



THE SECRET TO WINNING GUESTS OF ALL AGES

Pairing Timeless Arcade Classics with High-Tech Gaming

By Brandon Willey

In response to shifting consumer interests, bowling entertainment center operators continue to evolve and seek creative ways to broaden their appeal and enhance the overall guest experience. One strategy that is making waves is combining classic arcade games with modern redemption offerings. This mix of old-school charm and new-age tech creates a dynamic environment that caters to multiple generations.

I sat down with Adam Pratt from ArcadeHeroes.com who shared some great insights into why pairing retro arcade favorites with state-of-the-art redemption games is a winning combo. Whether guests show up for the social scene or the thrill of interactive play, guests of all ages can find something to enjoy.

BLENDING CLASSIC AND MODERN GAMES

Nostalgia is a powerful force. According to Pratt, "As long as human beings age, nostalgia will never go out of style." Many guests remember playing games like Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, or Need for Speed during childhood and relish revisiting those experiences. "However," Pratt continues, "what is

considered nostalgic comes and goes in the same way that arcade fads did in the past. You have to not only find clever ways to capitalize on the current trend, but you need to have your timing right as well."

Adding retro arcade cabinets is a great way to grab the attention of older guests who yearn for simpler days with pixelated graphics and straightforward controls. On the flip side, today's younger players also crave innovative and immersive experiences. Modern redemption or video games offer some of these features—such as motion sensors and immersive group play—that capture the attention of younger guests.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

For those who grew up in arcades, spotting a retro cabinet can bring back memories of chasing high scores with friends. "Including a selection of well-loved games like Galaga, Asteroids, or Space Invaders can provide an instant connection while also delivering a strong sense of familiarity," says Pratt. This emotional connection is a powerful way to boost traffic and keep guests coming back.

If patrons know their favorite classics are waiting for them, they are more likely to bring friends, visit often, and stay longer.

Meanwhile, younger audiences thrive on social, high-tech experiences. Immersive video and redemption games featuring interactive screens, touchless sensors, or multiplayer features that include fast-paced gameplay and attractive graphics will resonate and capture significant attention and should occupy a large share of your game floor. Pratt suggests, "Innovative titles like Playbox by Playmind, Goat N Ropes, or Zombies

Ready Deady Go! are excellent examples of the next generation of redemption games."

SELECTING THE RIGHT MIX

Pratt believes, "When choosing vintage machines, it's important to focus on timeless games that transcend generational barriers." Titles like Centipede, Street Fighter, or NBA Jam have near-universal recognition, and Pratt added that their enduring popularity stems from straightforward

controls, addictive gameplay loops, and memorable visuals. He suggests that rotating a few classic cabinets keeps the selection fresh and encourages guests to return to try something new. If you want retro gameplay with a modern spin, Pratt suggests turning to indie game developers like Alan-1 with their Asteroids Recharged or Avian Knights.

Have you ever thought about the anniversaries of the games on your floor? Pratt believes that games or their intellectual property (IP) celebrating a milestone anniversary can be capitalized. He asks, "If you have a particular game inside your venue, such as Pac-Man or Donkey Kong, do you know when those games came out and when their anniversaries are? Are you paying attention to other gaming and movie trends that might cause nostalgia for a particular classic to bubble up again?" These are massive opportunities to leverage your arcade to drive fresh foot traffic and excitement.

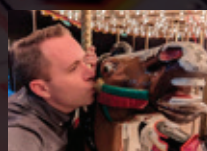


PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

Getting the word out about your arcade's blend of classic and modern games is crucial. Pratt suggests hosting retro-themed nights with old-school arcade favorites and promoting these events on social media to tap into nostalgia. Limited-time events with themed prizes, giveaways, or high-score competitions—especially tied to game anniversaries—can generate buzz and encourage repeat visits. "Get them in with nostalgia, keep them there with the new," Pratt says.

Games tied to popular intellectual property, like Jurassic Park, Sonic, Batman, or Angry Birds, offer even more promotional opportunities. These franchises often get new movies or streaming releases every few years. Pratt advises promoting these games like brand-new additions to your floor, especially around a film's release. But he warns against promoting games tied to franchises that are currently struggling. "It is important to watch for damaged brands," Pratt explains. "If particular resentment has built over a franchise, it could rub off onto you."

Striking the right balance between vintage arcade nostalgia and cutting-edge redemption and video games can transform your center into a thriving destination. By celebrating the timeless appeal of retro favorites while staying current with interactive, technologically advanced games, you cater to multiple demographics and keep them coming back for more. ●



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