



**Jan Jones Blackhurst,**  
Executive Vice President Public Policy  
& Corporate Responsibility

Jan Jones Blackhurst is a long-time political and business leader who has left an indelible imprint on the lives of millions of people. She spent most of the 1990s as one of the most popular mayors in Las Vegas' history. She then joined Caesars Entertainment, where she and her teams developed the industry's first Responsible Gaming practices and create a diverse and inclusive workplace, advancing environmental stewardship, advocate for important social issues and give millions of dollars to individuals, families and communities in need.

## Acting responsibly: walking the walk – not just talking the talk



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Jan Jones Blackhurst is to deliver her keynote address at the IAGA Summit in New York and moderate a session on employee training and awareness. G3 discussed the importance and relevance of these topics ahead of the event

**All casinos trumpet their responsible gambling credentials – but is the industry doing enough to protect its own future by providing robust, credible programmes, dedicating enough resources etc., – or are operators just doing the bare minimum to comply with laws?**

Caesars Entertainment was the first gaming company in the industry to develop Responsible Gaming guidelines more than 25 years ago, and it remains a top priority at Caesars. Our program comprises research, innovative technology and practical tools and comprehensive training for all staff. We're also actively seeking new innovations that demonstrate an even deeper commitment.

That said, different companies have different levels of commitment to responsible gambling. But over the

last decade, I believe the global gaming industry has experienced a sea change in its approach to developing a sustainable player base and minimising the risks associated with excessive gambling. We truly have advanced beyond a compliance-driven approach to one that internalises and reflects a responsible gambling ethos. Operators by and large understand that commercial viability and social responsibility are not mutually exclusive, and the sustainability and legitimacy of their business hinges in part on how we address and promote responsible gaming. Responsible gaming affects so many aspects of our operations – including recruiting top-flight talent and maximizing employee engagement – that any operator today who looks at responsible gambling as simply a compliance function is missing the big picture and missing out on much of the value that accrues to a company from a robust, dedicated responsible gambling programme.

**How can operators influence in a positive way the perceptions of the public that gambling can be an entertaining and fun activity if done so responsibly?**

The global popularity of casino gambling among adults and its proliferation around the world is evidence that the public does indeed view a night out at a casino as a fun and entertaining activity. One of the best things operators can do to reinforce these perceptions is to promote their products and services in a responsible manner. Among other things, that means avoiding marketing to those too young to gamble, and depicting the gambling experience as one where entertainment and fun are central. It also means taking some of your marketing dollars and devoting them to messaging that encourages responsible gambling.

For example, in 2002, Caesars launched the industry's first broadcast campaign solely devoted to promoting responsible gambling and continues to air this campaign today. Our experience with these ads has shown us that customers respect those messages, and

we know from research that they can enhance the reputation of your brands without negatively affecting perceptions about your casinos as fun places to play. Caesars also developed an advertising and marketing code almost two decades ago that continues to inform and guide our business team. We implemented this code absent of pressure from the public or from regulators – we simply recognised it would be good for our business, and the right thing to do. In that respect, it's no different than our pioneering programs on responsible gambling that we began implementing in the 1980s.

**How visible should an operator be in promoting their responsible message to the public – is there such as thing as too much exposure, forcing a message too hard?**

Caesars has taken some good-natured ribbing from the problem gambling services community over the years in the United States because of where and how we provide the national toll-free helpline number – it's a feature of just about all of our points of customer contact, and it's not that unusual for a customer to call the helpline and ask instead about our buffets or hotel reservations. But we don't know when a customer might make that often tough decision to reach out for help. We want that number to be front and center whenever they decide to take that step.

It is true that responsible gambling programmes must strike a balance between promoting responsible behavior and not be so intrusive that they disrupt the enjoyment of the experience for the overwhelming majority of adults who gamble responsibly.

Customers want to be treated as responsible adults, and they want to make their own decisions about their gambling. So there is a danger of, as you say, forcing a message too hard. There's also a danger of mixed messages – responsible gambling ad campaigns have to be responsible gambling ad campaigns, not subtle or unintended messages to "come gamble with us."

As an example, Caesars had to edit its responsible gambling TV ad prior to airing it because research indicated that the image of playing cards fanned out on the felt of a table distracted from the responsible gambling message. These dangers aren't insurmountable, of course, if your responsible gambling program is derived from a clear, well-understood philosophy and position statement and is fully integrated across the business.

**How do you communicate your message of social responsibility to a younger generation of players – the millennials – who aren't subscribed to the traditional media channels?**

Through the use of social media channels and our blog we are connecting with younger millennial customers. Our Citizenship channels on Facebook and Twitter are updated on a regular basis and promote our corporate and social responsibility activities. We post on average two blogs each month that highlight our responsible business practices. For Earth Month, we ran a "Did you Know" campaign that included daily posts on our social media channels and

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The International Association of Gaming Advisors (IAGA) will hold its 36th annual International Gaming Summit May 30-June 1, 2017 at the JW Marriott Essex House, New York, US.

# Events

IAGA SUMMIT  
New York 2017

Jan serves as a director of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce and the Women's Campaign Fund in Washington, D.C. She serves on several boards including the Las Vegas Stadium Authority and the Nevada Resort Association, and is also a member of the Women's Leadership Board at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Jan has received many recognitions and accolades including the Diversity in PR Award from PR Week, the Annual Black Images Honors from the 15th Annual Soul Festival, the Dom Pérignon Award of Excellence from UNLVino and the Diversity Hero Award from PR Week.

In early 2015, Jan was honored as the PR News CSR Professional of the Year and was named by the Las Vegas Business Press as one of its "Women Who Mean Business." In 2014, she was one of the first women to be inducted into the American Gaming Association (AGA) Gaming Hall of Fame. Jan has been honored by the American Diabetes Association and the "I Have A Dream" Foundation, and she was named Humanitarian of the Year in 1998 by the Muscular Dystrophy Association. In 2005 she was honored by the Women of Diversity in their project "100 Years of Influence – The Role of Women Shaping the First 100 Years of Las Vegas."

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included facts and statistics highlighting the social and environmental impact Caesars has made on our properties and communities.

**What should the message be to this millennial audience, since we've already seen that they're already disengaged with the casino-going experience?**

Our goal is to effectively communicate our responsible gaming ethic to a variety of audiences, regardless of where or how they engage in our products. The message is always the same: We are committed to promoting responsible gambling, and we only want people who play for fun and entertainment to engage with our products. If a guest is not engaging in our products in a responsible manner, we are ready and able to help them.

**Can operators inform, educate, be responsible and at the same time appeal to players to come and gamble? Can the same message deliver all these things - or do we need lots of different messages, which could contradict each other?**

This is a very important issue, and I alluded to it earlier. When we first began conceptualising our dedicated broadcast ad campaign on responsible gambling, we did focus groups with customers about content and messaging. One of the things they told us loud and clear was that any "come gamble" message undercut a responsible gambling message. That's why in our broadcast ads devoted to encouraging responsible gambling we don't use a lot of imagery associated with gambling.

This is also an instance where Caesars Marketing and Advertising Code plays a major role. This Code shows that you can deliver effective gambling marketing campaigns in a responsible manner without detracting from the entertainment appeal.

**How involved in "solution" should operators be? The setting of time limits - money limits - keeping records - taking frequent breaks - exit strategies - knowing where and how to get help - counselling etc. Where do the responsibilities of the operator begin and end?**

First and foremost, our programmes are responsible gambling programmes, not problem gambling programmes. Our employees aren't in a position to identify and diagnose mental disorders – that's a job for experienced clinicians. What we can do is provide excellent customer service and respond to concerns that a customer may be gambling irresponsibly. In fact, much of our in-casino responsible gambling efforts involve leveraging customer service skills and expertise. We never want to tell a customer he or she might have a gambling problem; we want them to have tools and resources available that can help them gamble responsibly. That said, we do have procedures in place that can result in our unilateral decision to deny a patron gambling privileges. Again, though, these decisions are not based on any kind of "diagnosis" of a gambling problem. We are excited about emerging technologies that may help players set and keep limits, and we continue to evaluate them as part of our efforts to continually improve and innovate in the ways we address responsible gambling.

**How impactful on reputation and revenues is the lack of enhanced social responsibility programmes, as opposed to the doing something substantial to address the issue today?**

We believe it is our responsibility to our guests and employees to be a good corporate citizen. Our Code of Commitment has been guiding the conduct of our business since 2000. The Code of Commitment includes our responsible business practices with our employees, our communities and the environment.

**Who should be informing the curriculums that form responsible and problem gambling programmes - and how involved should operators be in the training, education and awareness of these issues?**

We have consulted with leading treatment professionals and researchers on problem and responsible gambling in forming our programmes since their inception. In the 1980s, that meant working with gambling behavior pioneers like Henry Lesieur and Julian Taber. Today, that means working with a new generation of clinicians and scholars on innovations in training, policy, and procedures.

These collaborations have been invaluable. There are many stakeholders in responsible gambling, and we all bring expertise to the table. Responsible gambling programmes must be informed by the latest research and clinical insights, as well as by the real life nuts and bolts of operating a casino. They must also be regularly reviewed and evaluated, both internally and externally, to ensure continuous improvement.

**Spending and investing in prevention is always difficult to quantify, since by its nature, it yields few statistics. How should operators justify investment in social responsibility when it's so difficult to measure the results?**

Caesars' corporate responsibility and corporate social responsibility programs began out of a desire to be a good corporate citizen and a recognition of our commitment to employees, guests and our planet. We have found that the caring culture has benefits that have come back to help the company through an engaged workforce and by communicating our citizenship programs to guests.

The happier and more supported our employees feel, the better our team is able to provide exceptional level of service for our guests. The correlation between

satisfied employees resulting in satisfied guests is consistently proven through input from our regular surveys – nearly 1,000,000 in 2015 alone.

Guest awareness of Caesars' Citizenship programs increased 4.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2016. Customer research shows that our guests care how Caesars manages its environmental impact.

Each year, more guests say Caesars commitment to CodeGreen influences their choice to stay and play at Caesars.

**Is the industry currently on the right path and only needs to invest more, shout more about it's good work - or is there a need for radical intervention - new technologies, new programmes, new initiatives?**

As the pioneer of Responsible Gaming, we are always monitoring the science and literature on the topic and are always open to innovations that can improve our programs. Caesars has taken many pioneering steps, like our national self-exclusion program, our science-based training on customer interactions, and our national RG promotion via TV. Also every property has an RG Committee ensuring compliance with our RG policies and procedures.

**Are there lessons that can be learned from adjacent industries, automotive, alcohol, tobacco etc., in the management of consumer trust and management of crisis situations should they occur?**

We constantly keep an eye on other industries, particularly the industries that are tied to our business. Through our Responsible Supplier program, for example, we are closely monitoring the industries and our vendors to ensure the companies we do business with align with the corporate responsibility philosophy at Caesars Entertainment.

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Prior to joining Caesars in 1999, Jan served two terms as Mayor of Las Vegas. She was the city's first female chief executive and one of its most popular mayors, having been re-elected in 1995 by a 72 percent margin. While in office, Jan presided over an unprecedented period of economic, social and cultural expansion. She spearheaded a massive growth and redevelopment effort in the city's once-neglected downtown neighborhood and was among the first mayors in the country to advocate for LGBT rights and issues as early as 1991.