

YOUR NEXT CAREER MOVE?

“It’s not about the cards you’re dealt, but how you play the hand.”
Randy Pausch

The fact that you are reading this book suggests that you are an ambitious person with a drive to learn and to grow. Right now, you may be focused on becoming the very best Casino Host or Executive Host, but you should also be thinking about your next career move and planning ahead.

The good news is that the gaming industry presents so many opportunities for your future career. You can focus on your sales skills and become a Player Development Executive, or move into management, or move sideways into Marketing or Operations. There is no reason why you cannot plot a path to General Manager if that is your dream. You should look at people’s profiles in Linked In and see the route that they took to reach your target.

Unlike most industries, there are no certification requirements or strict rules about what it takes to move from one area of the Resort Casino to another. So, the gaming industry is your oyster provided you do the hard work to grow your experience, hone your skills, build your brand and your network, and be ready to seize the opportunity.

In this Chapter, we are going to explore how you can do the planning and preparation for when you meet your opportunity!

‘Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning.’
Thomas Edison

The best way to decide what you want to aim for next, is to pay attention to everyone around you, and see what catches your interest. Don’t limit yourself to *‘what could I do right now?’*, look at all of the different roles across the Resort Casino and ask yourself *‘What do I want to do in the future? What looks interesting? Who has the cool job?’*

You may have to take a couple of steps to get to your goal, but you can. No-one was born a VP or a General Manager. They might have started out as a Dealer, or a Security Guard, or on the Front Desk.

How to Start

Once you have decided on your goal, you can create your personal plan to get there. Here are some steps to take, regardless of what you choose.

1. Go online and search for three job descriptions for that position.
2. Look through the job descriptions and see what they have in common.
3. Open up your own resume and re-write it for when you apply for the job. Literally copy and paste from the job description into your resume. For example:

Proven ability to resolve guest disputes in an effort to restore confidence in the service we provide

Work collectively with all departments involved in planning and executing player events both on-site and off-site.

Must be proficient in developing annual budgets as well as quarterly goals with a proven track record of controlling labor costs and expenses.

4. Be candid with yourself. Where are the gaps between your current experience and the requirements in these job descriptions?
5. And now you just figure out how to fill the gaps!

People are hired, and promoted, into a job for which they appear to be ready. We do not hire or promote on a leap of faith. We do not say, “Oh let’s hire this person and see if they can figure out how to do that new job”. We hire the candidate because they already seem to be a ‘fit’.

If you want to become a Player Development Executive, then you need to be building fierce personal loyalty from the best players and networking like crazy.

If you want to be promoted to Management then you need to already behave, dress, and speak like a Manager. It falls on your shoulders to transform yourself.

“To get promoted a Host has to be consistent, organized, eager to learn, etc. but I think an important psychological change is when you first think of the operation from the business’ perspective instead of the guests. Hosts tend to favor their players and that is what you want from a host but sometimes it is hard to make them understand it from the business’ perspective. It doesn’t mean you don’t consider the players, but there is a shift that typically needs to be made. Managing employees, budgets, and property goals are fundamentally different than managing players.”

Create a Personal Plan

You should create a personal plan to fill the gaps. There is always a way to fill the gaps but they all require initiative on your part. You are going to have to volunteer to take on additional roles without any extra pay, any overtime, or any kind of short-term benefit.

Here are three examples to get you started. First, we show the requirement from the job description and then we discuss how you could close that particular gap.

Proven ability to resolve guest disputes in an effort to restore confidence in the service we provide?

Who do you see as a role model for service recovery? Talk to them and ask about their approach.

Build close relationships with Guest Services, the Players Club Representatives, and the Pit Bosses. Ask them about the different issues that they have seen in their careers and how they approach unhappy guests.

Read articles and books about empathy, emotional intelligence, and influencing skills.

Volunteer to be the Host on Duty on the busiest shifts so you get the widest exposure to all of the different scenarios that can arise.

Aim to win any kind of monthly or annual recognition for guest service at your Property.

Work collectively with all departments involved in planning and executing player events both on-site and off-site.

There are always opportunities to help with Events! Review the earlier Chapter on Event Planning to see which areas you are unfamiliar with, and then volunteer to help, so you understand the entire process. Introduce improvements if you can. Volunteer to team up with someone from Marketing to streamline the process.

Search online for ideas for VIP Events and create your own events for your coded guests. Start small! But go through the entire process including a pro-forma to take to your boss.

Must be proficient in developing annual budgets as well as quarterly goals with a proven track record of controlling labor costs and expenses.

Go and take some management courses if that is your direction! Find someone in your network who has a business and ask them to take you through a budget. Volunteer to be on a management committee for your Church or some local organization and immerse yourself in their budgeting process.

Learn all about using MS Excel to create models and using PowerPoint to communicate ideas. Pay attention in team meetings whenever your manager talks about metrics and

expenses. Read my other book, *Casino Host Goals*, to learn all about KPIs. And make sure you hit all of your KPIs every time!

These examples should get you started. If you get stuck, then use Linked In to find people from across the country who are in your dream job. Look at their backgrounds and find some people that made your move, give them a call and ask for help with ideas! How did they do it?

He who would accomplish little must sacrifice little; he who would achieve much must sacrifice much; he who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.

— James Allen

In the short-term, you have to invest time, money, effort, and show initiative, but it will get you to where you want to be. Successful people set a goal, create a plan, commit themselves, and do whatever it takes to make it happen.

Build Your Local Network

Even in this digital world, it is still a case of **who** you know and not what you know.

Build your internal fan base. When an opening comes up, you want people to recommend you on their own initiative. Or who will say “Yes, that makes a lot of sense” when they hear your name being considered.

Without being a brown-nose, slowly cultivate a good working relationship with the Director of Marketing, Pit Bosses, Front Desk supervisor, Players Club Manager, and more. Find out who would be involved in making the decision.

“I have seen people work hard at impressing the GM when the decision to replace me would not be addressed by the GM. There would be an interview committee made up of the Director of Marketing etc. and that is who they should focus on.”

The simplest way to make a good impression on someone is to thank them and their team whenever it is deserved.

Drop an email to thank F&B for the buffet at the VIP party, compliment the Director of Marketing on a popular promotion, and pass on any complements that you hear from your guests, such as “I just want to let you know that one of my guests was raving about the quality of the seafood buffet”.

Build Your National Network

You must also network across the industry because you might have to move to a different Property to achieve your goal. If you look on Linked In, you can see how people moved between Properties and Markets in order to get a promotion or to change direction in their career.

There are four reasons for this:

1. If your desire is to be Player Development Executive then you are going to have to move properties, and move between different kinds of markets, in order to grow a personal portfolio of players who will follow you wherever you go.
2. There are limited openings at your Resort Casino. If you are open to making a move there are thousands of casinos that you could apply to.
3. Your current management team believe they know you well, and they believe they know what you would bring to a new position. This works in your favor if you have really made your mark; but it is more likely to work against you because the Executives will 'want to bring in some new blood and some new ideas'. When you apply somewhere else, you become the 'new blood'.
4. If you want to move into management, it is hard to become the manager of your former peers. There may be some lingering resentment over your promotion, and it can be hard for you to gain authority over your former peers. Executives know this and so they won't want to create that situation. The exception to this rule is if you have already established yourself as the leader of the team.

The Internet has made it possible for you to establish a network across the industry. As of now, the platform of choice is Linked In. For free, you can slowly build up a network of gaming professionals, and you can slowly build your presence and brand. Yes, I am deliberately saying slowly. It will quickly become apparent if you are desperately commenting on, liking, and sharing everything that is posted by the VPs and GMs. Pace yourself.

When you meet other gaming professionals, treat them like a valuable player and stay in touch, including with people that leave your property and go elsewhere. Develop and maintain relationships even if the person is, say, a Director of Slots and that is not your direction. This person might still be able to put in a good word for you at a future Property. And they might become a GM! Vendors are another good connection to have. Stay in touch with those sales reps because they hear about opportunities and can suggest your name. Yes, it happens.

With all this said, there is a danger in hopping between properties:

"I look for resumes which show an employee has moved up within their organization. It doesn't have to be a big promotion, but I like to see they've had some movement within at least one of their organizations. That means the people who have observed

their work the most felt they excelled enough to promote. **I think it is a red flag if a person has only received promotions from moving properties.** It makes me wonder what they are saying about their previous job is true or they just know what to say to get through an interview.”

Stand Out

First and foremost, be exceptional at everything you do.

*The more work that you do to prepare yourself,
the more you will stand out*

Your number one skill, in Player Development, must be **the ability to sell**. You have to demonstrate the ability to consistently sell the Property, the amenities, the concerts, and the events.

The measure of your results is in the numbers. It doesn't matter if your guests love you, if you are not increasing Theo by 5% over last year, as requested. It doesn't matter if you are increasing Theo, if you are over-investing in your guests and arranging fancy VIP events that lose money.

“I believe the best way to get the attention of management is to understand the budget, profitability and guest service and the dance that is required to do all three well. If your company doesn't require a proforma before approving a party, dinner, outing, etc. learn to do one anyway. If it's not going to make money for the organization, it's a bad idea.”

And it doesn't matter how great your numbers are, if you are a pain in the neck. Follow the policies and procedures. Complete your assignments on time. Follow through on every detail for your guests and don't throw other departments under the bus in order to save your face.

“There are Hosts that are super-great with the players, but they don't pay attention to the operational side. And there are Hosts that are okay-great with the players, but they also follow through, and they understand the reinvestment, and the strategies. These are the Hosts that will be promoted into management.”

Share The Feedback

Think for a moment about the things you hear over and over again in conversations with your players. These are common themes, and it's likely that your players have discussed their feelings about your program with one another as well.

Are they getting more free play from your competitors? Since there's not much you can do about that, remind them that you provide them extra "value" for their visits by making it easier for them to make room or dinner reservations.

Do they tell you that they don't like your promotions? Get specifics and pass them along to the pertinent associates in your marketing department in order to provide those folks the direction they need to make those promotions more appealing. Share what you learn in order to keep your casino ahead of the curve.

Play well with others

"I think the main reasons that Hosts fail are ego and lack of courtesy and/or teamwork. There is a thin line between ego and confident. Exude confidence when talking to your guests but humble enough to do the small things and not take things personally when working in a team."

Be a positive role model. Be a team-builder across the entire Property and bring people together. As a Casino Host, you work with every single department, so you are in a unique position to have a positive impact across the Property.

(You can also use this breadth of contact to learn everything, and I mean everything, about how the entire Resort Casino works. Learn the vocabulary used in Finance and Accounting, understand the challenges of the supply chain behind Food and Beverage, and talk to Slots about floor optimization. Read books, ask questions, and be a sponge. Ask the managers in other departments what they expect from the Player Development team and reflect on how your role can assist theirs. This free education in gaming, will enable you to better navigate the Property on behalf of your guests, and it will give you the grounding for a future career at any level of management.)

Show Initiative

Volunteer to work on projects and pick areas that will bring new skills and fill the gaps in your resume. Volunteer to work on a team that will make a vendor selection and learn all about defining business needs and evaluating solutions. Volunteer to interview new hosts and be their 'buddy' as they learn the ropes. Volunteer for the task force created by the GM to make recommendations on how to attract younger players.

"Accept change as fast as you can. Be an early adopter. Don't resist or complain. Be constructive."

Ask your manager for opportunities:

"It is important for managers to give people an opportunity to show what they can do. Each year, each of my Hosts get their own party to plan. I give them a budget and a few criteria for who to invite. They have to create pro-forma beforehand and post-forma

afterwards. I watch them plan their party and I see how much help they need from me, and how they go about it.”

Be Creative

We have talked elsewhere about being creative with your VIP parties and hosted events. But, as you learn more (and especially as you become more Organized from Chapter 4!) you can make suggestions to your manager. For example, are the Direct Mail offers all mailed at the same time? This means your valuable 500+ ADT guests are competing with thousands of 50+ ADT guests who are all calling in to book a room. You might suggest that offers to VIP guests are mailed one day earlier; two days earlier if the offer is going to Canada!

Always make your suggestions to your manager in a 1:1 situation so they can give you candid feedback. After all, you may have overlooked an important detail. Make your suggestion humbly so that the Manager doesn't suspect that you think they are an idiot.

And never make more work for your boss! If you are presenting an idea, then you should also be volunteering to put in the effort to make it happen. You don't say 'Here's a better way to organize concerts'. You do say 'I have an idea about events that I would like your feedback on. If you like what we come up with, then I'd be happy to work with the team on implementing this'.

When your ideas are implemented, then always try to measure them so that the result can go on your resume. Instead of "Invented new VIP events", your resume should say "Invented new VIP events that were 25% more profitable".

By the way, keep track of your KPIs so those numbers can go on your resume as well: "Managed a book of business and grew this by 6%+ each and every year for three years."

"What Hosts can control is their performance and willingness to learn. During your tenure, keep in mind that each quarterly performance log, personally created promotion, and any other processes created by you, the host, for the benefit of the company, can be used as leverage for either your job promotion meeting or interview for another company. It's important to consistently perform above KPI's so that when the rare opportunity does present itself, you can confidently assert yourself as the prime candidate for promotion."

Key Steps to Sell Your Ideas

How hard it is to change a policy at your Property?

I threw out the challenge of getting policies changed if they are getting in the way of guest satisfaction. And an Executive Host came back with the perfectly reasonable question, "How do I get the policy changed when no-one listens"... Here are my ideas based on experience. What have you tried?

#1 Find out who has the authority to approve the change.

Let's assume you have a great idea! Find out who can say Yes!

If the approval has to go all the way to the Gaming Commission, then that is a lot of work. If the approval is from the GM, or a VP of your department, then you have less work to do, to lobby for change. Either way, think beyond your immediate manager and find out who can make the Final Decision.

It's no different than when you call your guest to invite them to an Event and they hum and haw and say they will have to check with their partner. Does their partner really decide or are they hiding behind their partner?

Does the GM really decide or is your Manager hiding behind that excuse? You should be a sly detective ahead of time, before revealing your proposal, to find out who is the real decision maker for 'that kind of an idea'.

#2 Get real!

When a manager hears you talking about 'we must improve service', they think to themselves, well, we are doing something right because we are making money. And why spend more money on 'better service' just to make the same amount of money?

I cannot emphasize this point enough – do not sound like an additional cost! Sound like an additional cost savings or additional revenue!

#3 Change Your Perspective.

Once you find out who has to approve the change, then think about it from their perspective. Does the change save money or help to make money? Nothing else matters.

You are probably thinking in terms of 'improving guest satisfaction' or 'reducing busy work for Hosts' or a vague sense that 'this will get the guest to play more'. In order to push for change, you have to think like a GM and identify how this will save money or make money.

For example:

- If you can improve 'guest satisfaction' then will they play up? Make more trips? Spend more F&B? These outcomes will all make extra money.
- If the guest is happier, will it stop them from going to the competition? Then the change will save money because it will save the property from losing money.
- If the change will make Hosts more efficient then the Hosts will be freed up to make more outbound calls and drive trips and make money.

Don't focus on explaining your change, focus on highlighting the difference it will make to the Bottom Line i.e. revenue = income - expense.

#4 Take a stab at the dollars involved!

You have to stick your neck out and try to estimate the dollars that will be made or saved. If you don't take a guess, then your manager will, and they haven't thought it through like you have, so their guess will fall short of yours.

- E.g. This efficiency change will save 60 minutes per day per host which means 6 extra outbound calls per day which could drive 6*400 ADT trips = \$2400 per day per host which is \$X per year.
- E.g. This policy change will keep guests playing at the slots for an additional ten minutes per day per guest which is 365 days * 200 guests * \$x in Theo.
- E.g. With this Gift Incentive program, we expect each Host to drive an additional \$4,000 in Theo per month by adding a 400+ ADT trip from each of 10 guests, in return for an investment in a \$50 gift. We invest \$500 per Host and we make \$3500 profit per Host. This is \$X per year!

Change your pitch to "We could make \$X thousand dollars a year by changing this policy in this way" and you have a good chance of getting some attention!

#5 Put Numbers Out There!

Don't be scared of putting numbers out there. If you create a model. then they can change the numbers but working with the model will make them believe in it, buy into it, and have a personal investment in it.

For example, you write that if this policy change encouraged 5% of our 400 ADT players to make one extra trip per month then that increases revenue by 5% x number of 400+ x 400 x 12 months = \$X.

If the manager says I think 5% is too high then **fine** they can change the number and see the result because you have done the hard part, which is to think about your idea in dollars and cents. You won't get anywhere with management until it is a financial recommendation.

#6 Minimize the Work for Your Boss!

Remember that you are creating extra work for the manager if they take on your suggestion.

They have to build a business case, arrange meetings to present the idea, and expend some political capital in making the case. If the change is approved, they have the additional work to rewrite the policy and explain it to staff. So, even if you have a great idea with some interesting dollar returns, your manager is still going to be reluctant to take on the extra work.

When you bring something forward, you need to do as much as you can to make it as painless as you can! Yes, create a PowerPoint deck that highlights the financial savings and return. Write a modified policy with your new wording. Include a slide that explains how the policy would be rolled out... Do as much of the work as possible and offer it up to the person as something they can take and run with. Plus emphasize that you are there to help.

Finally, if you feel really passionate about this change, then demonstrate your Persistence! You will learn a lot about the management mindset by trying to put this together. Use your PD skills, listen hard to what they tell you, go back with a revised approach, and don't give up! PD them!

Be Patient

Be patient; don't over promote yourself, or come off as arrogant, and don't get known as 'the know it all'. There is a fine line between making suggestions and being perceived as critical of management or moving into the realms of fantasy.

"Patience is a key element of success."

Bill Gates.

Patiently play the long game. Be nice to everyone, yes everyone, because this the gaming industry is still relatively small, and people move around all the time. The person that you cut off because they cannot help you today, may become the GM who decides not to hire you in five years.

Listen patiently. You have two ears and one mouth, so you can listen twice as much as you speak. Treat everyone with respect and apply empathy to your fellow employees. Basically, give everyone that same 'PD Treatment'!

Patiently and persistently build up all of your different skills and experiences. Watch your role models in the Resort Casino and copy them. Why do they succeed? Figure it out and adopt their techniques into your style. Do you see Casino Hosts that fail? Why? What can you learn from them?

And don't become impatient and apply for that next position until you are 100% ready. You have a plan so execute it and don't try to jump ahead when you still have gaps in your resume. But, if you are ready, then push forward and carve your path like the person in the following Case Study.

“My Story”

“I started my gaming career at 18 years old as a player’s club representative.

At that time hosts were the players club supervisors. **They didn’t host a specific book and mainly served as the go to people for all issues.** I always wanted to become a supervisor and at that time thought that’s why I wanted to be a host.

After a few years, Player Development was born and made into a separate department from the players club. They only had one director and 2 executive hosts. The remaining hosts were demoted and stayed with the players club.

Throughout this time, I got to work closely with the two executive hosts and director and assisted in any way I could so that I can learn more about the hosting world. **I thought at that time that hosting meant providing great guest service and issuing comps to fix problems.**

I tried for almost 9 years to become a host at the first casino I worked for and although I worked extremely hard, gave 120% every day that I worked, offered my loyalty and received nothing in return I learned the hard way that if I was going to be a host I had to leave them and venture off to gain the experience I needed to move up.

I left them for their competitor and was finally given the opportunity to become a casino host. In the beginning the management we had wasn’t effective. Yes, I was a host and I had a book of 400 players, **but my job was more about being a problem solver.** We were the ones that every department went to when issues would arise with any guest not just those who were hosted. We were trained to wear different hats every day and dealt with case by case basis.

About a year after I started we finally hired an effective leader who taught me what a host should be. **That is when I learned that my main goal was to ensure I created positive experiences and relationships to increase revenue.**

I learned that player development meant finding those players who had the potential to play big and develop them into the highest VIP level possible.

Towards the end of my 4 years as a casino host, they tried to implement inexpensive trainings to teach us better sales techniques however without spending the money to give us the tools and resources we needed it was difficult to learn the right skills to truly be a sales host. This only made me hungrier to learn more about sales hosting than ever before.

When advancing was not an option I turned to LinkedIn and found a position as a Senior Executive Host with a larger organization.

Working for a corporation that is not afraid to invest in their employees for maximum return has been the best decision I ever made. Here I have the tools and resources I need to be successful in my position. **I have learned sales techniques and telemarketing skills that are proven to help me succeed in maximizing my guestbook revenue.**

The fire now burns even thicker working for a corporation that has given me so much in such little time that I've worked for. "

I asked for permission to include this real life story because it is a wonderful example of someone paying attention to what is happening, and not happening, in their career. This person realized what their passion was and then fought relentlessly to find the role that would let them grow and express themselves. Thank you for sharing!

Don't Be a Goldfish

A VP of Player Development posted a meme on LinkedIn with the question “Are you a Shark or a Goldfish?” It caught my eye and made me ponder.

In our culture, a Shark seems a bit negative and aggressive versus the cuddly Goldfish. But the point is that a Shark is a hunter and will pursue its dinner. Whereas a Goldfish will circle around the glass tank hoping that someone will bring the dinner. **The question is, do you make things happen?**

I found out that the meme was based on a book *The Shark and the Goldfish*. I haven't read the book yet but the blurb on his website says “Jon Gordon shares an inspiring fable about a goldfish who has always been fed, a nice shark who teaches him to find food and a wave of change that brings them together. The Shark teaches the Goldfish that the difference between a full belly and an empty stomach depends solely on your faith, beliefs, and actions.”

I think it's worth challenging ourselves on these points.

Do you have faith in your ability to grow the business?

Do you have faith in your ability to not only meet but exceed your goals for this quarter? Let's say we are 63% through the quarter. Are you at 63% of the Total Theo that you have to deliver in Q1?

If you don't have faith in your ability, then why not? What are your fears or constraints that are holding you back? Who can help? Can you talk your manager into getting sales training for the team? Can you take some classes at your own expense?

If you do have faith but you are at less than 63% of your quarterly goal, then you see yourself as a Shark, but you must be acting like a Goldfish.

And if you smirked that the goals are impossible to meet because management is unrealistic then you just made a Goldfish excuse. (Why leave my safe bowl and go off into the Ocean just because management claims there are big fish out there?)

Do you have set of beliefs?

Do you have your own theories about why people visit your property, about how you can influence their behavior, and about how you can grow your business? You can have strong faith in yourself, but a Strategic Host also has a set of concrete beliefs, general theories if you like.

- Where are those fish? Where do they like to swim? Are they visiting someone else's pond?
- What times of day do they swim?

- How often should you contact them, and how exactly should you approach them?
- What are some good opening lines to sign up new players?
- What are your personal techniques to increase their trips and play?

You will never be a Shark and successfully fill your belly unless you create your own beliefs about how to grow your business. Read, talk to your peers and your manager, and brainstorm with close associates. Don't rule out talking with Pit Bosses and Slot Directors for their ideas. (Most people love to give their opinion.)

And then go test your ideas and learn from your mistakes. Yes, a Shark has the courage to make a mistake and miss a catch but learn for next time. A Goldfish stays in the safe zone and does not try a new opening line on a guest playing without a card. A Shark has an idea, tries it out, and learns from the result. A Goldfish sticks to the same old, same old, approach.

When did you last try something new?

If it was a month or more ago then you are acting like a Goldfish.

Read this from Wikipedia! "Sharks constantly replace their teeth throughout life; some sharks lose 30,000 or more teeth in their lifetime." Take this as an analogy! You need to constantly replace your 'teeth' by getting stuck into new approaches and seeing what happens.

Do you act like a Shark each and every day?

Are you constantly monitoring the situation and seizing every opportunity? For example, a Host is talking to a valuable player and they mention that their friend Vic likes to go to Vegas. A Goldfish will listen intently and may even make a note in the software that 'Joe has a friend Vic that goes to Vegas'. Now that was going in for the kill! A Shark will immediately say – 'Hey, let's get Vic in here for your birthday next month and have a good time!'. The Shark already had a belief, a theory, about what to try and do in this situation, so the Shark was ready to pounce.

(And if you are a Manager then run through the list of your Hosts and PD Executives and ask yourself if they are a Shark or a Goldfish? Are they making things happen or are they waiting for things to happen? And what are doing, as the leader, to instill faith, create beliefs, and track actions? Are you, yourself, acting like a Goldfish, executing the same old same old approaches, or are you brainstorming with your team each month about how to act like Sharks?)

Self-Assessment

Before you read on, grab a pen and complete this self-assessment. Where are your areas for improvement?

Skill	Yes	Could do Better	No
I know my next career move.			
I have found the job description and I am working on my plan to plug the gaps			
I watch other people as role models for good, and bad, behavior.			
I network across the Casino at all levels.			
I network across the Industry.			
I stay in touch with everyone that I meet.			
I invest time and money in my personal development.			
I watch for opportunities to volunteer and learn.			
I act like a Shark every day that I am on Property...			