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For more information on Michigan's gaming industry, please visit [www.michigangaming.com](http://www.michigangaming.com)

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# The MICHIGAN GAMING Newsletter



## INTERVIEW WITH ROCK GAMING'S PRESIDENT AND COO MARK DUNKESON

Mark Dunkeson joined Rock Gaming in October of 2013. He has worked in the commercial gaming and hospitality industry for more than 19 years and currently oversees the company's strategic partnerships and operational responsibilities to advance Rock Gaming's six-facility portfolio. He comes directly from Las Vegas, where he served as senior vice president of operations for several multi-property divisions of Station Casinos LLC since 2008. Most recently, Dunkeson was the senior vice president of operations for Station Casino's luxury brand division, where he led and operated several destination gaming properties. Mr. Dunkeson previously led and operated five core Station gaming resorts and spent five years as Station's corporate vice president of development where he executed the strategic direction for the company's growth and expansion.



**Q: As President and COO of Rock Gaming, what would you say is the #1 skill-set that helped you achieve your position in the industry? How did you arrive there?**

**A:** You have to really enjoy this industry to be successful, and I do. Being in a business that never closes, in an industry that is so dynamic and demands attention constantly requires a certain type of committed individual. Commitment to change, the commitment to the

evolution of a guest service and a guest experience based business; those are the attributes that have helped me over my career. And just as important is the skill set of mentoring great talent. This applies to all industries, but it is and always will be a key driver of my success.

I arrived in Michigan last fall, by way of 20 years in Las Vegas, Nevada. I joined Rock Gaming LLC not just for the opportunity to lead a great gaming company, but more importantly to be part of a larger organization lead by Dan Gilbert. It's a unique experience for a person like me whom is tenured in such a distinct business as the gaming resort industry to get a chance to be part of such a unique organization with so many business interests completely different from my own experience and skill set.

**Q: Based on what you have experienced over the past year, what advice can you lend to those in the midwest casino gaming industry?**

**A:** Simple. We better innovate and change to get ten steps ahead of the new gaming consumer. The gaming industry has hit a barrier, common in all industries, that never has been experienced by us. Domestically, the practice of "build it and they will come" is no longer working as competition increases with new jurisdictions opening up across the country. What is going to differentiate the gaming experience for the new generation of gamblers? That is the question that the entire industry should be spending 90 percent of our time on. The gaming resort industry has reinvented itself before to deal with challenges; this is going to be different. Enjoying a gaming experience is no longer as unique as it once was due to the expansion of casino gaming throughout the states.

**Q: In your opinion, what is the general outlook on the Michigan casino gaming market? What are the biggest challenges the market is seeing today?**

**A:** I am cautiously bullish on the near term trends, and very positive taking a longer view. Our economy, both nationally and locally, is still under severe pressure, and we are a discretionary business. As far as the biggest challenges, they're no different than what we all

see throughout the Midwest. However, in Michigan, particularly Detroit, the most significant opportunity the gaming industry has is the holistic reinvention of downtown Detroit as a daily destination for entertainment. What is happening in downtown Detroit is amazing, it is truly a different place than it was even five years ago. But we all have a long way to go to educate and convince a generation of people that something fantastic is happening in our city, and everyone will benefit from this urban resurgence. We need this entire Michigan community to believe what I believe...to believe in the strong future of Detroit.

**Q: Since the acquisition of Greektown Casino Hotel, are there any plans for development concerning additions, expansions or renovations?**

**A:** More plans than we can get done! Greektown as an area of the city, has a long history for Detroiters, and that history is one of the reasons that Dan Gilbert purchased Greektown Casino Hotel. This property has been underinvested in for quite some time, and our commitment is to change a lot of things about this property in the coming 12 months that make the guest experience one that we can be proud of, and our guests will reward us with their patronage. We are already making changes. The most notable is the addition of 275 new slot machines, with a lot more to come. From new carpet to a complete overhaul of the air quality system, we are going to make a major difference to this property. We are going to start with about \$50 million worth of improvements, and go from there.

**Q: What type of player are you marketing your properties towards and how are you going about accomplishing this?**

**A:** Our guests are right down the middle, local gamblers. We are focused on the market that want's a personal experience, want's to be in an environment that provides friendly service and great value, and a guest that loves and is committed to the reinvestment in our city. The convenience of our location in Detroit makes us a favorite for not only our guests in Detroit, but the surrounding community and suburbs. And we

want to be their first choice, we want to be their obvious choice. And we are going to do it one guest at a time showing them by action our commitment to this new chapter for Greektown Casino Hotel.

**Q: What role have new technologies played in the success of Rock Gaming's casino properties?**

**A:** A significant one, and getting bigger everyday. Going back to one of the earlier questions, innovation, especially through technology, is going to be a key indicator of who will be successful in these competitive markets. Everyone offers basically the same base offerings, the same base experience. The competition really comes down to the execution of a service culture, and the importance an organization puts on innovative growth for our guests.

**Q: Do Rock Gaming's gaming properties engage in any cross marketing with any Las Vegas Casinos?**

**A:** Certainly with our partnership with Caesars Entertainment in our properties in Ohio and Maryland we have a very strong relationship with some of the finest Las Vegas properties. Speaking specifically for Greektown Casino Hotel in Detroit, we are exploring options right now for a relationship in Las Vegas.

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If you would like to participate in future interviews please contact Mr. DeGracia online at [info@michigangaming.com](mailto:info@michigangaming.com).

## UNCLAIMED LOTTERY PRIZE GOES TO STATE SCHOOL AID FUND

On Monday, April 14, 2014, the state's School Aid Fund received an unclaimed Mega Millions prize of \$250,000. This marks the third major Michigan Lottery prize to go unclaimed in the past six weeks.

A total of nearly \$639,000 has been added to the School Aid Fund over the past six weeks. Mega Millions tickets are valid for one year from the

drawing date.

## AGA ANNOUNCES TWO NEW STAFF MEMBERS

On Wednesday, April 16, 2014, the American Gaming Association ("AGA") announced the addition of three (3) new members to its executive leadership and public affairs teams in an effort to improve membership engagement, media outreach, and overall better connect and inform gaming professionals. Notably in January, the AGA hired five new staff members for the positions of senior vice president of public affairs, vice president of government relations, senior director of communications, director of gaming policy, and general counsel.

The new AGA staff members include:

- **Ron Rosenbaum, Chief Operating Officer.** Mr. Rosenbaum brings more than 20 years of experience leading marketing, development and event management efforts. Most recently, he served as senior vice president, marketing and development for the Sports & Fitness Industry Association where he led a significant rebranding and positioning initiative that resulted in greater organizational relevance, sustainability and member alignment. Rosenbaum will join the AGA's executive leadership team to drive member engagement and retention, conferences and events, finance, human resources and IT.
- **Brian Cohen, Director of Ally Development.** Mr. Cohen has a decade of experience in advocacy, government relations, strategic outreach and campaign initiatives in the private sector and government. In his most recent post as director of external state government affairs at the Motion Picture Association of America, Cohen built coalitions to support issue campaigns and protected studios' interests to combat piracy. As the AGA's director of ally development, Cohen will identify and manage a network of gaming champions to support the industry's legislative goals at the federal, state and local levels.

- **Chris Moyer, Director of Media Development and Relations.** Mr. Moyer joins the AGA from Capitol Hill, where he served as press secretary and new media director for Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC). In this capacity, he built and managed relationships with reporters and expanded the Senator's reach on social media. He also previously worked for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), serving as personal assistant and deputy press secretary based in Las Vegas during his 2010 re-election campaign. Moyer will execute the AGA's earned media strategies, support the AGA campaign communications and manage media relations and social media content.

Additional information about the AGA may be found on its website, [www.americangaming.org](http://www.americangaming.org).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **SOUTHERN GAMING SUMMIT SCHEDULED FOR MAY 6-8, 2014 IN BILOXI**

The Southern Gaming Summit will be held in Biloxi, Mississippi on May 6-8, 2014. The event will be held jointly with BingoWorld, the world's largest bingo conference and trade show, at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center.

The summit will consist of conferences, networking, and exhibit space featuring information and products related to all facets of the gaming industry. The event will begin with the Southern Gaming Summit/BingoWorld Golf Tournament on May 6, 2014 for exhibitors. Conference events begin on Wednesday and include discussions, presentations, and workshops on current issues facing the gaming industry. Featured speakers include Tilman Fertitta, CEO and Owner of Landry's, Inc. and Geoff Freeman, President and CEO of the American Gaming Association. Other events include the Global Gaming Women Luncheon, an Executive Roundtable, and numerous networking opportunities for attendees.

Gaming and hospitality industry executives, regulators, legislators, and consultants are likely to express interest in the event. For more information on the event, as well as registration information, please visit: <http://www.sgsummit.com/>.

### **SIGN UP FOR RMC'S DAILY GAMING NEWS FEED**

Regulatory Management Counselors, P.C. (RMC Legal), authors of *The Michigan Gaming Newsletter*, would like to extend an invitation to sign up for the complimentary *RMC Daily Gaming News Feed*. The Daily News Feed delivers Michigan and gaming-industry specific news links directly to you each morning.

To sign up to receive the RMC Daily Gaming News Feed, simply visit: <http://rmclegal.com/media-publications> and complete the form.

Should you have any questions, feel free to contact Blaine DeGracia at 517-507-3857 or [degracia@rmclegal.com](mailto:degracia@rmclegal.com).