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“What do Diversity and Inclusion have to do with me?” and other common questions about connecting to fuel engagement and growth

PGRI Introduction:

Following the Women’s Initiative in Lottery Leadership event (WILL) held at PGRI SMART-Tech, we caught up with IGT’s Kim Barker Lee (Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion) and Stephanie Huckel (Senior Global Program Manager, Diversity and Inclusion) on some questions that managers commonly face about Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), and how IGT’s D&I efforts have accelerated in the past year.

Paul Jason: Kim, when you took on your role one year ago, IGT already had an executive advisory council for D&I, but the Office of Diversity and Inclusion was new. Now that you and your team are one year in, do you still need to convince people that diversity and inclusion are important for business?

Kim Barker Lee: Our lottery customers have told us how important it is to them. When we asked them about it, more than 90% said it’s important that their vendors focus on diversity and inclusion – that it’s relevant to growing their lottery – and 92% said it’s important within their organization. Within our own organization, we view diversity and inclusion as being critical to how we grow and how we support our customers’ growth. We know that we need to mirror our customer base and our customers’ evolving player base, and support a culture where all employees feel

valued, included, and engaged. We also know that being a diverse and inclusive organization has a positive impact on innovation and on the delivery of products and services to customers. We’re excited about the progress we’ve made in the past year. There are areas where we’re doing really well, and areas where, like many organizations, we have bold, aspirational goals.

Paul Jason: Can you talk about the difference between diversity and inclusion. Is one more important than the other?

Kim Barker Lee: The way I describe it is that diversity is not just about race or age, but the total mix of people in an

organization, including their professional and personal experiences, ethnic heritage, religion, mental and physical ability, gender identity, character traits, and much more. Inclusion is how the workplace and the culture allow for and embrace that diversity and individuality. Ideally, they work together. We’re very focused on the inclusion part – a culture that sees the value in ensuring that all voices are at the

Wendy Montgomery, Senior Vice President, Global Brand, Marketing, and Communications, and Alberto Fornaro, Chief Financial Officer, (shown below) are the executive sponsors of IGT’s Women’s Inclusion Network (WIN). The group’s goals include empowering women at IGT through networking, professional development and mentoring.

The launch of the company’s first WIN chapter was held in 2018 in Las Vegas, Nevada (shown here and on opposite page). This year, WIN with IGT is expanding to include new chapters in Italy, Reno, and Rhode Island.



table – including those that are currently underrepresented, and this takes effort.

Stephanie Huckel: Related to that, I think about some of the employee questions around diversity and inclusion that come up for managers in and outside of our industry that might have relevance for others reading this.

Kim Barker Lee: One is the perception that if someone is not a member of an underrepresented group, their future will be somehow negatively impacted by D&I within an organization. So while we're thinking about all the positive aspects of diversity and inclusion – and training leaders and managers to get the most from that diversity – some people say, "Wait a minute, if I don't offer those different perspectives or I'm not a member of an underrepresented group, does it mean I don't have value to the organization?" And these are important conversations to have, because ultimately they create a clearer understanding for everyone of what diversity and inclusion are about.

Stephanie Huckel: The fact is, if you're someone who is committed to your work here, has institutional knowledge, and you're interested in creating an environment where everyone can show up as themselves, then you bring great value to the organization. There can be a misconception of what diversity is – that diversity is the "other." In reality, diversity includes everyone, and a straight, Baby Boomer, cis-gender white male represents dimensions of diversity just

as a 20-year old genderqueer Latinx person does. If you're up for creating an inclusive environment for your colleagues, then you add value for everyone.

Kim Barker Lee: One question that comes up for us and for others who are focused on diversity and inclusion is: "Are we trying to solve something with this?" It's an opportunity to raise awareness about the reality that the global consumer base is constantly evolving and changing, and beyond demographic shifts, global organizations need the cultural grounding, the brain power, and the diverse professional experiences and life experiences to meet those changes.

Stephanie Huckel: Another common question is, "Does this mean I can no longer hire the best person for the job, and instead I have to hire a woman, a person of color, or a person with a disability?"

Kim Barker Lee: In answering that, I like to challenge the assumption that the goals of D&I, qualification, and merit are on opposite sides of the table. They're not mutually exclusive. What we know is that diverse teams perform better – there's a lot to be said for building your team with different life experiences, perspectives, and professional experiences. It's a strength. But all of that difference cannot make a positive impact on business if there isn't an inclusive culture. If people aren't allowed to collaborate, to share those diverse experiences – or they're shut out of opportunities to grow and to learn – then it's diversity for diversity's sake. That's not our goal.

Paul Jason: The Women's Initiative in Lottery Leadership (WILL) has a unique mission to drive business growth by supporting the advancement of women into top positions in the lottery industry. How focused is your organization on supporting women's advancement?

Kim Barker Lee: It's an important area of focus for IGT, and one of the reasons we sponsored the WILL Educational Seminar during the recent PGRI SMART-Tech conference. IGT also recommended and sponsored the event's keynote speaker, Ann Simmons Nicholson – a well-known executive coach and gaming industry veteran, who shared her vision for accelerating diversity and inclusiveness in gaming, as well as strategies to help women develop a successful career path. That said, one of the things we take into account is the diversity of women's experiences and who they are. The women in our organization work in more than 60 countries and represent different cultures, ethnicities, languages, and more. When we're talking to and about women, it's important to factor in that no one woman's experience is identical to another's, yet there are some things organizations can do to positively impact not just the numbers but the professional lives of women.

Stephanie Huckel: The first employee business resource group (EBRG) that we launched at IGT was the Women's Inclusion Network (WIN). It was created by a group of employees in our Las Vegas office, and now WIN is expanding to

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include chapters in Italy, Reno, and Rhode Island. It was important to us that our EBRGs represent a cross-section of our people, and this year we're also expanding

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– Kim Barker Lee

an EBRG focused on the needs of our LGBTQ employees and launching EBRGs for veterans, persons with disabilities, and employees ages 50+.

Kim Barker Lee: Importantly, our leaders are directly engaged with EBRGs, serving as advocates and champions, strategic partners and coaches. As an example, Renato Ascoli, CEO of North America, is the executive sponsor of PRIDE with IGT, our employee business resource group focused on LGBTQ employees, and Wendy Montgomery, Senior Vice President, Global Brand, Marketing, and Communications, and Alberto Fornaro, Chief Financial Officer, are the executive sponsors of WIN with IGT, our global women's inclusion network.

Stephanie Huckel: For our EBRG executive sponsors, learning about the experiences of employees allows for an exchange that can have a huge impact on culture and inclusion. IGT has also established a training program for executives on leading inclusively and creating greater opportunities for growth for all team members, to help ensure that they're well equipped to manage and promote diverse teams.

Kim Barker Lee: This leads to the subject of intersectionality. When talking about any of these groups, not all members are the same. For example, there's no uniform definition of “women's issues.”

Stephanie Huckel: Yes, people never have just one dimension of diversity – we're dynamic people who carry multiple layers or dimensions of diversity at the same time. How this works in practice, for example, is that people talk about “women's issues,” with barriers to leadership being things like parental leave – and that lens might be

broadly relevant to some women but could be made more relevant to others whose challenges to advancing into leadership aren't related to being heterosexual, married, and with two kids. The idea is to consider these aspects of intersectionality when developing policies and actively seek out other voices.

Paul Jason: What do you advise others who are looking to improve D&I within their organization?

Kim Barker Lee: Our customers have their own questions around diversity and inclusion, and some lotteries have shared or asked us about things going on within their organization as we have shared our own path and our learnings. One of the things we've talked about with others in the industry is the impact of the different dimensions of diversity. We welcome these exchanges.

Paul Jason: How does D&I come into play in lottery marketing?

Kim Lee: We market externally, and it comes into play there. We also do a lot of internal marketing, where the customers are our current and prospective employees, and representation matters. We're conscious of trying to ensure that all our communications reflect the world we live in. That certainly includes visible diversity. For example, we helped to create avatars that represent more diverse individuals in our marketing materials, and more and more of our organization-wide announcements are now made available in multiple languages. Together with IGT's communications teams, we've implemented a process where people with different perspectives review our marketing materials. I'd say that in our organization there is now a higher level of discourse about these things. And with the complete support of our leadership, we put in place trade show guidelines to ensure that we are consistently represented in a professional manner. Rather than practices or costumes that objectify others, we rely on the experience and knowledge of our employees to promote our products and services, consistent with IGT's values and workplace culture. ■

IGT's Comfort Zone parking spots, located near the main entrance of IGT offices, are designated for expectant parents and employees with other conditions that require a little extra care. The Comfort Zone program was introduced by members of IGT's Women's Inclusion Network in Las Vegas and has since been expanded to the IGT campus in West Greenwich, RI.

