as the Director of Finance. In this position she participated as a member of the executive operations team in strategically improving and enhancing casino operations and planning for the future expansion of the casino.

Gail has developed a depth of experience in areas that will provide a range of benefits to Innovation Project Development clients, including project development and coordination, contract negotiations, community planning and political relations, staffing analysis and facilities management. Gail has developed capital projects in the health and social services field including a comprehensive health and social facility, 60-bed licensed chronic care facility, residential long term care facility, licensed day care centers, adolescent group home, family violence shelter and transitional housing.

Gail has a degree in Liberal Arts from Cazenovia College, a Bachelors of Arts in Sociology and Social Work from St. Lawrence University, graduate course work in management from St. Lawrence, a certificate in Gerontology, and is currently enrolled with Cornell University in the Master Certification in Essentials of Hospitality Management program.

Gail is a Mohawk and a member of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. She and her husband Richard are proud parents of 5 children and reside in Akwesasne, New York.

Watch upcoming newsletters for profiles of additional IPD new hires - Tom Baird, Charles Suit and Edward Smoke.

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NIGA 2008, San Diego, California

Matt Sodi, President, Innovation Capital

"Exploring Options in Tribal Finance"

Matt's presentation explored various options available for tribal financings, especially those relating to gaming enterprises or utilizing gaming cash flow as security for other tribal projects. He covered recent trends in the lending marketplace, looking at new lenders, market comfort and how the industry has changed. Matt also discussed economic development trends available with expanded gaming opportunities such as infrastructure financing and social program financing.

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2008 Canadian Gaming Summit, Montreal, Quebec

Steve Rittvo, Chairman, The Innovation Group of Companies - Moderator

"The Top 5 Things Gaming Operators Should Assess (or Reassess) in Today's Economic Climate"

Steve outlined and moderated this panel, which reviewed the most important considerations management should study, address and anticipate in today's economic climate to maximize efficiency, obtain the greatest return on investment and secure the bottom line.



Paul Girvan, Managing Director, The Innovation Group - Moderator

"The Value of Amenities"

Paul moderated this session, which discussed today's casino and resort amenity options. The panel covered how each amenity has the potential to generate revenue for a property and how the property should be sized appropriately in Canada's unique gaming market. The panel also covered how amenities are financed today, the use of amenities to offset the advent of new competition and other considerations for owner's from the lender's point of view.

Matt Sodi, President, Innovation Capital

"Financing & Strategic Alternatives for Middle Market Canadian Gaming Operators"

Matt's presentation on this panel covered a variety of alternatives for middle market companies to capitalize their balance sheets without access to the high yield market. Within the presentation, he described how the middle market tends to provide a steadier stream of capital for borrowers.

Bob Kelly, President, Innovation Project Development

"Reinventing Your Property in a Tight Financial Market"

Bob's presentation at the CGS covered how smaller renovations and retrofits can become opportunities for market repositioning when financial capital does not flow as easily as it has in the past. He also discussed how larger property expansions may still be appropriate and evaluated both large-scale expansions and smaller amenity upgrades from a planning, design and construction perspective.

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Southern Gaming Summit, Biloxi, Mississippi

Dr. Scott Fisher, Managing Director, The Innovation Group

"Fighting for Finance"

Scott presented to the SGS on the investment outlook for the Gulf Coast casino industry and the challenges facing developers of different property configurations. He posed that developments with a condominium were having the hardest struggle with financing and suggested ways for developers to proceed in today's market.

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Pier's Tribal Casino & Hotel Development: Finance Design and Construction Essentials, Las Vegas, Nevada

Stephen J. Szapor, Jr., President, The Innovation Group

"Retaining and Understanding a Feasibility Study"

Steve presented views on feasibility studies and their benefits for providing clarity about the success of a project, especially in unstable financial markets. His presentation included what feasibility studies entail, who does them, what the client should receive when contracting for one and what the investor is looking for in requesting one.



Robert F. Kelly, Jr., President, Innovation Project Development

"Establishing Your Team of Professionals: From Design to the Grand Opening"

Bob moderated this panel that explored what a tribe should expect in the process of hiring outside professionals to bring a development out of the ground. The panel covered team creation and how the team puts plans and financing together, including designers, builders and financial partners.

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G2E Asia, Macau, Peoples Republic of China

Dr. Scott Fisher, Managing Director, The Innovation Group - Moderator



"The Macau Market: How Much is Too Much?"

Scott moderated this panel covering the explosive growth in the Macau gaming market. Because so many gaming operations have come on line in such a short period of time, his panel discussed such topics as supply and demand, balances and imbalances, the potential for non-gaming demand, the skill and cost of the labor pool, the use of technology and more.

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Market Conditions Emphasize the Importance of Third Party Feasibility Studies - continued

A typical feasibility assessment will explain the methodology and key assumptions used to develop the findings, provide a description of the environment (competitive, legislative, etc.) that may impact the project, develop the conclusions that encourage a go/no-go decision, and make recommendations regarding key issues, new opportunities, and potential project sizing among others. A determination can also be made if a follow-up deliverable such as a detailed market assessment, an economic impact study or a project valuation is also required.

In addition to increased financial sector demand for such up-front analysis, there are several other reasons to engage a reliable third-party feasibility consultant in today's market. Not only can a respected industry specialist provide the external validation required for significant investments, but they can also be of value to those with particularly aggressive schedules and budgets, and for those who want to ensure that potential owner/management bias regarding project outcomes is removed from the equation. Additionally, the long term success of a project is enhanced when potential strengths or weaknesses are identified from the outset. A well-executed feasibility study can include an investigative process so thorough (qualitative and quantitative assessments, peer group comparison and analysis, third party research and industry and company analysis, etc), it may reveal project inclusion opportunities that the owner may not have even considered.

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Mohawk Casino Sports Bar a Winner - continued

In "Casino getting a new eatery," an article by Chris Garifo in the *Watertown Daily Times*, Stick is credited as being a major milestone in the first phase of the casino's \$75 million expansion. When complete, the Mohawk Casino's expansion will have added a 200-room hotel, an expanded gaming floor, retail shops and such F&B improvements as a fine-dining restaurant, a nightclub, a food court and a new production kitchen. In his article, Garifo points out that the décor of Sticks includes collectibles and memorabilia donated by members of the Akwesasne community that commemorate the local history of lacrosse. Lacrosse is a sport deeply rooted in Akwesasne culture and one of the large-screen TVs will be dedicated to it.



The development of Sticks Sports Bar is the most recent of IPD's recommended changes to the F&B operations at the Mohawk Casino. According to Bob Kelly, other Food and Beverage improvements included changes to the food-ordering and loss-control systems as well as several changes to the kitchens. "Kitchen changes included the addition of storage and front-line food prep equipment, which made the line more efficient to operate," explained Bob. "New recipes were developed and new training programs were instituted to promote better delivery and more consistent food to the guests. Staff reviews were undertaken to better understand each employee and their strengths, so to make a better work place and more successful restaurants."

Behind the scenes, IPD's in-depth analysis of all aspects of F&B led to modifications that had a number of significant impacts. The result has been cost savings that are so significant, that combined with the increased revenue from the reworked venues, F&B has gone from being a loss leader to a new source of profit for the casino. Quint commented that the new "Just Around The Corner" Grab-N-Go Snack Stop has been a major contributor to the F&B revenue picture. Both Bob and Quint cite an open-minded, cooperative management and tribal representatives as the key in making the changes a success. Said Quint of the project's outcome, "It worked because they wanted it to."

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For more information on The Innovation Group of Companies, visit www.InnovationGroupOfCompanies.com or contact one of the offices below.

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