

# UNLV center helps downtown casino

In a resort town where new hotels are starting out large and older properties are getting larger, one Las Vegas casino realizes that being small is different that thinking small.

The Lady Luck Casino and Hotel began 25 years ago as a tobacco stand, and it has grown to a property with 800 rooms and a staff of 850. Despite that growth, the Lady Luck is dwarfed by the newest Las Vegas resorts, some of which have more than 3,000 rooms.

"We can't compare ourselves to the big theme hotels like the Mirage or Excalibur, but we can provide our customers with the best possible service by tapping into the best hospitality program in town at UNLV," said Michelle Pro, the Lady Luck's director of human resources.

UNLV's Hospitality Research and Development Center (HRDC) and the Lady Luck have formed a partnership to improve customer service and management training at the downtown casino. Members of UNLV's hotel administration faculty are helping the Lady Luck establish several custom-designed training and development programs for the hotel's employees and managers.

"Both UNLV and the Lady Luck benefit from this partnership," Pro said. "The faculty members are able to keep in touch with the hotel industry, and we learn from their expertise."

Mary Shurtleff, HRDC asso-

ciate director of training, explained that, "What sets us apart from other consulting firms or programs is that everything we do is custom designed for the hotels. And because we only charge to recover our costs, the Hospitality Research and Development Center is more reasonably priced than those firms that supply pre-packaged programs and texts."

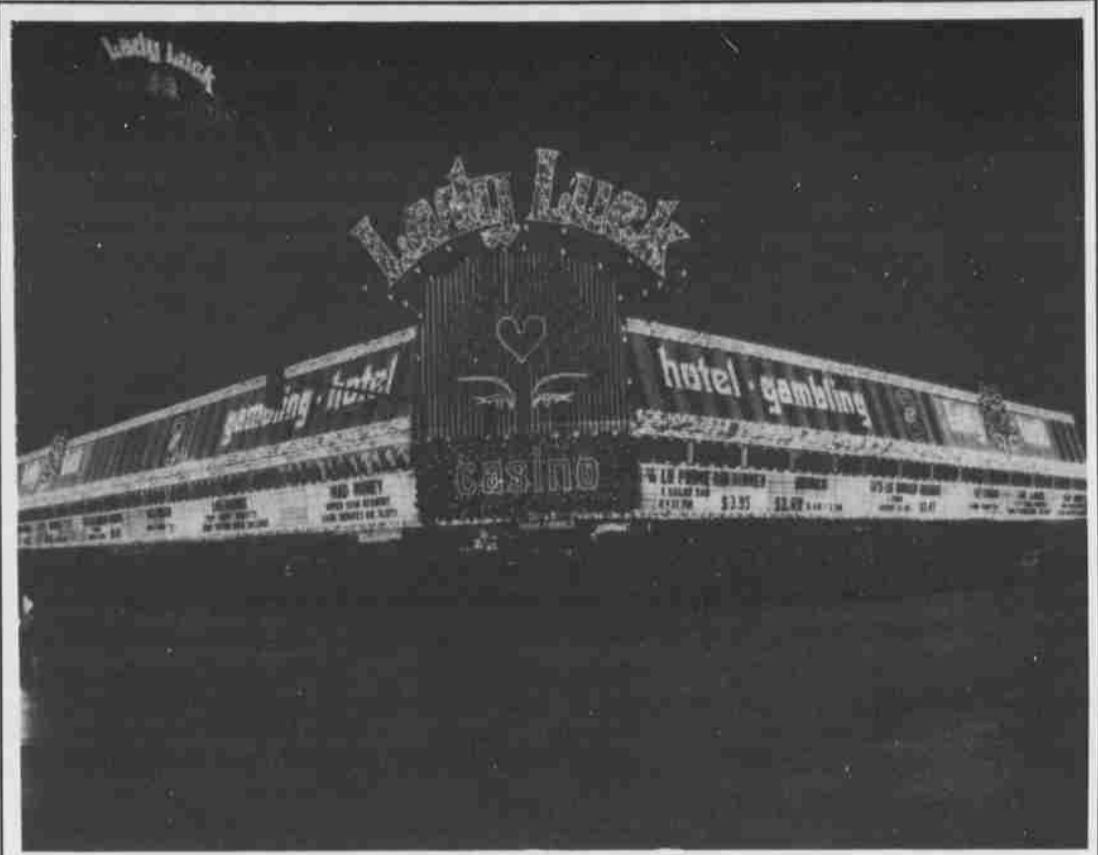
With UNLV's assistance, the Lady Luck Hotel will be one of the first hotels in Las Vegas to establish ongoing management training and customer-service programs.

Besides educating all employees on how to deal with customers, the Lady Luck also plans to provide additional training and educational opportunities that will help its employees advance in their fields.

As director of human resources, Pro considers this a cost-effective measure.

"We want our employees and managers to be the best, and we want to keep the best here," she said, noting that a large attrition rate is costly and common in Las Vegas. "We're creating a family ambiance to engender loyalty."

The Lady Luck recently completed the first phase of its customer-service program. UNLV's Shurtleff met with employee volunteers from the food and beverage area and established service standards based on the employees' input.



Yell Photo / Robert Anderson

Lady Luck - Casino and UNLV's Hospitality Research and Development Center formed a partnership for the casinos' training program.

Faculty members from the Hospitality Research and Development Center then observed and evaluated the food-and-beverage employees and rated them by their own standards.

"UNLV showed us that we need more teamwork in the food-and-beverage area," Pro said.

The hotel responded by setting up mini-meetings before each shift begins to help generate a

team spirit and to try to resolve any problems before they occur.

The hotel is planning the next phase of its program, which will include management training for hotel supervisors and customer service training for employees in other areas of the hotel.

According to Pro, as employee training programs are established and implemented, periodic evalu-

ations of employee performance and additional education and training will be added to the hotel's program.

"Team work is the key to making this partnership with UNLV a success," Pro said. "All of our employees and departments, from the top down, are involved and committed to this partnership."

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