

A master juggler in the pressure cooker of high-stakes gambling, Marcus Lim imparts a lifetime of insights and skills for everyone in the explosive market of luxury lifestyle

HOW TO

Secrets of Selling to the

HOOK A

Ultra High Net Worth

WHALE

“Witty, informative, engaging... all this and more.” – Alfred Lim, Director,
Fullerton Law Chambers

MARCUS LIM

What does it take to have billionaires and celebrities on your speed dial, party with high-rollers and be responsible for billions of dollars in annual revenue?

In this exciting tell-all, Marcus Lim, a seasoned marketer in VIP international casino sales, spills his secrets on how to wheel and deal with the super-rich. Running a casino may look like glitz and glamour on the outside, but you'll need to be a shrewd businessman, an astute mind-reader and an empathetic psychologist all rolled into one to ensure that all your ultra high net worth – and ultra demanding – customers are happy... and Marcus has that in spades.

Follow this no-holds-barred guide and win big at work – and in life!

visit our website at:
www.marshallcavendish.com/genref

 **Marshall Cavendish**
Business

Contents

Preface	9
Introduction: Welcome to My Life	12
Part One: Gambling, Gaming and What I Do	
1 One Odd Start	18
2 Casinos: Losing, Winning and So Much More	27
3 The Foundations of Salescraft	36
Part Two: It's All About the Customer	
4 Hunters and Gatherers	44
5 Whales: A Field Guide	53
6 Selling the Dream – Quickly and Often	69
Part Three: Fortune Favours the Prepped	
7 The Right Impression	84
8 Do Your Homework	92
9 Platform Marketing and Social Media	104

Part Four: Execute and Close

10	The Three-Meeting Rule	112
11	When Things Change, So Do You	129
12	A Whole New World	138

Part Five: Moving on Up

13	Focus on Yourself	146
14	Service Recovery or Bust!	156
15	Everyone Is Needed	164
16	Managing Your Bosses	176
	Conclusion	185
	Closing Note: A Letter to My Son	187
	Appendix: What We've Learnt	193
	Notes	202
	Acknowledgements	206
	About the Author and Co-author	207

Preface

As you are reading this introduction, one of four things must be true.

1. You are in the casino sales business and intrigued by the idea of reading what someone in the same business might have to say.
2. You are in another job in the casino sector, but aspire to be a VIP salesperson, and thus seeking some insight into the workings of this world and what it takes to enter this niche area.
3. You have no idea what salespeople in casinos do – your best guess involves the image of a dealer, and you are interested to find out.
4. You are not in the business, but are curious about what it takes to be a good salesperson.

This is a book produced by someone who has earned a conventionally successful life. Meaning, someone who is a

multi-millionaire. Someone who has climbed to the highest positions of named companies in the gaming and hospitality sector. Someone who has broken historical records for the number of billions in profit he brought in for the company. And finally, someone who spent his childhood crammed in a three-room HDB flat with seven other people. This book is like a buffet spread, with sections heavily laden with 'delicacies' that range from distinctive and unusual memories with ultra high-net-worth customers, to what goes on in the minds of mysterious casino salespeople as they make their sale, to the toxic workplace politics that somehow exist in every industry with gaming and hospitality being no exception. If it is not yet evident, this book is not exactly a focused one that will drill you in one area. (Although if you're interested, the producer does have a book for that.)

This book, strictly speaking, is not a sales book. Naturally so, because it does not aim to be one. The producer has no intention of becoming another faux guru, and claim this one trick will make you a millionaire. (If they truly did know such a trick, they would probably be relaxing at a multi-million dollar mansion in the Caribbean instead of seeking guru fame.)

This book exists to serve anyone who – in the words of the producer – gives a damn about it. The reason why we read biographies and love learning about other people's success stories is because we are curious, yes, but ultimately because we know that getting to know the mistakes made and lessons learnt along the way can provide good grounds for one to build their own success stories upon.

I wrote this book for two reasons. First, I just got fed up with salespeople that didn't know how to sell. The sheer number of bad sales people frustrated me. Second, I fought an extremely lonely battle in my early years in this business without a mentor. The combination of toxic work culture and company politics that I was oblivious to for the longest time almost made me quit this profession, and I don't wish anyone to endure that. This is a wild shot at creating an effect bigger than myself. But regardless of whether you tick all the boxes of a bullied novice salesperson or don't, I have no doubt that there is something to take away for anyone who reads this book. After all, we are perpetually selling something to someone. Who better to learn from than someone who sold his way to success?

Introduction

Welcome to My Life

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them.

– George Bernard Shaw

That was it. In a split second, the heads of the entire Singapore sales team were laid on the guillotine. Make it into the President's club by the end of the financial year by hitting 150% of our annual target – or die. Shamefully resign from the company, and very possibly have our names tarnished in the niche and small casino sales industry. What was explicitly on the line were our positions in the company, but tacitly... we had just bet the entire future of our careers in the business to the drunk President of Crown Casino.

"What?! No, no." Where was the man who had just been announcing, with heavily put-upon confusion, how our Singapore team had "done everything" but "just couldn't get

into the President's club?" His face was ashen. For Crown casino to lose their whole Singapore sales team in one fell swoop would be disastrous. Beer in hand still, he blustered that there was no way he was accepting a bet like that and hurriedly left our table.

But it was too late. A restaurant-full of Crown casino staff had borne witness to my declaration. The bet was on. And damned if I wasn't going to make good on it. The only problem was –

"Why the hell," I said slowly, running a frustrated hand over my face, "did the two of you jump in on my bet?!"

I had spoken in anger over the President's snide remarks – that the other two Singapore sales team members un-animously chimed in on my bet was completely unorchestrated, and frankly terrifying. How on earth were we going to hit more than 50% of our budgeted targets with our tiny pool of gamblers in Singapore?

They exchanged a look. "I think we can do it," one of them said finally. That daring proclamation hung in the air between us, a testament of their belief that they were voluntarily putting their asses on the line alongside mine – the stakes had suddenly been raised much, much higher.

There was really only one option. "We *make* sure we do it." I said, the tense line of my shoulders shifting back into something sure. I banged my fist down on the table, hard. "Let's do this."

And we did.

The next few months were insanity. We hustled as if our asses were on fire – and truly, the threat of being fired was

very real. We were constantly organising events and tournaments of all kinds at the casino to create a purpose for customers to visit almost every other month, going after clients be they true-blue gamblers or sporadic lapse customers who enjoyed the occasional thrill and cajoling them into coming through any means at our disposal, from persuasion to negotiation to outright pulling the favour card. It was unimaginably exhausting: day after day, month after month of keeping up such a frantic pace of non-stop hustling, a single-minded focus on nothing but *getting more customers* that sustained us through sleepless nights, subsisting on winks of sleep caught on the plane to and fro Singapore and the Crown casino in Melbourne – uncertainty and fear searing whiplike in our minds were the ever-present masters spurring us mercilessly on.

But what drove us even more relentlessly was our burning desire to shove the President club's invite right back into the President's face. His little provocation turned out to be an unexpected gift that kept on giving – we were selling like there was no tomorrow and hitting truly spectacular numbers.

By year end, we had made history. We had completely burst our annual budgeted target and broke all historical company records by achieving 270% – a staggeringly large percentage that was practically unheard of in an industry where other sales teams were struggling to even reach 100%.

After thoroughly enjoying the fully funded end-year holiday to Japan that all President club members were

entitled to, the President came to find me. He was talking excitedly about how Crown casino's number one competitor, Star casino, would be so utterly outperformed by our Singapore sales team in the coming year.

Shortly after the trip, I officially joined Star casino as the senior Vice President of South Asia, with my two teammates in tow. By an unexpected turn of fate, I became Senior Executive Vice President of both North *and* South Asia in July of my second year – but we were *billions* behind in deficit. Three hectic months later, I brought the company back to budget. By the end of the financial year, my team broke almost all sales records known to Star casino. We dethroned the almighty Crown as the reigning king of Australian casino business to seat ourselves firmly on the coveted number one place.

We achieved the highest turnover ever of 59 billion dollars. Our budget was 38 billion – we had all but exploded, going above and beyond the set target to make a whole *20 billion* in pure profit. We had done absolutely, insanely ridiculous numbers. As I remember, my paycheck that year was pretty ludicrous as well.

Now, why am I telling you all this? Surely it can't just be to brag and satisfy my own engorged salesperson ego. Of course, it's a rather unsubtle attempt at assuring you of my credibility as an experienced and reasonably successful salesman – I wouldn't want to insult your intelligence by pretending otherwise. But now, I'd like you to ask yourself – was what you had just read insightful in any way at all? Beyond realising with a pang how shudderingly rich casinos

must be, did you glean any information into the enigmatic workings of such establishments, or the manner in which their well-trained bloodhounds sniff out profit? Hmm? No?

There's no surprise there. Usually, that's how such stories about casinos go. Most of the published literature surrounding them is decorated lavishly with glitz and glamour, a shimmering veil of secrecy that distorts any information of real value from the public's eager scrutiny. Perhaps you may be asking: how do VIP casino sales people manage to reel in so many whales (ultra-rich individuals)? How can I become a good VIP salesperson – heck it, how can I even become a good salesperson at all?

Hopefully this book will end up answering most of your questions, even those about the things you didn't know you didn't know. Hopefully this book will, like an exciting buffet with platters upon platters of delectable new dishes you've never seen before, open up options and possibilities of a career in the casino business previously unknown to you.

Above all, I hope this book will help you, in some way or another. Or not, that's fine too. If you don't like it, tear it to shreds, use it as kindling to offer the gods a whiff of pure smoke as the book goes up in incandescent flames – and then later as you clear away the ashy remains befouling the earth, you can be comforted by the knowledge that you've just rid the world of an unnecessary evil that comes in the form of such a publishing atrocity. Or don't, that's fine too! Your buy, your book, your problem!

PART ONE

GAMBLING, GAMING AND WHAT I DO

1

One Odd Start

And then, as if written by the hand of a bad novelist, an incredible thing happened.

– Jonathan Stroud, *The Amulet of Samarkand*

Perhaps you've heard of brilliant entrepreneurs who just seem to have a knack for sniffing out business opportunities like a bloodhound hunting its prey. Individuals who seem to be born with the sole purpose and singular talent for making money, and raking in capital at the very age you were still playing chef with Play-Doh. All you can do is shake your head in amazement, because hey, these people are just wired a different way from everyone else; they're a different breed.

But all these people have an authentic, more realistic, yet essential attribute in common to set them apart from enough people to make them exceptional: Hunger.

From my experience, a strong entrepreneurial spirit is driven by hunger. An uncontrollable biological drive to hunt and forage when the body is starving. An overpowering

ambition for more. Throughout my whole life, hunger – for money, recognition, happiness – has driven me to fight tooth and nail to get to where I stand today. I believe it's the same for the majority of other successful people out there. There is no greater driving force than this pulsating mash of anger, desperation and fervent yearning.

Why is the rags to riches story so popular? It speaks of a hunger that most can relate to. It reassures us with the happily-ever-after we all dream will one day precede our "The End" – a small flicker of hope unfurling in your chest, an emboldening affirmation that such miracles can happen in the world. That's the whole purpose of this book, and why I want to share my own personal story: so that you can understand my journey, my highest highs and lowest lows – and when you're caught in your own low, you'll feel that flutter of hope turning into hunger, and perhaps at the end of the day, your very own happily-ever-after.

Of course, you might have also picked up this book with the single-minded purpose of seeking out concrete sales advice. Then by all means, skip my personal story. Why would anyone care about what happened to little old me, anyway? It's absolutely irrelevant to your purpose. In fact, what a nasty trick for me to pull – luring you in with promises of solid advice, only to selfishly jabber away about myself. That wasn't in the book description, you may be fuming. False marketing!

But as Otto von Bismarck rather cleverly said, "Fools learn from experience. I prefer to learn from the experience of others." Most unfortunately, I have been one such fool.

Even so, in all my folly, my experiences have acted as showpieces in advice sessions to those who've sought them. I want to share my learnings with anyone who's willing to listen and say, please, don't make my mistakes.

A Promising Start

My story starts with rags and literal hunger. My earliest memory is of my parents fighting because we couldn't afford to pay the electricity bills. My father was a boat mechanic and my mother a clerk in a merchandising company. Even though I loved to eat, I refused to ask for more for fear of burdening my family. We were eight people squeezed into a single apartment.

My first taste of riches came from luck: I had a "fairy" godmother. How I became the godson of this lady who was a member of one of Singapore's richest families was pure, unadulterated coincidence that she saw as divine providence. My dad was a mechanic working on her boat when he shared news of my birth and was met with visible shock – we shared the same birthday. She decided there and then to "adopt" me as her godson.

That one decision altered the trajectory of my childhood completely.

With a wave of her hand, she got me admitted to one of the most prestigious primary schools – Anglo-Chinese School (ACS). That was when I realised the power of immense amounts of money and strong networking that transcends the worldly rules and governmental regulations

most other lowly peasants are bound by. It is worth noting that it has not been long since unfair practices backed by cheques have been made well-known, reason being that in times before, in my childhood era, they were simply kept unknown.

In ACS, I experienced a different kind of hunger – the kind that welled deep in your gut and hurt. My batch mates discovered that I was one of the only three students who lived in HDBs and marked me out as a "pigeon" for living in a "pigeon hole".

Relentless teasing ensued. I felt like the poorest kid in the world, watching with burning eyes as my classmates were chauffeured to school in Rolls Royces and toted their expensive comics with Rolex-laden hands.

What my first two years in this elite institution gave me was not a premium Math and English education, but ironically a sense that somehow, wealth correlated to my value as a person. Would I have been less wronged if the exclusion was due to some other reason? The certainty that my financial situation was put forth as justification for their actions – it may come as no surprise that amidst being bored in classes, my focus landed on how to make money.

Comics being all the craze back then, I sought out the most popular comic dealer and offered my services: I'd bring him customers. Thankfully, it's hard to say no to a determined 9-year-old. In return, he let me pick out comics for free. Even as I was disappointed I hadn't been paid instead, my brain was already working a mile a minute thinking about all the possible ways I could make money off these comics.

Social Radar

Here in Singapore, most of us consider entry into a school like ACS a great blessing... but it can work the other way as well. Even though we all wore the same uniform, my schoolmates had a very distinctive 'radar'. I was rarely befriended, because they could sense who belonged to their social class, and who did not. Those from richer backgrounds were higher up on the pecking order, and ordered those lower down around... and those in turn sought out even poorer schoolmates to do the same to.

One of the reasons I grew up rebellious and among delinquents was because of ostracism by the better-off. I naturally sought out others who were like me.

I won't deny this is a human tendency, present among rich and poor alike. My schoolmates didn't have to be taught how to discriminate based on social class.

But among adults, those who earned their fortune behave very differently from those who inherited it. I've spent my life finding ways to learn about and work well with both.

I picked comics with the most interesting covers, and I just... kept them. In a box under my bed. Unopened – because common sense instructed me to preserve its mint condition. I soon accumulated lots of comics under my bed. My reasoning was that like all prints, comics would eventually sell out. The key was to pick out comics that would later become a hit and sell it to fanatic comic addicts for a premium.

At a time when a plate of chicken rice was 90-cents, store-bought comics ranged from 5 to 10 dollars. After sitting on a "hit" comic for eight months and waiting for it to be completely sold out in shops, I'd relinquish it to salivating schoolmates for easily 20 or 30 dollars. I once even sold an Issue Number 1 comic for 85 bucks – for a comic I got for free.

I started expanding my business from comics to VHS tapes. To test the upper limits of this new market, I priced each tape at an outrageous 120 dollars. Go big or go home, right? The deal was closed almost instantly. I realised that I had found a gem. No, even better, I had found a new market where demand was sky-high and I was the only supplier.

I invested in two VCR players to duplicate the tapes for 300 dollars each. The cost price of a blank VHS tape was eight dollars – I bought 50 in one go. My school bag was emptied and filled to the brim with VHS tapes. Sometimes, as I spent my afternoons looping VHS videos at a 112 dollar profit per tape, I would marvel at how not one person thought of duplicating the tapes themselves.

At 12, I was king of the world, traveling everywhere in a taxi, buying all the toys I wanted, and always having at least 50 bucks in my wallet – pretty extravagant for a primary school kid, even by the formidable ACS standards. This experience forever impressed upon me how lucrative selling to the rich can be.

That was my primary school life, bestowed by my fairy godmother. But it's certainly not to say that only me and Cinderella can get from rags to riches, abetted by some higher

power – for me, what was truly powerful was my bone-deep determination that I'd do anything not to be poor again. In fact, I demonstrated this by deciding to reject the paved path to ACS secondary school my godmother presented, instead deciding to enter a less elite neighbourhood school, to my parents' and godmother's utter incomprehension.

The Networker

It was a whole new world. For the first time, there was no need to prove that being poor didn't equal inferiority. I could connect with my schoolmates, I had found a community; this happiness brought forth an overflowing exuberance I never experienced before. Perhaps that's where the extrovert in me developed and flourished, buoyed by elation and erupting with a vigorous enthusiasm so infectious my connections soon spread throughout the school, finally landing me my reputation as the Networker.

And it was through my friendships that I found new avenues of making money. My new friends were from the street, and from the street they would always procure interesting products. Having reached a certain level of closeness, they'd feel comfortable sharing with me their wares. Other friends would then ask about the very same items I was shown days before. It was a simple matter of connecting the dots. All I had to do was bridge that gap – for a hefty compensation, of course.

I continued my business of selling VHS videos – something I discovered some others were doing as well. Having

found a pool of experienced suppliers, I stopped all factory work and promoted my duties to the managerial dealings of merchandising: buying and selling at a profit.

I was selling each tape at 100 dollars – a discount of 20 dollars from primary school – tapes which I would buy from my friends at five bucks. My commission fee: 95 dollars. I could even offer my customers a whole range of new, exotic titles without ever lifting a finger to scrounge or manufacture. Not having to squander time copying tapes, I had even more time to do sales.

At the tender age of 15, I appreciated the lucrative value of outsourcing. I also understood margins: it's not always about raising the price of the product. Sometimes, buying the item at cheaper rates – without it necessarily being lower in quality – could yield gratifying returns.

My dealings were so extensive that I had even gotten a special sort of status. Majority of the students were from some kind of triad, secret society or gang, for without "protection" of a coalition, they'd be at the mercy of all the other groups. Yet as the Networker, I was the go-between guy who was friends with everybody, and more importantly, everybody's livelihood sort of depended on me being able to survive and thrive – I was the middle man who helped sell their wares. No gang dared touch me for fear of incurring the wrath of the other gangs.

Secondary school taught me the power of network.

I went to business school for polytechnic and soon decided that I could make more as an entrepreneur than forcing my way through school. The very next day after I

dropped out, I volunteered for early enlistment into National Service. Funnily enough, I was selected (from over 3000 recruits) to be a weapons specialist, where I befriended many weapon suppliers. And immediately after completing National Service, I got down to business.

I spent the next ten years of my life being a businessman – from starting many of my own to investing in countless others. I made my first million before turning 21, and proceeded to make and lose a few million more over the next decade.

2

Casinos: Losing, Winning and So Much More

In the 1970s, Stanley Ho of Hong Kong said, “Have a casino.” He had a casino in Macau. So I said, “No, over my dead body!” But the world has changed. Increasingly, people can easily fly to gambling centres just a few hours’ flight away.

– Lee Kuan Yew, founding Prime Minister of Singapore¹

No one really knows where gambling originated, but games of chance are almost as old as human history. Sacred writings from all over the world mention it, and some even include prayers for success in the gambling halls. It was already an age-old practice by the time the Bible got to it.

Societies at large have frowned on gambling for hundreds of years, and as recently as the early twentieth

century, it could land you in jail in some places. But legalised gambling came into its own in seventeenth-century Italy, when the city of Venice allowed a “controlled amount of gambling” during the Carnival Season. Gambling houses came to flourish all over Europe, but the integrated experience casinos give today owes its roots to the entertainment boom of 1950s America.²

Today, Las Vegas and Macau are the gambling capitals of the world, with places like Atlantic City and Melbourne opening their own casinos to attract whales and travellers alike. In fact, for a country whose leaders once actively discouraged gambling, Singapore ironically now has a hotel and casino as its most iconic building – the \$4.6 billion Marina Bay Sands complex.³

Casinos have come a long way from being just gambling dens. Today, the same roof can house a theatre, a concert venue and world-class shopping, the grandest hotels you can find, and yes, gambling facilities. In the same building, you can spend the night, take in a show, shop your heart out, exercise and tempt fate in the gambling halls as much as you want.

For better or worse, gambling is one of the experiences people look for when they travel, and I could fill a book with the ways it’s changed the world, created jobs for millions of people, and given millions more an experience they’ve never had anywhere else. My customers have gone from names on a list to great customers and better friends, and I’m proud to say I’ve had my own small part to play in that.

There’s Gambling, and There’s Gambling Badly

There’s an old joke that goes: “A casino is a place where you leave with a small fortune... after you enter with a large one.”

Very funny. I’d like to correct the misconception that casinos are just there to run you out of your wealth. A lot of financial, credit and status loss comes not from the practice of gambling, but from gambling *badly*. No business that just drove people to bankruptcy would last very long – because no one would want to come back, and word would spread!

We *do not* gain anything by disrupting our customers’ financial state. We try our best to protect them from risking and losing too much, even to the extent of tapping them on the shoulder and persuading them to leave the table after they’ve won (or lost) a certain amount. I’ve done this a number of times over the years, but it’s always the customer’s decision whether they want to continue. Many people, even the ultra-rich, do gamble above their means and lose everything – and it hits especially hard for the young and those with families to support.

By definition, the outcome of a game cannot be controlled or predicted. Each round is independent of the one before it; so don’t be fooled by winning streaks or an almost-win. It’s imperative that you take care to minimise your losses by gambling only within your means, and never gambling with money that is borrowed or budgeted for living expenses. Gambling is strictly a game of chance, not a way to get rich or solve financial problems.

Don't get us wrong. People *can* win at casinos, and win big. But government controls, such as those set up by Singapore's Casino Regulatory Authority (CRA) and others around the world, are there to protect people from their own greed and overestimated appetite for risk. The odds are often against the individual gambler, hence the expression "the house always wins." But that's where the thrill comes from; the same thrill that whale after whale gets under our roof.

The social problem is not the industry itself, but its misuse. When ordinary people gamble away their life savings, what has ruined them – the casino (which has no way of knowing their entire financial situation or predicting their gambling habits in advance), or their gambling with money they couldn't afford to spend?

One of the reasons why we reach out to high-rollers, instead of average folk, is that they can absorb more risk without impacting other areas of their lives. That's not being unfair or underhanded – it's just the way things work.

The bottom line: Just as drunk drivers are misusing their cars, gamblers who consistently lose money are misusing casinos by not deciding in advance how much they are going to bet, how much they are prepared to risk, and how much is enough to retire for the day. And just as we keep children out of the driver's seat until they're old enough, we need to help manage the customer experience so they don't bet too much before they're ready.

However, given the crowds who come to try their luck at the slot machines, the roulette wheels and the baccarat tables, there's simply no way we can hover over everyone.

As marketers and hosts, we're responsible for the experiences of our customers – so there's no mother hen for the average person who just wants to try their luck.

Two foreign-owned casinos set up shop in Singapore in the 2000s, and as I write, the government is managing the social consequences. When ordinary people like you or me visit, in place of a handler there are various protective measures in place, such as:

- A **day account**, where customers put in how much they can afford to risk for that day's gambling. All bets are drawn from that account, and when they lose all of it, they are not allowed to re-enter the casino for 24 hours.
- A **self-exclusion order**, where people have their own (or family members') identities noted for prohibition from entering any casino in Singapore.
- A **visit limit**, which limits the number of times the holder may enter a casino in Singapore.
- **Helplines and counselling** for problem gamblers and their families. For more information, visit the Singapore National Council for Problem Gambling website at www.ncpg.org.sg.

However, the best way to resolve the effects of problem gambling is, pardon the expression, between your ears. No

host or safety measure can make up for a lack of prudence and responsibility on your part – and this applies to whales and ordinary folk alike.

So if you want to try it out for yourself, be my guest. Just keep in mind to set aside what you are willing to lose, and never drain personal savings or other funds to do so.

Want My Job?

My move into casino marketing was a *lateral* one, which is a fancy term for moving from one field (or company) to a similar position in another. That's not the case for most people, who enter this field the same way as any other: From entry level. They begin as line workers in casinos to receive and entertain guests, making sure their day-to-day needs are met.

All this while, the sales and marketing team observes the new hires, identifying those with potential – those with enough charisma or good looks to form a good rapport with clients. They're then invited to try out for a sales position. Otherwise, it takes longer as you have to rise up the ranks through your own hard work.

Either way, it can mean many years of 'menial' service, filling requests that seem insignificant or even unreasonable. But remember that a single bad customer experience can cost millions. Don't be fooled by the glitz and glamour, because a lot of the usual drudgery goes on behind the scenes – all the usual cooking, cleaning, maintenance, stocking and accounting needs to get done, and to a very exacting standard.

Many people want to enter the sales field. We may play up the benefits, like the money we make, or the generous tips (if we're allowed to accept them) – but remember a lot of it comes from commissions, so we constantly need to close sales, besides being the go-to people for anything clients need. Our basic salary is not so different, and entering the field, you trade shift work for a 24-hour on-call period that rarely allows you time off.

To trade service for sales is to exchange safety and stability for stress and risk. Some people (like myself) like it that way, but it's certainly not for everyone. You're expected to think on your feet, and you live and die by split-second decisions made a thousand times every day. I'll say more about finding a role suited to your abilities later.

The sales numbers also hang over our heads, like the sword of Damocles. If you don't make them, the boss will demand an explanation! But in a service job, you're okay if you do it right.

Even if a senior sales representative takes you on, it's no guarantee of success. Sadly, too few newcomers in the casino trade get good guidance, because their ostensible mentors are too busy, and rarely take the time to delegate or share their knowledge. For them, it's gaining new clients first, making existing clients happy second, and training new salespeople a very distant third. It's an easy pattern to fall into.

Few casinos invest in sales training. Even fewer give new salespeople meaningful responsibilities and clients to manage. I was fortunate enough to work for one that does;

for the majority, it is down to your own initiative and hard work to learn the trade

In a sales role, you effectively put yourself – and your time – at the mercy of others. Your time is no longer your own and you'll be on call most of the day. Will your family support that?

Furthermore, you're at the beck and call of clients, and in the casino trade, such clients will be millionaires and billionaires. Not all their requests will be possible, so it's crucial to say no gracefully.

But the rewards, if you attain them, are great. I've had the advantage of making friends with, and learning much from, the movers and shakers of various industries. You can read their bios, but imagine how much more you can learn in direct conversation with them!

Of course, they're human, and our friendship has privileged me to help them through many difficult times as well. I still remember the client who called me at 1.30 am, sobbing as he told me about his impending divorce from his wife. I dropped everything to visit him in Hong Kong to keep him company.

He was grateful, and remains a good friend. It's episodes like that that remind me why I do what I do – and illustrate the lengths a good salesperson must sometimes go to.

What We've Learnt

1. Gambling isn't simply a vice. Thanks to integrated resorts, it's an experience you can sell alongside tours, hotel stays, theatre shows and many other attractive activities.
2. If you yourself must gamble, do it right and keep your greed in check. Your primary role is to help your customers get the best possible experience.
3. Being a salesperson means giving up safety and stability for an unpredictable, round-the-clock experience that brings both increased risk and greater rewards. It's certainly not for everyone.
4. Be prepared to build the relationship by the means available to you – even if you must be ready to help them out at odd hours.