

A NEW ERA OF ENTERTAINMENT

Diversified Offerings Drive Long-Term Growth

By Brandon Willey

The world of bowling and entertainment is transforming fast. Today's consumers crave more than just a single activity—they're looking for vibrant, multi-attraction experiences, leading to the rise of hybrid (multi-attraction) entertainment. This fresh model combines bowling with complementary attractions to keep guests engaged and returning for more.

A hybrid entertainment approach allows guests to immerse themselves in an arcade with classic and modern games, try their hand at axe throwing or social competition attractions, gear up for high-energy laser tag or Gel Blaster battles, or step into cutting-edge virtual reality. The idea is simple but powerful: create a one-stop destination offering everyone something. The result? Longer visits, repeat business, and a significant boost in revenue.

This isn't just a passing trend—it's a turning point. As consumer expectations climb, embracing the hybrid model is necessary for operators who want to stay competitive and attract a broader audience.

WHAT'S DRIVING THIS SHIFT?

The popularity of hybrid entertainment models can be traced to several significant market trends. Changing demographics play a key role, with Gen Z and Millennials prioritizing interactive and socially competitive experiences over more traditional forms

of entertainment. These groups value activities encouraging connection, creativity, and competition—qualities that hybrid models are uniquely positioned to deliver. Families, too, are drawn to venues that offer something for everyone, making hybrid BECs an appealing choice for group outings.

Similarly, consumers increasingly prefer "experience-based" outings, as consumers increasingly value activities that create memories and foster connections. Social media drives demand as guests seek visually captivating experiences to share online. For BEC operators, these trends emphasize the importance of diversifying offerings. Revenue generated from additional attractions reduces reliance on bowling alone while spreading operational risk and boosting profitability.

BENEFITS OF GOING HYBRID

The adoption of hybrid entertainment models offers transformative benefits for BECs. From a revenue perspective, incorporating attractions such as arcades or axe throwing opens new income streams, including game card sales, additional attraction purchases, and event bookings. Additionally, food and beverage sales often grow significantly in hybrid venues as guests linger longer and seek sustenance during extended visits. Hybrid venues also excel in customer retention. Providing multiple activities gives guests

Competitive Strategies

compelling reasons to return and explore features they may have missed during their initial visit. For instance, a group may visit for bowling one week and return later to try out the Gel Blaster or finally win that giant plush behind your redemption counter.

Furthermore, hybrid BECs stand out in saturated entertainment markets, positioning themselves as destinations for a wider audience. This adaptability allows operators to evolve alongside shifting consumer trends, ensuring long-term relevance and success. Private events like corporate team-building or birthday parties are the cherry on top, adding another lucrative layer to the business.

THE CHALLENGES YOU'LL FACE

But it is not all smooth sailing. Transforming into a hybrid venue takes careful planning and investment. One of the most significant hurdles is the initial investment needed to add new attractions, which can be substantial depending on the scope of the upgrades. Renovations may require reconfiguring existing spaces (such as removing bowling lanes) to accommodate new activities, which can disrupt regular operations if not managed carefully.

Operational complexity also increases, as staff must be trained to manage a broader range of activities while maintaining high-quality service. For example, briefing, vesting, and marshaling in a laser tag arena require different skills and service levels than operating bowling lanes. Space allocation presents another challenge; finding the right balance between bowling lanes and other attractions is crucial to preserving the venue's identity. Removing too many lanes may alienate traditional bowling enthusiasts, while not allocating enough space for new attractions could limit their appeal and adoption.

Finally, it is vital to ensure that new offerings align with the existing customer base while attracting new demographics. Misaligned or malapportioned attractions could alienate core patrons who value the traditional bowling experience. Operators must also consider ongoing maintenance costs for higher-tech specializations like virtual reality equipment or amusement machines, ensuring these investments remain profitable.

ASSESS MARKET DEMAND

Are you thinking about making the hybrid leap? Start by understanding your local audience. The first step is assessing market demand to identify activities that resonate with the local audience. This might involve conducting competitive analyses, surveys, and focus groups to understand customer preferences and expectations. Any additions should align with

the venue's brand identity, complementing its strengths. For example, a BEC with a strong family-friendly reputation might prioritize attractions like arcades or laser tag, while a venue targeting young adults could focus on free-roam virtual reality experiences or social competition attractions like axe throwing or augmented darts.



A PHASED APPROACH

A phased approach often works best, allowing operators to start small—perhaps by adding space for an expanded arcade with redemption or an immersive enclosure like Qbix or Valo Arena—and scale up as demand grows. This strategy minimizes financial risk and provides opportunities to refine operations before expanding further. Partnering with experienced vendors can ensure a smooth integration of new attractions, from design, layout, and installation to ongoing maintenance. Vendors can also provide valuable insights into industry best practices, helping operators avoid common pitfalls.

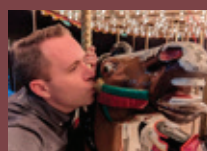
TARGETED MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Marketing is key. Promote your expanded offerings before, during, and after launch. Social media platforms, email newsletters, and partnerships with local influencers can effectively raise awareness and generate excitement. Offering promotional packages that bundle multiple activities can also encourage guests to explore everything the venue offers.

Hybrid entertainment models are reshaping the bowling industry and setting the stage for the future. By embracing innovation and diversification, operators can create vibrant, multi-attraction destinations that delight modern consumers. As guest preferences evolve, adapting will be critical for long-term success.



Whether by adding an arcade, integrating virtual reality, or introducing immersive enclosures and more, the hybrid model offers a clear path to growth and sustainability. For BEC owners, now is the time to seize this opportunity and redefine what it means to deliver a memorable entertainment experience. With careful planning and a commitment to meeting the needs of a diverse audience, hybrid venues can thrive as cornerstone destinations in their communities now and into the future. ●



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