

# STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

Strategies to set your center up for success

By **Brandon Willey**



In the rapidly evolving world of location-based entertainment (LBE), standing out from the crowd requires more than just oiled lanes and operational pinsetters. Many of today's bowling centers are evolving into comprehensive entertainment hubs, catering to a diverse audience hungry for variety, technology, and exceptional experiences.

Let's explore the strategies setting leaders apart and the standards owners should aim to surpass to ensure their venues remain the go-to spots for entertainment.

## Diversifying Fun

The most successful centers are those that offer a myriad of entertainment options beyond the traditional bowling experience. By incorporating a mix of attractions like arcade games, laser tag, virtual reality, and even axe throwing, these centers attract a broader audience and encourage guests to extend their stay. To stay competitive, a multi-attraction center should aim to feature at least three to four distinct attractions besides its bowling anchor. For more innovative attraction ideas, review my article "Embracing the Arcade Evolution" from last month's issue of *IBI*.



## Elevating the Experience

At the heart of every center should be a commitment to providing an unparalleled guest experience. This involves friendly, attentive, and personalized service and ensuring the facility is aesthetically appealing, inviting, and always clean (yes, this includes edges, corners, and all the places where dust and muck accumulate). Our industry's top brands and locations often implement regular staff training programs focused on service excellence and operational efficiency. A frequently overlooked tactic is ensuring the actual guest experience is aligned with the customer expectations set by your marketing, branding, and messaging. Finally, financially planning for periodic renovations and attraction upgrades and replacements every several years is a sound strategy for maintaining a high standard that will keep customers returning.

## Integrating Technology

In an era dominated by digital convenience, integrating technology into the experience is non-negotiable. From online booking systems that streamline reservations to modern digital scorekeeping and lane advancements that enhance gameplay, technology can significantly improve guest satisfaction.

Allowing guests to order food online or from a dedicated app will increase revenue and improve the experience by reducing reliance on servers to take orders. Furthermore, an active social media presence can engage customers and keep them informed about upcoming events and promotions.

## Embracing Community

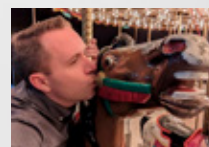
Building a strong connection with the local community is a powerful strategy for driving repeat business. Successful centers often engage in local events, sponsorships, and fundraisers, positioning themselves as pillars of the community. Additionally, rewards programs encourage frequent visitors and continued patronage. Operators should strive to participate in at least one community event per quarter and offer a play-to-earn rewards program with tangible benefits to maintain a competitive edge. Moreover, hosting at least one themed event or special night monthly or weekly can boost foot traffic and establish a loyal community.

## Operational Excellence

Efficient operations are the backbone of any successful business, encompassing everything from staff scheduling and inventory management to routine maintenance. Regular reviews of operational efficiency can identify cost-saving opportunities. The most proficient operators conduct operational efficiency reviews bi-annually.

## Charting the Course

The LBE industry is dynamic, with consumer preferences and technological advancements constantly evolving. To remain at the forefront, owners must continuously seek innovative ways to enhance their offerings, improve the guest experience, and streamline their operations. By embracing diversity in entertainment, leveraging technology, engaging with the community, and maintaining operational excellence, operators can ensure they meet their guests' current demands and are poised to adapt to future trends. ●



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