

What's In a Title?

THE FACILITIES DIRECTOR



When you hear of someone with the title of Slot Director, you may have a fairly good idea of what they do and some of their job responsibilities. The same may hold true regarding the job titles of Director of

Table Games, or Director of Finance. However when the title of Director of Facilities comes up, having a sound understanding of their responsibilities is not always the case. I hope this article can shed some light onto this subject.

To get some insight into the daily life of this position I reached out to Gary Strawbridge, who is the Executive Director of Facilities for the Sycuan Casino in El Cajon, California, and has been with them for more than 4 1/2 years. Prior to this he was with the Tachi Palace Hotel and Casino, as well as Pechanga Resort & Casino. Gary is a long time California resident, and has his Bachelor's degree from Long Beach State University.

G&L: Tell us about your property.

GS: Sycuan Casino is owned and operated by the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaah Nation. The Casino Operation consists of a 2,000 slot gaming floor with 35 table games, a 19 table poker room, and Off Track betting. We have a bingo facility upstairs that supports 600 plus positions. Our food amenities consist of a 325 seat Buffet (Papias),



Gary Strawbridge 1 Executive Director
of Facilities for the Sycuan Casino in El Cajon,

160 seat sports bar (Game Day), 125 seat Café (Wachena's), a deli and a snack bar that services gaming floor space and Bingo. We also have a TDR (team dining room) for employees that seat's 175. The casino also houses a 450 seat state of the

art Theater/Concert Venue which provides great music and acts in an intimate setting.

G&L: How many people are under you, and who do you report to?

GS: My departments consist of Valet, Transportation, Maintenance/Engineering, Waterworks/Utilities, and Housekeeping. I also oversee facilities at the Sycuan Resort, a golfing facility with 100 rooms that the tribe also owns and operates. This property is approximately 3 miles from the casino facility. The total amount of employees from all departments is 310. I report directly to the General Manager and also, on some committees I sit on, report to the Tribal Council.

G&L: Describe a typical day in your work schedule.

GS: A usual day for me would consist of awakening at 5:30 am for my commute into El Cajon. I will typically stop at the Golf resort on my way to the casino and attend to any business at hand, then proceed up to the casino. I usually have a few meetings throughout the day with my departments or others in the casino. I sit on the Executive Committee, so I attend to all of the committee's business. I approve purchase orders and contracts, negotiate contracts, and deal with departmental issues throughout the day. Our departments are service departments, so we are always working towards great customer service, both internal and



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external. I also may have some meetings with the Council, as I am on a few committees on the Tribal side of the operation. Normally on my way home I will stop at the resort again to attend to any other business the day may have brought.

G&L: What are some of your top departmental priorities?

GS: Always first and foremost is good customer service, internally and externally. By striving to improve in this area all other priorities fall into place. If we want our building conditioned in a way that provides a comfortable gaming experience, we will set parameters for HVAC technicians as to how to attain and maintain that environment. The HVAC technicians know that first and foremost the passion they bring to their work place will translate to the satisfaction level of our internal and external customers. Our job in management is to provide the tools necessary to accomplish great service levels. Teamwork in this manner permeates throughout all of our departments. Another priority for me has always been to be as efficient as possible with all of our resources, and to use time wisely. Our departments need to be problem solvers, not problem makers.

G&L: What are some of the biggest challenges in the Facilities department?

GS: One of the biggest challenges that the department has are some of the logistics involved in providing the service levels expected. We have to cover airport runs, casino transportation, tribal transportation, repair and maintenance of the Golf Resort, and some off-site utility facilities. Other challenges are keeping staffing levels consistent in order to provide good customer service while having vacation, sick days, retirements, and termina-

Broad-Based Salary Ranges

Property Size	Manager	Director	Vice Pres
Small	45K-55K	50K-75K	70K-85K
Medium	55K-70K	70K-90K	85K-115K
Large	65K-85K	90K-120K	105K-135K
Mega	70K-85K	90K-135K	130K-180K

tions in mind, and allowing for processing times for new employees. I have been blessed with a great management staff.

G&L: Tell us about your department's interaction with other departments.

GS: Our department's interaction with all departments on property entails providing service to them, and our external customers, whenever needed. We run cabling for Surveillance, on occasion provide equipment for other departments, and assist Food & Beverage by keeping the kitchen equipment running in an efficient manner. We provide service on all equipment on property, clean offices, and assist with anything we are asked. We just finished a \$27 million renovation of the inside of the Casino, and could never have accomplished this construction without full cooperation from all of our departments on property. This work was done without ever denying our customers full access to all of the amenities they are used to; once again, great customer service! Our job in Facilities is to make people comfortable, and to be an asset to all of the departments we service.

G&L: Where do you see the future of the industry going?

GS: I see a future where gambling opportunities will be provided in other forms, whether it be internet gaming or opening up more gaming opportunities in the state to non tribal bodies, in order to collect tax revenue. I believe that the Tribal Gaming Industry has evolved in this state to a level that few truly understand, and that the cream will rise to the top. Those entities that provide the best guest experience will survive and prosper in the competitive market that is on the horizon. A property that works as one and has good leadership from the top to the bottom will thrive, like in any other industry in the business sector.

I hope this little peek into the working life of a Facilities Director has been enlightening, and want to thank Gary for his insights regarding his work, and the Sycuan Casino. If you have any comments or questions my contact information is below, otherwise hope you read this column in the next issue!

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