

# LIKE WHAT YOU HAVE, LOVE WHAT YOU DON'T

By Stephanie Maddocks

**W**hat is it about life that causes us to like what we have and love what we don't? The quintessential thing that causes us to revert to being 10 years old again, standing in front of the store window, drooling at the hope that we will get that cool new present for our birthday. We like our current toys, but we lust after the toys we don't have.

Remember back to your 10th birthday party, when you received the hot new toy that you had been begging your parents to give you for months. When you first open your new gadget, it's all shiny and pretty and, if you're lucky, fully charged and ready for play. You call all your friends over to show them your new toy and then they want one, too (also known as toy envy). You take turns passing it around and everyone plays with it. The first friend to drop it is off the birthday party invite list for years to come.

You play with your new toy every day and love it, Love It, LOVE IT! You rave about it so much that your best friend gets one, too. But that takes a little of the sparkle off your toy. It was so much better when you were the only one who had it. But that's OK, you are still cool because you have this must-have toy. Over time, however, the newness wears off and it's just another toy gathering dust in the toy box. You've moved on to wanting the next hot toy deluxe.

It's the same way in the grown-up technology world. We like the technology we already have, but we love the gadget we don't have. The search for the perfect widget is like the search for Nirvana. We know that when we find it, it will solve all our problems and we will finally be happy. It's why I've owned more computers than cars in my lifetime. Or more mobile phones than shoes.

It is this same thought process that results in casinos spending millions of dollars for the latest and greatest new technology. Whatever player tracking system we don't have is The One that is perfect. Whatever game that is just released is The One that is going to push our revenues through the roof. Then, after we install it, we find that, over time, it's not all that pretty and shiny after all. It's really just the same old toy with the same old issues, just in a newer wrapper.

So why do we continue to covet what we don't have?

First, sales teams spend a lot of time to describe to us in very compelling terms what we must have. Many of us don't even know what

we want, so there are wonderfully influential sales people who are more than willing to tell us what we need. These are the persuasive folks who repeat that "of course it can do that" or that "this new feature is going to change the world." It's hard to imagine much in the technology realm that doesn't change the world in some way, but does it always create

business efficiencies or make us more money? The best antidote for the



powerful sales hook is a good dose of skepticism. Does this new technology really solve all the world's problems, or will it just make my life a little bit better? Is "a little bit better" worth the price tag?

Second, marketing departments spend a lot of money to tell us what we need. They raise our attention to the "fact" that a casino without bonusing can't compete. Or that a slot machine without a rapid fire progressive feature is just a plain old slot machine. Their messages are all designed to make us believe that without the latest and greatest in

innovation, we are just an aging dinosaur of a casino operation, plodding steadily along toward extinction. And the sensible remedy for this is to first examine the business operation from an objective viewpoint and decide if innovation will make a difference—does it make more money, save money, or make us better, stronger or faster?

Third, understand that it's human nature to want what we don't have. We just can't help it. When we are on a diet, we want pizza. When there's a sale, we want to buy something. When there is a shortage, we are compelled to stock up. The same is true of technology. We just believe that the new tool will make our life better. We are optimists. We can't help it. Even the glass-half-empty people think that the new shiny toy may just convert them into glass-half-full people. As for a strategy to overcome human nature, well, if I knew that, I'd be living on a beach somewhere right now.

There are many more reasons for why we covet what we don't have. Advancements in technology are the natural result of progress. Operators learn new things, developers learn new things, and all this knowledge results in new technology. In the end, the decision to implement new technology comes when the natural aversion to change is overcome by the irresistible desire to have what we want. A business benefits when it is objective about the reasons for change and realistic about the effects of the change on the operation.

In the end, the true cost of loving what you don't have and desiring new technology is not just in the price tag for the new gadget. It's all the time and associated equipment that is required to make that gadget really work, including configuration and training, more hardware and software, and changes to the operation to truly take advantage of the new functionality that the new technology promises. With each new software system, there is a transition period when old habits evolve into new knowledge. With each new game, it takes time for the players to

learn how to play. Next time you love what you don't have, it is essential to consider all the costs of change.

The Rolling Stones said it best:

*You can't always get what you want ...  
But if you try sometimes  
You just might find  
You get what you need.*

With that advice in mind, I'm going to go play with my new iPad and lose a few more productive hours fiddling with my shiny new toy in search of Paradise.



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