

Physical Security in UK Casinos: the shift from protecting assets to being one

A new approach to customer service

The UK casino landscape has changed dramatically in the past decade.

And so has the role of the men and women providing physical security to this sector.

The security in a standard casino is generally split into two parts.

The Physical Security Team - which involves trained professional security officers patrolling the casino floor to respond to criminal or suspicious activities and also managing access to the premises.

The Surveillance Team – which operate the closed-circuit television system in order to maintain an overview of both players and employees, reducing fraud, money laundering, theft and any type of misconduct.

Both of these specialised casino departments work very closely with each other to ensure the safety of both guests as well as the casino's assets and staff. This dynamic also helps adhere to licensing and gaming regulations.

Common sense - and regulation – has meant that there have always been people both on the ground in and outside casinos, as well as watching from above through surveillance cameras, to ensure a casino remains a safe, viable and enjoyable environment for customers, employees and owners. However, with changes to regulation allowing customer to walk in off the street, these security people arguably now have an added role – encouraging footfall.

While the ultimate responsibility of security personnel may not have changed – to keep people and the casino safe – they are also now a central part of the public 'face' of the casino.



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Often, they are the first person a potential new customer or existing customer sees and their ability to both do their job and make customers feel welcome and wanted has commercial value.

In a world of high competition, **attracting customers** is key.

The easiest change is being approachable and friendly so new customers in particular feel at ease coming to and into the casinos. To achieve that it is just a question of hiring people who can do their job of providing security while smiling and being friendly.

A casino will want people who can be in control and give a sense of 'protection' without being constantly threatening or menacing.

It gets trickier when it comes to existing customers – and particularly high rollers, regulars or people of note. They can go anywhere and so being recognised and having a sense they are valued needs to start on the pavement to keep them coming back. For security personnel to add value, they need to be consistently present enough to be part of the fabric of the casino. They will need to – and want to - understand the key players, how to engage with them and how to manage them in a way that adds value and appeal to the casino.

Another important element of the role is to be able to identify those that pose a risk whether they are individuals known to the local authorities, those known to cause problems at other establishments or those the casino itself have deemed unsuitable from previous experience. In some ways, this part of the role is similar to recognising valued customers – the physical security presence must identify them, assess the possible risk they pose and establish the response that is most beneficial to the casino, all before the individual goes through the door.

To achieve all this requires the right kind training as well as on-going collaboration with other security personnel and regular use of facial recognition techniques to ensure physical security adds real value to the business.

The training must go beyond simply being SIA Licenced and include a detailed induction into the gaming industry and how to support customers and truly understand the business

In modern casinos, having physical security personnel is not just about protecting assets, keeping people safe and meeting your legal requirements, it's about having a consistent presence, with people who are sharp, engaged, and personable with the right training to ensure they are able to add to the appeal, and therefore value, of the casino. **It's about being an asset, not just protecting them.**



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