Budgeting Solutions

Designing fun and
engaging gaming experiences and
driving revenue with player analytics

SG SCIENTIFIC GAMES®

SG Gaming, a division of Scientific Games Corporation, is a leading provider of gaming solutions for the licensed betting office, arcade and bingo sectors in the UK as well as a content provider for the interactive gaming sector.

Overview

The Business Challenge: SG Gaming saw an opportunity to differentiate itself by providing not only state-of-the-art gaming machines, but also the insight to help clients configure machines to maximise revenues.

The Solution: SG Gaming has built an insight and analytics capability that gathers data from over 20,000 gaming machines and empowers users to analyse player behaviour, revenues and market trends for themselves.

The Benefits: Insight from gaming data enables improvements in game design, platform development and marketing. Automated analytics increases weekly reporting output tenfold and eliminates manual report-writing.

• Empowers users to analyse player behaviour, revenues and trends

• Reveals new insights into game design, platform development and marketing

• 10x boost in weekly report production without hiring additional resources

Solution Components

• IBM® Cognos® Business Intelligence

• IBM SPSS® Modeler

"Analytics helps us to understand player behaviour and develop successful games and promotions."

Chris Wilkinson, Director of Insight and Analytics
SG Gaming

Taking the Lead

In recent years, the rise of online and mobile betting and the entry of new game providers has made the UK gaming market more competitive than ever before. To attract the attention of new customers and maintain the loyalty of existing players, it is not enough to create high-quality gaming products. Gaming providers need to find an edge – a way to set themselves apart from the competition.

For SG Gaming, part of that edge comes from technology, and specifically from analytics. The company has more than 20,000 gaming machines in licensed betting offices, arcades and bingo halls across the country. Each state-of-the-art machine offers up to 70 different games, and SG Gaming is constantly developing new games and new promotions to keep players interested.

Sophisticated as they are, the machines themselves are only part of what makes SG Gaming a leader in its field. Behind the exciting gameplay and attractive presentation is a serious big data architecture that captures every play session, including every transaction that each customer makes on each machine. Receiving over 20 million rows of new data per day, the company has a rich source of insight into player behaviour patterns, market trends, promotional activities, and many other areas.

Chris Wilkinson, Director of Insight and Analytics at SG Gaming, explains: "We don't just offer the best machines with the best games – we unlock insight that helps us work with our clients to optimise the configuration of each machine to maximise revenues in any given location."

"Analytics helps us see what combinations of games our clients should offer, what promotions they should try, and what configuration they should apply to meet the needs of their unique markets. It also helps us understand why players prefer one game to another and feed that insight back to our developers, which helps them create new generations of even more compelling games."

"We are also focused on our responsibilities to ensure that gambling is a fun activity, and to work with our industry partners in promoting responsible gambling. Developing a greater understanding of problem gambling behaviour is an area where we are working in conjunction with our customers in order to ensure that our products are used responsibly."

Building an Enterprise Analytics Capability

SG Gaming has always been a data-rich business. However, until two years ago, its analytics capability relied on a handful of specialists in different parts of the business. These skilled analysts spent much of their time manually gathering and manipulating data in spreadsheets – a time-consuming and occasionally error-prone task.

The company's Executive Chairman realised that analytics offered an opportunity to become not just a provider of technology, but a trusted advisor to its clients. Working with the CEO and COO, he recruited Chris Wilkinson to form a new Insight and Analytics department that would act as a centre of excellence within the business.

In the place of a few scattered analysts, Wilkinson would build the team, design the processes and put in place the technology required to transform the way the business gains value from its data. He also engaged Budgeting Solutions, an IBM Business Partner and analytics specialist, to help the new team get the most out of the solution.

"On the technology side, IBM offered the breadth of capabilities we needed: business intelligence, predictive analytics, and the ability to support a self-service culture for business users as well as provide more sophisticated tools for power users," says Wilkinson.

"But in a big data world, technology alone is not enough to deliver return on investment.

You need the right people and the right processes too. For us, working with our partner Budgeting Solutions was a key part of building this capability."

Budgeting Solutions deployed IBM® Cognos® Business Intelligence software and developed an initial set of reports to meet some of the most urgent business needs. Next, the consultants worked closely with the in-house team to help them develop reports and analyses for themselves. As a result, the SG Gaming team is now almost entirely self-sufficient, but still regards Budgeting Solutions as a trusted partner for particularly complex analytics projects and product support.

Seeing the Result

Today, SG Gaming is able to generate more than 400 reports each week, providing instant insight to all areas of the business. The reporting process is almost entirely automated and users can serve themselves with the information they need, or have information delivered automatically to their inbox.

The company has also invested in IBM SPSS® Modeler to mine and predictively model data on player behaviour. The results are fed into the business intelligence system, giving decision-makers and game developers new insight into how players interact with their games, and why some games or promotions are more appealing than others. In turn, this insight helps SG Gaming constantly enhance its products.

With these technologies in place, the Insight and Analytics team does not need to spend time manually pulling together data or formatting spreadsheets. Instead they

can focus on developing deeper analyses, learning more sophisticated techniques and exploring new data-sets.

Operating in a highly regulated industry, it is also important for SG Gaming to be able to demonstrate its compliance with the latest gaming industry legislation and best practices. By generating detailed, accurate reports on every aspect of its operations, the solution helps the company satisfy its regulators and auditors more quickly and at a lower cost.

Most important of all, analytics helps SG Gaming understand market trends and track the performance of its machines for each of its clients. The company's account managers can access daily dashboards that show play sessions, transactions and revenue by machine, by region or by type of location. They can then drill down from a top level view to examine the underlying data.

By understanding which games and which machines in which locations are generating the most revenue, SG Gaming is in a strong position to advise its clients on how best to configure the machines to maximise their revenues.

"We are now better placed to build strategic relationships with our clients at a deeper level than most of our competitors. We're not just providing clients with a gaming platform, we're advising them on how to win and retain customers and grow their businesses. That's the key advantage that analytics gives us."

Chris Wilkinson, Director of Insight and Analytics
SG Gaming