

by Craig Pendleton

## Critical Planning for New Restaurant and Casino Openings

Opening a new restaurant or new casino is a major project. If the opening is not an addition to a current operation the challenges are even greater.

### The Benefits of a New Opening as an Expansion

If the new restaurant or new casino is part of an expansion or addition to current operations, there are many resources that can be utilized from current systems:

- Project management
- Department supervision in each outlet or area for input, planning, design brainstorming and requests.
- Facilities management can provide active input to the project and oversight of construction and installation – to learn how items operate and how to maintain systems and equipment after opening.
- Training systems and operational procedures that can be modified for the new outlet/casino.
- Proven staff and supervisors who understand the culture and know how to operate the business. They can assist with R&D, training and opening. Common practice is to use existing staff for some of the new operation's staff to avoid the challenges of training and the initial opening with all new personnel.
- Existing facilities to allow testing of products and systems (examples: kitchens for cooking and refrigerated storage, IT for tech testing).
- Existing human resources to handle recruiting, interviewing, hiring, orientation, uniforms and paperwork.
- Purchasing department to coordinate shopping, bids, purchase orders, requisitions, receiving and delivery to installation area.

### The Challenges of a New Opening that is Not an Expansion

In this situation the operation is starting from scratch. Everything will have to be created from the ground up or from past experiences, systems, materials or ideas brought from other openings that are assembled by the first supervisors and key staff that are hired in the beginning phases.

It is a balancing act to bring on sufficient key staff and management to fully complete all areas needed without bringing on extra staff and exceeding opening budgets. An initial

determination needs to be made regarding how much staff and resources will be brought on board permanently, and how much will be contracted resources that will not remain after the operation is open and running smoothly. Typically, outside resources may be required to perform specific tasks that are needed only for the opening. These service specialists may not be required later and are not cost effective to retain on permanent payroll. Often services provided by the specialists include design, layout, equipment acquisition, project oversight, creating systems, training new staff to perform daily duties and operate new systems as well as how to update these systems in the future. Budgets and timetables will assist in determining what help needs to be contracted. Often the new or existing managers may have the skills to perform all of the required tasks but simply not have sufficient time to complete everything within a rigid timetable by themselves.

Once the roles are determined of all responsibilities, a timetable must be determined. Common practice is to create a project timeline without dates beginning with the first week of opening and working backwards listing the projects that can successfully be performed in a week's period of time. In the case of a full casino opening, the schedules for each department and outlet must be coordinated together to merge similar timetables and arrive at the same final week of opening.

Based on the complexity of each job, learning certain skills may only require a few days of training while other positions may require several weeks of training. This amount of training will typically hold true when calculating how long it will take to train new supervisors in the same job skills.

Phase 1	Engage project managers Development/concept/budget	
2	Spec/bid/purchase Construction/ordering	
3	Installation	First hire key staff Build systems and controls Policy and procedures/org chart R&D/menu/tech Recruiting supervisors Installation of equipment Finalize product/service/marketing Train the trainers
4	Inspection/handoff/occupancy	Recruiting and hiring staff
5	Equipment and tech burn-in Receiving product Live production/final testing	Training/orientation/paperwork Practice dry runs/live runs Private functions/press party
6	Days off (1 or 2)	
7	Opening	
8	Two week assessment	Re-staff/release temp specialists

## Common Steps in a New Opening Project

The following list is an example of the major project items to be performed for an opening. This is not a complete list but should serve as a general guideline of tasks to be completed within a timetable. Each opening project is unique. Multiple items may be overlapped within a week provided there is enough staffing to complete the tasks. The order of projects may be adjusted provided items are not scheduled before other items if the completion of one item prevents completion of the next item.

## Typical Timeline Projects for an Opening

- Budget
- Concept
- Bring on development team and any outside resources. A project manager and owners agent should be engaged by this time.
- Design including engineering calculations. Now is the time to establish what major utilities at the site or outlet may need to be upgraded for the project. Any specific addition or upgrade in this area may require 6-10 weeks for completion.
- Specifications and costing, RFPs, contractor and supplier selection, bids.
- Ordering – construction supplies, equipment, furniture, fixtures, smallwares, printed items, technology equipment.
- Construction (one of the longer timeframe items that overlaps most of the other items).
- Receiving, install communications and offices.
- Create Policy and Procedure systems, controls and materials, job descriptions, staffing requirements, hiring pars, base model schedules, determine skills required for opening assignments and future development.
- Installation and programming at critical points based upon each item.
- Recruiting, advertising and job listings of key positions and supervisors.
- Interviewing, reference checks, tentative hiring, background testing, drug testing, licensing. Allow adequate time for supervisors and trainers to get on board.
- Testing of systems and equipment as they are installed.
- Management and key staff onboard for training as trainers, supervisor development.
- Pre-training walk through of systems R&D (true testing to arrive at approved recipes, products, sensitivities, trouble shooting, product testing/shelf life, preparation and holding options for different sales volumes, what-ifs, tastings, plating, documentation and photos), finalization of recipes, product specifications, procedure and pricing, pre-ordering of non-commonly stocked new products including specialized and printed items. Some tasks may need to be performed offsite at temporary facilities.
- Outlet hand off by contractors, suppliers and installers for inspections, testing and occupancy approvals.
- Products delivered, stored and testing of service and products. Test fire systems. Final equipment burn-in, testing of new systems and technology.
- Recruiting/advertising/job listings staff positions. Interviewing, reference checks, tentative hiring, background testing, drug testing, licensing. Allow adequate time for staff to get on board.



Score Gaming has the hottest award-winning table games in the industry. Our selection of innovative games help casino properties meet the demands of players. For more information contact Bobby Jones at 760.238.1423 and visit us at G2E - Booth #4300.

- ♦ Innovative Games ♦
- ♦ Exceptional Service ♦

**Expect More From SCORE!**



**3CARD DRAW POKER**

[www.SCOREGAMINGNV.com](http://www.SCOREGAMINGNV.com)

- Staff onboard for orientation and training, uniforms, paperwork, time clock/payroll systems, new hire assessments during training/re-staffing as needed.
- Classroom orientation and training. Train mission/vision statements, basics, technology, products/menus/specs, service.
- Practice runs (mock runs/dry runs without actual products).
- Live runs on staff/live runs on friends and family with real products – full dress rehearsal. Control product amounts for training with menu practice distribution by projected menu mix to avoid “cherry picking” of most expensive items not representative of actual normal sales.
- Private functions/press parties.
- Day(s) off prior to opening – recommended opening on Wednesday to utilize strongest staff for first 5 days of operations including the weekend.
- Operational and staffing evaluation after the first two weeks of operations.
- Release of temporary resources and re-staffing to replace fall outs from the opening.

### Next Steps in Planning the Project Timetable

A calculation must be made for how many weeks it will take to complete each task. Certain items cannot be accelerated beyond a point that will not require added costs (example: construction crews working weekends and around the clock will involve overtime fees).

Background checks, drug tests and gaming licensing have a typical timetable and often may involve extended periods of time. Licensing at a state level, if a large number of applicants are submitted at the same time, may see considerable delays.

Once the duration and required order of completion of each item is established, then dates for each week can be filled in on the timeline beginning with the opening date and moving to previous items until the date is established when the project must be started to allow opening on the selected date. This can be a startling process when the amount of time required for the project is clearly documented.

### Critical Elements and Suggestions

Place a single project manager in charge of the project. A common error many operators make is assembling supervisors in each area and releasing them with a general idea of what to complete with a due date for completion. This method is not dynamic oversight and leads to major conflicts if not managed by one person.

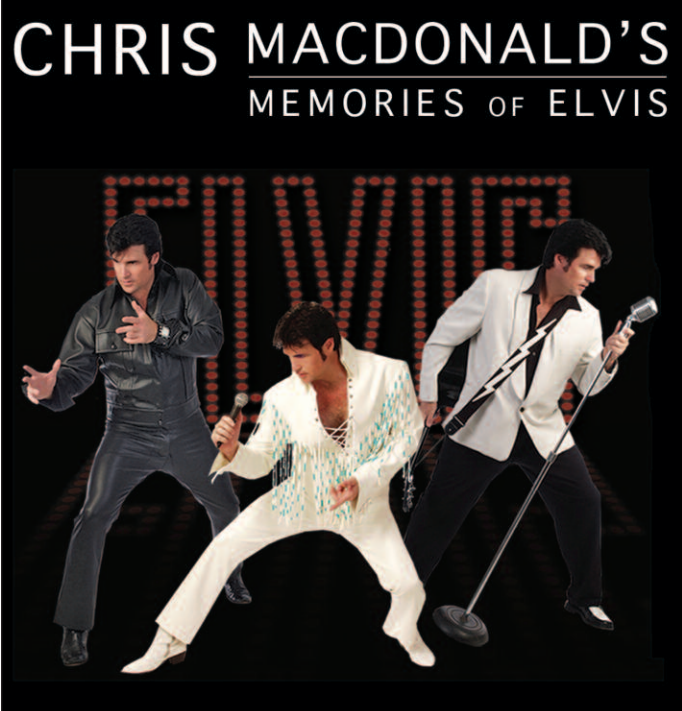
Pad estimated timetables with an extra amount of time for the performance of each item. Delays in openings are common. A delay in one area may delay an entire project. Planning a fixed

opening date tied to a specific holiday or event can easily force a hasty opening.

Training and practice should be performed on other staff members, friends and family – not on guests and customers. Practice, practice and then practice. The staff should be able to train a supervisor on their job and perform these functions efficiently and consistently prior to opening the outlet to the public.

Many guests will not give the casino/outlet a second chance if their first experience isn't good. Simple errors in planning, design and project management can be very costly. Project managers must meet and communicate regularly with all parties involved at a minimum of a weekly basis while maintaining a real-time project status report available to all parties. Planning will always provide the best results and prevent many unexpected surprises during the opening process. ♣

*Craig Pendleton is President of National Foodservice Consulting, Inc. He can be reached by email at [natlfdsrv@yahoo.com](mailto:natlfdsrv@yahoo.com) or visit [www.nationalfoodserviceconsulting.com](http://www.nationalfoodserviceconsulting.com).*



**CHRIS MACDONALD'S**  
**MEMORIES OF ELVIS**

- A Multi Media Tribute to the incredible story of the King of Rock-n-Roll
- Full production show with a 9 piece band, back up singers and dancers celebrating the life and music of Elvis Presley

“Let's Rock-n-Roll”

For Booking Call 954-341-6005 or  
for more info go to [WWW.CHRISELVIS.COM](http://WWW.CHRISELVIS.COM)