

# Internet gaming is job one with Williams Interactive

Williams Interactive formed in July 2012 to take advantage of emerging digital distribution channels and technologies to deliver a premium portfolio of WMS Gaming casino games in free-play and real-money formats to the global iGaming industry.

In real-money jurisdictions, Williams Interactive integrates its **Remote Game Server** with online casinos to provide their players a catalog of slot games on desktop, tablet and mobile devices. Williams Interactive's real-money solution, which will be implemented in the regulated U.S. markets of Delaware and New Jersey in 2014, is currently live across Europe with many games in its portfolio already player favorites.

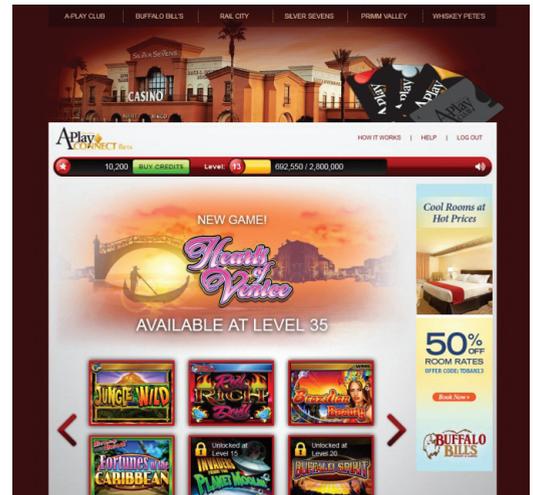
From a free-play standpoint, Williams Interactive provides **Play4Fun Network**, a white-label social gaming platform that provides land-based casinos the ability to build an engaged online player community ahead of fully legalized online gaming in their jurisdiction(s).

One of the Williams Interactive executives overseeing this expansion is **Bob Hays**, vice president and managing director, U.S. and emerging markets. To date, Hays has successfully established critical alliances supporting online products/services, led the continuing development of Williams' casino platform and most recently was responsible for Williams selection as a supplier to the Delaware Lottery. He recently took time to answer questions from *Casino Journal* Editor Paul Doocey about Williams Interactive, its products, future plans and the current state of iGaming in the U.S. Here are some excerpts from his answers.

*What attributes set Williams Interactive's free and for-pay iGaming products apart from the competition?*

**Hays:** In both cases, it's a combination of content and experience. We provide our customers best-in-class solutions tailored to meet the iGaming goals of their operation, anchored by our deep library of player-favorite slot games.

In free play, which applies to the majority of the casinos in the U.S., our Play4Fun Network leverages best-in-class marketing capabilities and proven social gaming mechanics to provide exceptional retention that allows casinos to build an engaged online player community. We're the only company taking a proven social game (one of the top five social casinos in the world) and white-labeling it for casinos, and we've wrapped it in next-generation marketing tools that



## Play4Fun Network

enable inexpensive, targeted marketing opportunities to maximize the benefits a casino can see from their free-play offering.

In for-pay iGaming, our games have been live since the beginning of 2013 with major European gaming sites, which has provided us great experience in the delivery of games through different digital channels, most recently through the introduction of our real-money gaming mobile platform. We're able to combine this operational experience with our best-in-class insights into player behaviors and preferences, both online and offline, to provide a premium solution to gaming sites in current and emerging online gaming markets.

*Why should a land-based casino consider the "freemium" iGaming model? What benefits does a free-play iGaming solution offer a brick-and-mortar casino operation?*

**Hays:** We believe traditional casinos can see many benefits from offering a free-play iGaming solution, perhaps most importantly that they can begin to build an engaged online player community around their brand. Every statistic we see, either in the industry or from our own experiences in social gaming, tells us that current land-based casino players are doing two things in ever-increasing numbers: playing games and browsing the web on tablets and smartphones, and playing social games (and more importantly, social casino games) between trips to the land-based casino floor. According to the 2013 Active Gambler Profile Report from WMS Gaming, over 70 percent of the most valuable casino players play social games already!



**Bob Hays** is vice president and managing director, U.S. and emerging markets for Williams Interactive LLC, a Scientific Games Company, where he leads new business development, marketing, commercial sales and B2B product strategy. Previously, Hays served as executive director at WMS Gaming, leading the new business development and commercial sales efforts across multiple North American jurisdictions.

Land-based casinos now have the ability to offer these experiences under their brand.

Specifically, casinos could benefit from a free-play offering in a number of ways:

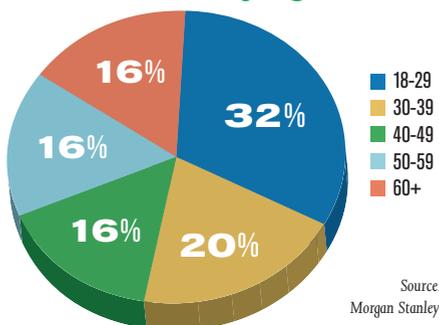
- Increase revenue from current players—One way in which players can play and progress faster in our Play4Fun Network game is through the purchase of virtual coins. These purchases are already being made via Facebook games and other non-casino entertainment options; by offering a social game online that monetizes, you are now in a position to snag some of that incremental entertainment budget from those players between their trips to your casino floor. And while the game monetizes your player base, we have thus far seen this is only incremental to that player's total worth to the land-based casino.
- Reach younger players with your brand—Free play add new players to your player database, with many of the new mobile users and social game players in the coveted 21- to 41-year-old range.
- Increase your ability to market to players between casino trips—Our Play4Fun Network allows for manual or rules-based marketing messages and offers that deploy based on player information and behavior in real-time, low-cost manners. With our current deployments averaging over 30 minutes per player, per day on the site, at an average of 2.5 sessions per day, there is ample additional time with players connected to your brand online—time you can take advantage of with the proper tools to drive incremental visits to your casino floor from those players.

*How can a free-play iGaming site prepare a brick-and-mortar operator for a regulated, for-pay online gaming future? How easy is it to convert a free iGaming site into a for-pay operation?*

**Hays:** There is a lot more that goes into real-money iGaming than free-play variants alone; not just from a technological

standpoint but from a liability standpoint and a marketing skills standpoint. If you're in a jurisdiction that currently has no legalized online gaming, then offering a free-play variant will at least allow you to begin building an online community around your brand that you could one day convert to real-money gaming if allowed. Without some sort of sticky offering, like a free-play site, land-based casinos aren't using the best tools available to begin building an online brand identity for use in a future real-money gaming state.

### Social iGamers By Age



*Operators are on the lookout for any product or service that helps attract and keep younger clientele playing on both the online and brick-and-mortar gaming floor. How do free and for-pay iGaming help them meet this goal?*

**Hays:** Younger demographics are currently playing social games, including social casino games, at very high rates. These younger generations are also very technologically advanced, with high penetrations of smartphone and tablet use. Offering a well-rounded free-play iGaming solution, that provides the type of games they already play in the device or platform of their choice, is a great way to begin introducing those desired demographics to your casino brand. Once you engage them, you can pull the marketing levers available through this digital connection to drive those players onto your casino floor.



Game Server Mobile Platform

*What are the staffing requirements for a free iGaming site? Is there a way to perform these tasks without adding dramatically to employee headcount?*

**Hays:** Again, it varies based on the goals of the casino, but one could easily benefit from a free-play iGaming site with little or no incremental head count. Our solution in particular is designed to be a truly turn-key solution, where we work with the casino through pre- and post-launch consulting to setup the automated marketing that they'd like the platform to run; following that, updating content on the desktop and mobile platforms of the Play4Fun Network takes barely any time at all and can easily be rolled into the ongoing work done by the current marketing staff.

*How do you view the evolution of the free-play iGaming model in the U.S. thus far? Is there still room for more growth? What impact will for-pay iGaming have on it?*

**Hays:** The evolution has been slower than we'd like to see when it comes to land-based operations embracing the potential from free-play offerings; the continued runaway success of Facebook-based social casino games continues to grow, especially through mobile and tablet channels, and we'd expect to see that trend continue. That being said, we think that the biggest room for growth is through a product like our Play4Fun Network, leveraging a casino's largest resource (their player population) to provide an experience that research shows casino players are already enjoying between trips to a casino floor. There's a massive opportunity for land-based casinos to benefit from their own free-play iGaming offering.

Will real money iGaming impact free-play? Perhaps. But we feel there's certainly a place for both free-play and for-pay iGaming to coexist, and are evolving our solutions accordingly to ensure that our product remains relevant and as entertaining as possible for players, whatever their preference for gaming entertainment may be. 🌐