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"The Operators' Choice"

Cover Story:
Sacoa builds on success

Preview:
IAAPA Attractions Expo
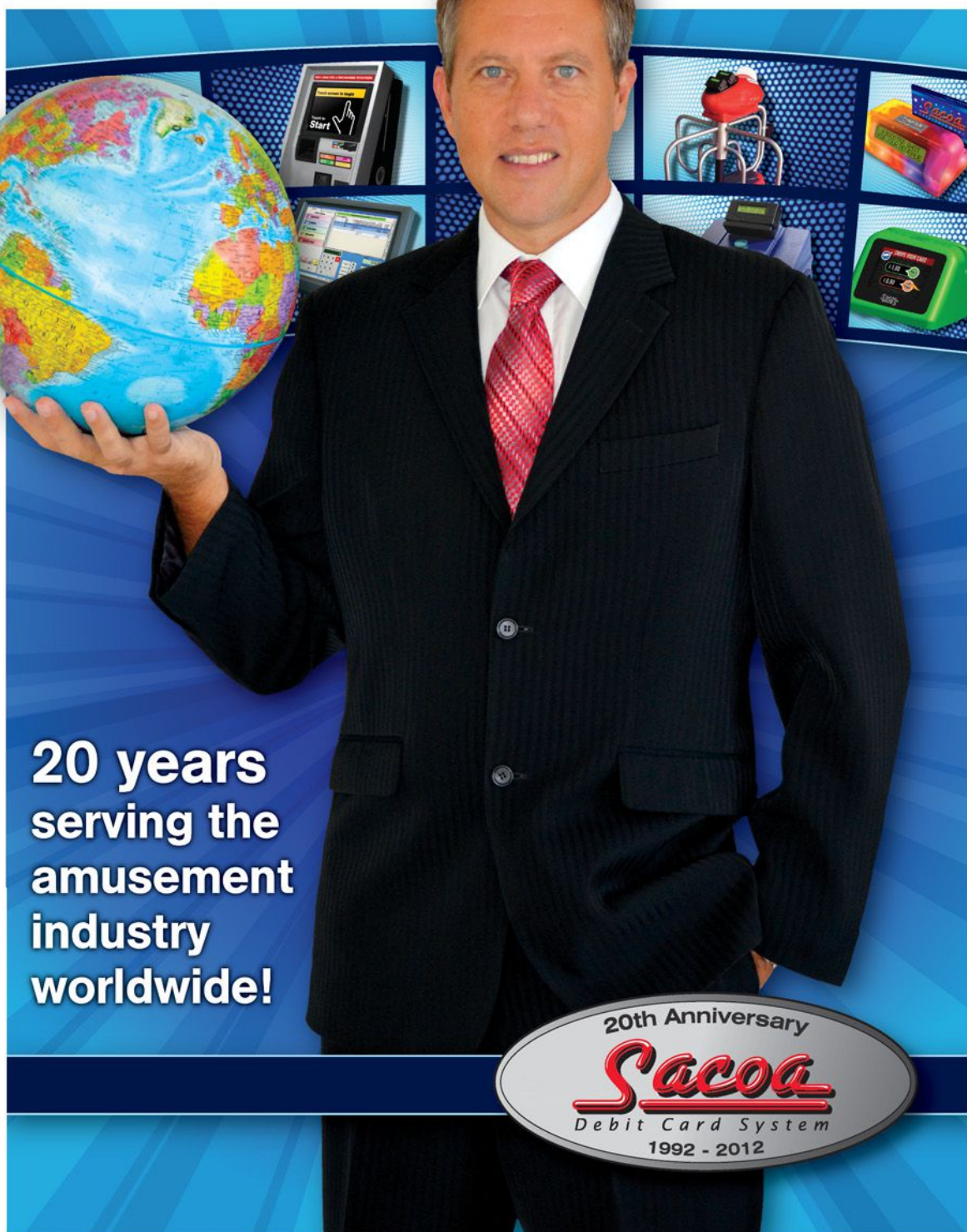
Focus on:
Sweepstakes and promotional games

20 years serving the amusement industry worldwide!

20th Anniversary
Sacoa
Debit Card System
1992 - 2012

OCTOBER 2012

THE COIN-OP/FEC INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

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Top:
Sacoa principals, (l-r): Pol, Jorge, and Sebastian Mochkovsky at a trade show.

Inset:
The Color-Shot HD DR450

Sacoa PlayCard celebrates 20 years

A sophisticated wireless debit card system designed to manage every activity in an entertainment center was not commonplace 20 years ago. Enter Sacoa, a game changer.

The company has roots in the entertainment field that go back 55 years, with the PlayCard System in operation for 20 years.

Company principals are Jorge, Sebastian, and Pol Mochkovsky. Sebastian provided background and history on the development of the Sacoa Play-Card System, which is currently installed in over 800 locations in more than 50 countries.

What led to the development of the PlayCard System?

My grandfather, Mauricio Mochkovsky, and my father, Jorge, started the entertainment business operating jukeboxes and Bally bingos in bars and sports clubs in Argentina.

In the late '80s, Jorge realized the need of a much better way to control the business, keep track of the revenue, rotate games wisely, modify prices to compensate for inflation, and avoid theft.

So Sacoa PlayCard was developed in-house in the early '90s to optimize our own operation of arcades, family entertainment centers (FECs), and amusement parks.

An almost immediate 30 percent revenue rise was derived from the sys-tem being installed at all the centers around the country in less than a year.

The Sacoa System is THE solution to optimize the entire operation using a rechargeable magnetic debit card with centralized management from a remote corporate office.

As operators you could see what was needed at the location level. What were the capabilities of your first system?

The first version of the PlayCard system allowed basic features such as individual game control price, automat-ed digital revenues reports, and cashiers sales control, which was our goal.

Suddenly, we realized the power of the "marketing system" and we added new features like VIP status, automated price tables, instant lottery on POS (point of sale) recharges, time cards, and more. Today most of these features are standard in the card system industry.

One feature we created in 1994 and did not find successful until a few years ago was the implementation of the "electronic" ticket for redemption games. The market was not ready for such advanced development.

How has the PlayCard System evolved? How has the market changed?

From the beginning, the system was developed to manage the basics in a location. By that time, the market had a powerful coin/token mindset. The U.S. market was the hardest one because of the legendary quarter and operators did not have an open mind

ready for the future. The rest of the world appeared to be more prepared for such a huge change.

Today, the system allows operators to manage all aspects of their business, such as redemption, food and beverage inventories, party bookings, membership, loyalty programs, online sales, and more options.

As the market became more and more demanding, and new requirements surfaced from operators all over the world, the company strived to lead the vanguard by developing and introducing new features every year, taking the PlayCard system to new levels of performance, usefulness, and sophistication.

For example, the implementation of a wireless game network eliminated the hassle of running wires to or from the games, allowing new site layouts as easily as moving furniture around.

The development of multi-function

self-service kiosks allowed customers to purchase, recharge, and analyze Play-Cards on their own. Our Multi-Session redemption counter software used through barcode scanners provides speedy customer service.

The current acceptance of e-tickets eliminates jams and down time at the games, reducing counting time at the redemption center as well as personnel needed. The introduction of several colorful card readers opened a range of options for customers with different budgets.

Today, many food and beverage and bowling operators are looking for integrated third party system solutions. We found this to be very convenient and the feature has been offered since we made one of our first installations in the U.S. market back in the mid-'90s.

The Internet and smart phones have had a great impact on the market with direct payment solutions, growing

Part of the Sacoa team.

demand for online sales, online booking solutions, and customer relationship management (CRM) applications.

Sacoa's product line of card readers consists of the Classic DR200, Color-Shot DR-400, Color-Shot HD DR450, and the Touch N' Play DR500. What is your most popular model? Which features are most in-demand?

Our most popular card reader model is definitely the Color-Shot that allows for countless effects such as static hues, marquee-like animations, fade in, fade out, and crawling rainbow effects.

The Color-Shot 3.5-inch HD screen is the newest product, and as such it has been growing exponentially. It supports multiple images and multi-lingual messages in any alphabet. We also offer motorized turnstiles and manual access control for rides.

What are the best locations for each model of card reader?

For indoor FECs, any of the Color-Shot models is recommended, while for outdoor parks we suggest the Classic model since it is waterproof.

You exhibited at the Amusement Expo in March. What are trade show attendees impressed with when they come by your booth?

Sacoa exhibits at all major trade events in the U.S. and around the world. Coming up is the European Amusement Show (EAS) in Berlin this month and the IAAPA Expo in Orlando in November.

One constant first impression from the attendees is when they look at the amazing world map where we show the locations Sacoa has installed all around the world, currently over 800 locations in more than 50 countries.

Despite the economy, new entertainment centers are being built and existing facilities are remodeling to stay competitive. Are you seeing more facilities deciding to go to a card system?

Absolutely! The trend is to go towards the card system because it allows for increased sales, better control, reduced costs, marketing strategies, etc.

What advice do you give to a facility that is still undecided about going to a card system? What are the biggest advantages of your card system?

The biggest advantages are that it increases sales and allows the operator to have more control. Operators of all sizes cannot afford NOT to have a card system.

When you think about the reasons why an operator would want to implement a debit card system, you have to mention the following:

• The possibility of having an integrated POS according to the type of operation where customers may purchase not only cards and credits but also food and beverages, retail merchandise, attraction and ride passports, schedule laser tag sessions, link their cards to a frequent bowling account, post their transaction to a hotel room, and more.

• Tools to implement marketing strategies, ensure customer satisfaction, and enhance customer loyalty.

• Pricing strategies to increase revenues, a feature impossible to achieve with coin/token operation.

• Elimination of the financial cost of float and hidden operational costs.

• Put a stop to petty theft or fraud. The system prevents cashiers from cheating the operator or the customers.

• Computerized management, monitoring, and control for operations of any size.

• More time to cater to customer needs, motivate personnel, and achieve general operation oversight.

• Reporting and auditing features that enable better decision making based on hard facts information.

• The possibility of switching to e-ticket operation provides for maintenance savings by reducing coin and ticket jams, thereby reducing labor costs.

• More efficient redemption inventory control.

All these translate into a more profitable operation. When you think about the reasons why an operator would choose the Sacoa PlayCard System, you cannot avoid mentioning some key factors such as:

• We operate more than 30 FECs and amusement parks in Argentina and Ecuador, thus our products are developed in-house with a true inside knowledge of the operator's business and marketing needs.

• Our company is known for its outstanding performance and reliability as well as for its post-sale service and flexibility for product customization, which accounts for the constant evolution and improvement of features.

• The PlayCard System has been in use since 1992 and is the most widely used system in the world.

• We offer unparalleled support, a 24/7 help desk at no extra cost, and free software upgrades.

Tell us about your other products: the Redemption Counter Program, the Inventory Control System, the Online Party & Event Booking Module, and the Online Sales Module.

The *Redemption Multi-Session Program* allows up to eight attendants, equipped with wireless barcode scanners, to work at the same time on one single computer, servicing up to 64 persons simultaneously. This allows for high-speed performance of all redemption operations, which translates into speedy customer service.

The *Redemption Counter System* controls e-ticket counting and paper ticket counting since it is capable of interfacing directly with "behind the counter" ticket eaters and scales and also "reads" ticket amounts from pre-counted vouchers from stand-alone ticket eaters.

The system allows for full audit and accounting through specific and customized reports. Labeling capability, DPL direct input from all major redemption suppliers, and automated minimum/maximum settings for DPO are standard.

The *Online Party Booking Module* is a highly customizable platform where customers can adapt their whole system to their business needs. It features multiple store selection, availability, party packages, food and gifts, on-line payment, and everything needed to manage party reservations.

With the *Online Sales Module* operators can start offering instant credit recharges to their customers right from their Web site. It allows for easily

adapting the look and feel to suit the company's image, customizing credit offers, and getting online reports with an easy to use interface.

What are some of your most recent installations?

In the last few months we have installed the Sacoa PlayCard system in more than 30 locations. In the U.S.: The All Star in Riverhead, N.Y.; Lucky's Complex in Daytona Beach, Fla.; The Epicenter Family Entertainment Complex in Klamath Falls, Ore.; Restaurant 180 in Dallas, Texas; Laser Legend in San Antonio, Texas; and more.

Worldwide we have recent installations in Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Georgia, India, Kuwait, Oman, Mexico, Morocco, Paraguay, and South Africa. More are coming during Christmas.

Is there a minimum size facility or minimum number of games and attractions that work well with a card system?

Although technically there is no minimum, the minimum we recommend for the investment to be reasonable is 14 games.

Even with cultural differences, there is universal appeal in family entertainment. Is there a common goal or mission at all the facilities that utilize Sacoa products in their entertainment venues?

Absolutely yes! To make more money and to have more control over the operation.

Sacoa is a family business. Is it easier or more difficult for family members to work together? Is a new generation coming along to continue the Sacoa name and tradition of excellence?

Sacoa Entertainment was born in 1957 as a family business and has kept the same format since then. The PlayCard division is also a family business from Jorge's side.

It is nice to work together; when there are several ideas for the same concept we professionally discuss every matter, looking for the best solution without jeopardizing the family side of it.

We have opened offices around the world to provide better service. They are in Brazil, France, India, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Mexico, Taiwan, Turkey, Russia, and the U.S. Our main office is in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The new generation joins us at several trade shows, playing games and collecting souvenirs, which is exactly what Pol and I did when we were kids. We can't wait to see what happens 15 years from now.

For more information on Sacoa, call (214)256-3965; e-mail (playcard@sacoa.com); Web (www.playcard.com.ar). ▲