

Just the Essentials



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DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

By Judith Hayes

ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN THE GAMING INDUSTRY PROJECT

In April 2008, The Canadian Gaming Association released information on the economic impact of gaming in Canada. The report identified that a large number of Canadians are directly employed in the gaming industry (about 135,000) and that our industry plays a vital role in Canada's economy.

As casino related jobs evolve to include new technologies, there is an increased need for skilled employees. We need our employees to be flexible and able to apply their skills in a variety of areas, able to learn about emerging technologies and compliance issues, and of course be able to apply decision making and problem solving skills to meet our customers' increasing needs. In fact, what we really need are employees with solid foundation skills or more accurately essential skills that will allow them to develop and grow as our industry moves into the twenty-first century.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada identifies nine essential skills that are important to success in today's workplace. They are:

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working With Others
- Continuous Learning
- Thinking Skills
- Computer Use

These skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable gaming employees to evolve in their jobs and adapt to workplace changes.

The \$492,000 grant to the Canadian Gaming Centre of Excellence provided by the Federal Government and topped up by in-kind partner contributions to \$720,000, will be used to develop a national training advisory committee, essential skills course materials and an extensive web site providing information on gaming careers and the connection of essential skills. A report outlining training needs for gaming employees across the country will be made available to all interested stakeholders. The project also focuses on the development of gaming career skills for current and prospective Aboriginal and new Canadian employees.

Over the next eighteen months gaming properties will be asked to participate in committees and in providing information to ensure the project is reflective of the needs of all gaming organizations including private, public and Aboriginal properties.

This project marks a milestone for our industry and recognizes not only the contributions of gaming to the Canadian economy, but also the enormous impact gaming has upon the employment picture of Canada. It is critical for your gaming organization to be involved!

FEATURED PROPERTY

McPHILLIPS STATION CASINO WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

McPHILLIPS STATION CASINO FACTS

- Opened June 1993, later expanded in 1999
- 721 employees
- The building is 173,000 Square Feet, with a property size of 25 acres
- Amenities include Live entertainment in lounges and mainstage, gift store, Ticketmaster outlet
- Michele's Restaurant, Dixie's bar and Joker's Lounge, Upperdeck Sports Bar or fast food at McDonalds
- Multi-purpose rooms for social and business functions. (Only persons 18-years and older allowed in the casino).
- Hours of operation Mon. to Sat., 10:00am-3:00am & Sun. noon to 3:00am
- Operates 360 days per year. (Closed - Remembrance Day, Christmas Eve and Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday)

Welcome to one of the most interesting and unique entertainment facilities in Western Canada. McPhillips Station invites you to relive the opulent splendor of the past and saunter down the street in our historic railway village amid the bustle of old world life. The splendor of the past comes alive every day at McPhillips Station. Stroll through our historic railway village. Take in the dazzling view under the twinkling lights of the chandelier in the Royal Alexandria, our turn of the century grand casino. Get swept back in time. In addition to old-world elegance, the Casino offers exceptional dining, live entertainment, exclusive attractions – and all of the games you love.

At McPhillips Station Casino, variety is the name of the game! The Casino offers a wide range of gaming options to suit all types of play and personal interest, including a variety of table games with limits from \$3 to \$1000, including Black-jack, Double Deck Blackjack Mini Baccarat, Fortune Pai Gow Poker, Roulette, Let it Ride, Texas Hold'Em Bonus, and Craps. Approximately 821 slot machines, from 1 cent to \$100 denominations, 326 Electronic Gaming Machines with games including Bingo, Keno, Poker and Swinging Bells, as well as approx. 400 paper bingo seats.



NUMERACY IS AN
ESSENTIAL SKILL
FOR TABLE
GAMES DEALERS.

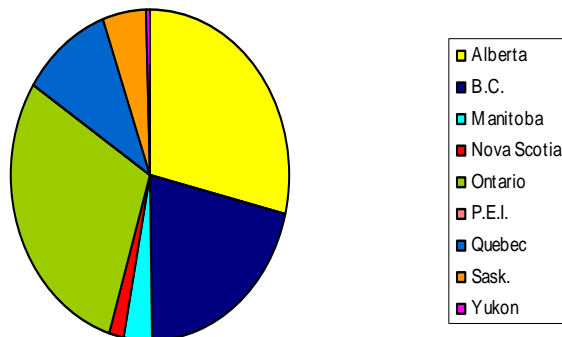


FEATURED ESSENTIAL SKILL NUMERACY

Numeracy is an Essential Skill that all Casino employees need to:

- Calculate winnings according to placement of chips, betting odds and values assigned to chips
- Count cash in opening and closing balances and customer transactions
- Estimate times required to complete tasks
- Estimate crowd flow
- Measure, calculate and use ratios to mix cleaning solutions and compounds

Percentage of Table Games in Canada by Province (2007 statistics)



FEATURED ESSENTIAL SKILL PROFILE

TABLE GAMES DEALER

Dealers deal a variety of table games with proficiency and attention to detail. They observe, at all times, the highest quality of customer service. The most important Essential Skills for Dealers are: **Numeracy, Oral Communication**

Typical Level & Most Complex	How Dealers use Essential Skills
A. READING TEXT	
1-2	Dealers read games manuals; consult “advantage charts”; read the bulletin board for memos. They may draw on the library of gaming information available in the casino.
B. USE OF DOCUMENTS	
1-2	The TDI scanner in the table games section has eliminated much of the paper work involved in tracking chips. Numerical input is computerized; the scanner identifies the dealer, records time and date. Dealers use standard office request forms for time off, WCB claims etc.
C. WRITING	
1-2	Dealers initial the daily log; may write impressions for an incident report. They use a standard form to request time off or to switch shifts.
D. NUMERACY	
1-2	Dealers sell gaming chips, generally dealing in whole dollar amounts. They add and multiply numbers rapidly in their heads and memorise repeated numerical combinations. They retain patterns of play in their heads for the duration of each game.
E. ORAL COMMUNICATION	
1-2	Dealers inform players about basic strategy; constantly alert inspector to higher bets; maintain authority; remind the players of procedures if necessary. Chat with regular clients and offer information about casino services.
F. THINKING SKILLS	
1-2	Dealers call in the inspector to make decisions on errors or questionable plays or to deal with irate guests. Remember procedures for each of the games they deal; keep a mental picture of the bets and players at all times.
G. WORKING WITH OTHERS	
	Dealers focus their attention on the play at their table and socialize little. They communicate with the inspector letting him/her know when larger bets are laid.
H. COMPUTER USE	
1	Dealers use a TDI scanner but do not have access to a computer for other purposes.
I. CONTINUOUS LEARNING	
	Dealers are given job-specific training at MLC.
J. OTHER INFORMATION	
	Dealers stand at their tables but do have frequent breaks. They require finger dexterity; make repetitive wrist movements. They are friendly without appearing lax or out of focus.

INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

Interview by:
MYRA LAMOUREUX
Training Specialist
McPhillips Station Casino

Q. How long have you been involved in Table Games?

A. I have been at Manitoba Lotteries for 25 years. First as a dealer for 5 years, Pit Boss for 3 years, Pit Supervisor for 2 years, Inspector for 6 years, Acting Table Games Manager for 1 year and now as a Table Games Training Specialist for over 13 years.

Q. What changes have you seen over the past 10 years?

A. What I have noticed is that the new dealers that are being hired may know the game of Blackjack because they have watched it on TV or played it on the computer, but their math skills are not at the levels they were 10 years ago.

Q. Can you be more specific?

A. Many of our new-hire Blackjack dealers might know the game but cannot pass the 30-question pre-screening math test. Some people who want to be dealers have not even played with a deck of cards or do not even own a deck of cards, maybe do to the fact that the computer table games are making decks of cards obsolete. Also, for some who do pass this test and are familiar with the game, do not realize the complexity with the math skills. Dealers have to quickly calculate in their heads the card amounts, chip bets and payouts and also they have to exchange currency for chips. They have to follow strict procedures when it comes to placement of cards and chips for gaming integrity.



In Blackjack, there are three areas of math: cards, chips and currency. Some of the Blackjack trainees might be competent in one area but lacking skills in the others. For example, counting card totals might come easy but have trouble in calculating chips and/or exchanging currency for chips.

Q. How does Table Games training build in the development of Numeracy?

A. The Blackjack training course is 120 hours, generally over a 3-week period. What we do during this time is send 'homework' home to practice their math skills. Repetitive practice is key to learning Blackjack math skills. We provide:

- Decks of cards and ask trainees to practice flipping over cards and adding the card totals quickly
- Math lesson plans on how to quickly calculate odds for Blackjack calculations
- Blackjack basic strategy charts and blank charts to help them learning by filling-in the form

TEACHING TIPS FOR NUMERACY

NUMERACY VOCABULARY

1. Names of coins and bills

Both proper and colloquial names for common currency should be taught; nickels, dimes, quarters, pennies, loonies, twonies, bills etc.

2. Number pronunciation

Perfecting the pronunciation of numbers should be a regular, repeated and well practiced part of the curriculum.

3. Word order

Teach and practice correct word order and alternative ways of referring to amounts when talking about money, such as:

\$3.38 = Three dollars 38 cents.

\$58 = 58 dollars

\$3500.00 = thirty-five hundred dollars or three thousand five hundred dollars

4. Time and Scheduling

Teach concepts and specifics of time, calendars, months, weeks, holidays, etc.



LESSON PLAN FOR NUMERACY

FOCUS: TABLE GAMES DEALERS

Table Games dealers must perform many calculations quickly and accurately in their heads. They calculate odds in table games and keep track of bets and payouts. They count the value for chips and exchange them for the correct denominations of money. They also must calculate commissions on bets.

Calculate Bets, Odds and Payout

At the Blackjack table, the house pays 3:2 or 150% of a bet if the player gets a Blackjack and the house does not.

Question #1

How much will the house pay out on a bet of \$55.00?

Question #2

How much will the house pay out on a bet of \$10.00?

Question #3

The dealer has a Jack and an 8 showing. Which one of the following hands beats the dealer's hand?

- A) 4, 5 and 8
- B) 9, 8 and 5
- C) 10, 9 and 2

Count the Cash Value of Chips

Question #4

What is the value of 49 chips worth \$5.00 each??

Question #5

How many \$5.00 chips are needed to make \$165.00 bet?

Calculate Commissions on Bets

Five percent commission is paid to the house from winnings at the Mini Baccarat table

Question #6

How much commission will be paid on winnings of \$40.00?

Question #7

How much commission will be paid on winnings of \$104.00?

ANSWERS:

#1—\$82.50, #2—\$15.00, #3—C, #4—\$245.00, #5—33 chips, #6—\$2.00, #7—\$5.20

Essential Skills for the Gaming Industry

Why Should You Care?

THE NINE ESSENTIAL SKILLS

1. Reading Text

Refers to reading memos, schedules and procedure manuals.

2. Document Use

Refers to understanding documents that have a combination of words, numbers, symbols, colors and shapes together. (flow charts, procedural checklists)

3. Numeracy

Refers to using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms. (counting cash, calculating winnings)

4. Writing

Refers to writing memos, emails and recording entries in forms.

5. Oral Communication

Refers to talking to exchange information. (explaining Gaming rules and Casino information to customers)

6. Working with Others

Refers to employees working together to carry out tasks

7. Continuous Learning

Refers to the ongoing process of acquiring new skills and knowledge and applying them in the workplace.

8. Thinking Skills

Refers to the process of evaluating ideas or information to reach a rational decision. Thinking Skills includes problem solving, decision making, job task planning and organizing, significant use of memory and finding information from text, people and computerized databases.

9. Computer Use

Refers to the variety and complexity of computer use within the employees' position.

Essential Skills are the skills people need for work, learning and life.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada have identified nine essential skills that are essential to success in today's workplace.

They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable Gaming employees to evolve in their jobs and adapt to workplace change.

Without adequate levels of Essential Skills employees' productivity, training and career options in Gaming may be limited.

Essential Skills are critical to the future of the Gaming Industry.

HIT THE JACKPOT...BET ON A CAREER IN GAMING

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