CRM: It's Not Just a Marketing Expense

Scientific Games' Lori Szymanski Talks Strategy.

Spending a few minutes with Lori Szymanski, Scientific Games Director, Digital Growth Marketing, is enlightening. She not only knows her way around Customer Relationship Management, but her team's expertise is behind successful CRM programs for 11 U.S. lotteries.

These forward-thinking lotteries are using CRM to view player engagement, communicate with their players, optimize the player journey with their brand and nurture player acquisition and retention.

The company's CRM initiatives help drive a 29% year-over-year increase in online wagers through segmented targeted outreach, proving that players stay when they feel seen and valued. The results are why other lotteries are currently in discussions about bringing the company's CRM strategies and solutions to their states.

"It's not just a marketing expense, it's a strategic investment in sustainable growth," says Szymanski, a digital marketing expert who has worked in CRM for nearly a decade. "We're guiding lotteries on how to provide seamless experiences across retail and digital that help drive their customer lifetime value, enhance their operational efficiencies and strengthen their player relationships and loyalty."

She believes CRM is no longer just a system, it's the heartbeat of personalized connection where data, AI and insights come together to turn every interaction into an opportunity to build loyalty and inspire engagement.

Szymanski explains, "Lotteries can be hesitant to invest in CRM due to the challenge of directly attributing marketing communications to tangible returns. However, our CRM solution overcomes this hurdle by providing robust multi-touch attribution capabilities. This allows lotteries to precisely track the customer journey and directly link engagement initiatives to measurable outcomes, making the ROI clear and compelling – a transparency often lacking in other CRM offerings."

Bridging the Retail Digital Gap

CRM is a critical tool for unifying the retail and digital player experience by centralizing player data across channels. It enables lotteries to create a consistent, holistic and personalized player journey.

"Our CRM helps bridge the divide between retail and digital by giving lotteries a single view of the player, allowing them to engage with tailored messages and incentives. Regardless of where the interaction begins," she says.

For example, in one market, players who spent $50 on the *GAME OF THRONES* eInstant game received a coupon for a complimentary $10 *GAME OF THRONES* retail Scratch-Off ticket with the purchase of a $10 *GAME OF THRONES* Fast Play ticket. Players can be rewarded for online play with an offer at retail – or vice versa.

"We're cross-promoting participation across all verticals to drive awareness and engagement. As part of the program, we're delivering online support, including a dedicated *GAME OF THRONES* promotional webpage and strategic email communications to players."

Building Loyalty, Bringing New Players to Lottery

CRM is instrumental in fostering loyalty by enabling lotteries to engage players with personalized, timely, and relevant communication. Through the AI-driven recommendation and predictive analytics that Scientific Games' CRM solution offers, lotteries can anticipate player behaviors and deliver more personal and rewarding experiences.

"Our CRM solution allows for smarter, more targeted player acquisition strategies by identifying and reaching out to audiences that are most likely to convert to players," explains Szymanski. "By analyzing player behavioral patterns, our CRM platform can segment potential players and tailor outreach based on past activity or similar profiles."

Szymanski's team uses CRM segmentation to help create target groups that can then be used to identify lookalike audiences with paid media campaigns. The campaigns are delivered across digital channels to lookalike audiences for high-value and most active players. The team's strategy then takes the potential players through an online journey to educate them about the lottery's games and convert them into new players.

Delivering Lower Cost Results

The CRM platform Scientific Games uses has a robust digital advertising integration stack that enables custom integrations and automates tasks between the CRM solution and the most popular social apps like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. These integrations ensure data is up-to-date and synchronized, automate tasks and workflows, reduce manual effort and improve efficiency.

"It also ensures the lottery is spending its efforts on acquiring the right person who is more likely to become an active player. Ultimately, it delivers results at a lower cost."

Understanding the Benefits of KYC

When it comes to age verification, lotteries take a variety of approaches including a self-attest (they check a box that says "Yes, I'm 18 years old"), light Know Your Customer (they must enter their first and last name, address and date of birth), and full KYC (the last 4 of their social security number is required in addition to first and last name, address and date of birth). With full KYC, if the player can't be verified, they may be asked to upload a photo of their driver's license or other photo ID.

The relationship between the player and the lottery is anonymous in a retail setting. There's no visibility into how frequently someone plays or whether they're playing within their budget. However, once a player registers online and becomes a known customer, the door to personalized communications will be opened, enhancing safeguards with a full suite of responsible gaming tools.
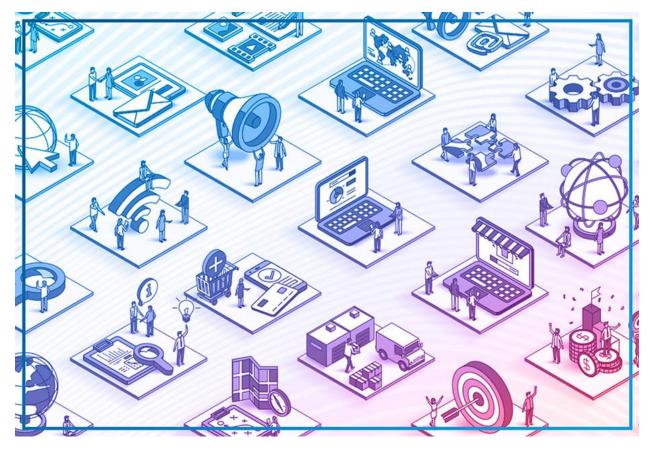
"With KYC in place, lotteries can ensure their marketing and engagement efforts are both targeted and responsible," shares Szymanski.

While KYC ensures that the data is tied to real individuals, the combination of KYC and CRM enables lotteries to deliver proactive, personalized messaging that promotes healthy play while maintaining transparency and accountability across retail and digital environments.

Lotteries can set weekly or monthly spending limits or limits on the loyalty points players can earn by entering tickets online. They can also proactively educate players about responsible, healthy play.

Investing in CRM to Grow Responsibly

Even without online sales, a CRM solution gives lotteries the tools to engage players more effectively through loyalty programs, second-chance programs and marketing communications. Capturing and activating player data builds the foundation for digital readiness.

CRM enables lotteries to build a digital profile for their players. Why is that important? They're learning more about their players today, which gives them a running start into online sales that could be in the future.

"Knowing what your players like and what messaging they'll respond to will help convert players on day one," says Szymanski. "Players begin to become familiar with your brand, gaining trust through consistent, relevant communications. You can start to build, then increase your retention rate. The big headline is that CRM is quick and easy to implement with our CRM experts at Scientific Games."

What consumer business doesn't benefit from a head start? Once in place, everything a lottery does to grow and mature its CRM readies its business model for if/when online sales eventually launch. From more cost-effective, efficient marketing to responsible gaming efforts, CRM has become a must-have for all consumer brands.