

Brand awareness

Helen Fletcher discovers how important a strong licence really is to a coin-op amusement game



THE amusement industry is full of licences whether it is in an FEC or adult gaming centre. Brands appeal to men and women, girls and boys and to all ages – find a licence that appeals to a large target audience and you’ve won half the battle.

Using a licence for a game is nothing new – they provide instant recognition and used correctly can enhance the performance of a machine. While some manufacturers may use a licence for brand appeal only – such as IGT’s Sex and the City, where the brand is incredibly appealing but has little bearing on the actual game play – some of the most successful licences are those that combine a strong brand, elements or features of the brand and then great game play. Choosing the right licence for the game type is also crucial – in the UK, television quiz shows tend to work very well on SWPs – and the “Annoying Frog” well-known across Europe from the mobile phone ringtone adverts, suits the redemption ‘whacker’ game extremely well. Harry Levy Amusements had a phenomenal amount of success with this licence along with others such as Elvis (which has been the company’s most successful licensed product to date) and more recently UK television soap Coronation Street, which were both used on pushers. “Licensed products draw a customer in,” Colin Mallory of Harry Levy Amusements told *InterGame*. “The characters and story are instantly recognisable to the players, which is why branded games are so important to a location.

Then you have games that are a success at a global level – the main one that comes to mind is Deal or No Deal, which has been developed into an SWP, AWP and redemption game as well as for

the casino market. Wheel of Fortune is another extremely strong performing licence in the gaming and amusement sector.

UK gaming company Games Media is just one company that has enjoyed great success with many licensed games it has launched, but for Rick Mounney, director of content development, Monopoly from Hasbro has to be its most successful licence to date. “It is probably the most recognisable brand in the board game market and it has evolved to reach new audiences,” said Mounney. “We have adapted it to a gaming format which works really well and suits our players. A brand or licence which is already a game tends to lend itself better to an AWP game.”

Games Media’s most recent licence was Pink Panther, which launched in October, but it will also unveil a video AWP version of Deal or No Deal at this month’s ICE Totally Gaming show. “We look at licences that will suit our business and appeal to game players,” continued Mounney. “An established brand helps raise awareness of a game and can therefore accelerate the uptake of a new game. However, once you have their attention you must ensure the game is strong enough to keep them playing. It is no good having a great brand name if the game does not live up to expectations.”

The Deal or No Deal brand, owned by Endemol Games, is one of the biggest success stories in the amusement and gaming industry. Bell-Fruit Games alone has developed more than 30 different UK Category C terminals and with Games Media recently obtaining a licence for video Category C, it is expected this number will continue to grow.

Endemol Games’ managing director Jurian

VanDerMeer told *InterGame*: “We are seeing similar success with our group of licensees for the UK Category B3 market

and on the skill side this format has been very successful, we have licensed three different skill games so far. Another successful format for us is Golden Balls; although there hasn’t been a Cat C terminal so far, it is doing very well as an online slot game and as a skill game.

“We think the main reason these brands are so successful with amusement games is, as well as the immediate consumer recognition and draw of a familiar well-known brand, that the game play of these products is very similar to the format of the television show, enabling people to experience for themselves the same excitement as the TV show brings.”

TAB Austria is another manufacturer that has managed to secure a top licence for its gaming terminal – Monopoly on the Fun4Four amusement terminal, re-affirms the international demand for this brand. Players are able to build houses, buy streets or collect rent. Alongside Trivial Pursuit, another new licence for TAB, Monopoly is one of the first games on the terminal that can be played by up to six players. According to Dietmar Straubinger of TAB, the contemporary digital versions of these two well-know board games draw players in with their quality graphics and animations represented in full HD mode.

Obtaining a licence however, is not always easy and while a manufacturer might have a great idea for a game there is usually a lengthy process involved from the initial idea to the final product –