



When it comes to loyalty programmes, South Africans are definitely spoilt for choice.

Whether spending on our credit cards, buying cosmetics or shopping at a particular store, it seems that there is always an option to sign up to a club in order to receive numerous rewards and massive savings. But do any of these programmes actually deliver?

To be fair, there are a few programmes that have cracked the so-called "loyalty code" and stand head and shoulders above the competition. While others just limp along quietly, never quite managing to get off the ground.

So what is this magic formula that separates the good from the mundane? It's actually quite simple – if your customers choose to spend their time and money at your establishment, then make a plan to reward them for their loyalty! Reward them as soon as you can, and give them benefits that they can actually use! A simple formula – but how does it work in execution?

Winners know when to stop. Only persons over 18 are permitted to gamble. National Problem Gambling Counselling toll-free helpline 0800 006 008.

Montecasino's Club Festival is a good example, offering a range of benefits the moment Club Members sign up. And the variety is impressive with everything from discounts on movie tickets and dining vouchers, to two-for-the-price-of-one theatre tickets.

"Our Club Festival Programme is set up in such a way that you don't need to wait before making use of the benefits," says Steve Howell, General Manager at Montecasino. "We've done our homework and know what benefits new members will both use and enjoy, so why not let them do so from the very beginning?"

According to Howell, one of the key challenges involved in a casino loyalty programme is the perception that only high-end gamers will benefit. "Big spenders will obviously move higher up the rewards ladder and receive the corresponding bigger benefits," he says. "The more time you spend with us, the more ways we find to spoil you and thank you for your loyalty. But that doesn't mean that our entry-level benefits are in any way not worth having. Quite the opposite, in fact!"

Something else that sets this programme apart is the fact that guests can earn points both on and off the casino floor. Howell maintains that Montecasino has such a wide demographic of visitors, each with his or her own interests and preferred venues (of which the casino floor is just one), that it makes sense that guests earn points at participating restaurants and retailers throughout the property.

Another misconception is the belief that playing with a Club Card reduces your chance of winning, that the machines are somehow pre-programmed not to pay out when a card-carrying guest is playing, or that only higher tiered players (Gold and Platinum Members) will win jackpots.

"Montecasino doesn't have a secret room filled with employees that are deciding who should and shouldn't win the jackpots! Besides, why would we want our cardholders NOT to win and therefore not return for a future visit? It doesn't make sense!" says Howell.

According to Howell, tampering with the slot machines is virtually impossible. The gaming environment is so tightly regulated that we can't alter a cardholder's odds of winning on the Slots machines or Tables.

"Playing on our dime instead of yours is a pretty good perk!"

"The reason why you should be playing with a loyalty or club card," says Howell, "is so that you earn points while playing. These points can then be used instead of cash, so you end up playing longer on the casino floor, which increases your chances of winning. The only difference is that you are playing on our dime instead of yours! It's a pretty good perk!"

Something else that patrons are often concerned about, is the potential that their personal gambling information could be passed on. With the current focus on consumer protection and safe-guarding your privacy, many people are becoming more possessive of their personal information than ever before.

"Our guests really don't need to worry about this at all," continues Howell. "Not only are we required by law that all security information, personal gaming data and contact information is only held by Montecasino. Any information that we are given – whether for our Club Festival

Programme, competitions or special offers – will only be used for the purpose for which it was intended. We treat that information with the utmost care and confidentiality and would only share those details if we were legally bound to do so."

According to Howell, the downside of all these misconceptions and urban legends is that gamblers who have chosen not to play with their cards, have missed out on the accompanying rewards.

"If you don't use your card when playing in the casino or visiting one of Montecasino's retail outlets or restaurants, the casino will not be aware of your loyalty and will therefore not be able to reward you. You might also miss out on moving up a tier and receiving an even higher level of benefits!"

Concludes Howell, "The gaming environment in South Africa, which is among the most tightly controlled in the world, ensures the utmost protection of the consumer. This means that loyalty programmes are exactly what they should be – initiatives that reward you for your loyalty and time spent with us. Over the years, Montecasino has grown to include some of the finest entertainment, dining, theatre and gaming in the country. It just makes sense to get the card – and get the rewards."

