

Creating a Dynamic Cluster

Change the appearance of your FEC - without spending a bundle

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from FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTER, July/August 1995

Every person entering your FEC takes a snapshot. That is, every time a new visitor enters your facility he will pause to take a mental picture of what he sees. This is your guest's first and most important impression of your FEC - you must make it an exciting one. You also want your repeat visitors to feel 'wowed' each time they enter your facility, as they tire quickly of seeing the same snapshot over and over again. Now let's look at how games should be placed so each can generate maximum revenue.

Think About Layout

How can you keep changing the appearance of your FEC every few weeks to create excitement - without spending a bundle? Coin-operated games are often the most practical means of changing your FEC's look. While it may be beneficial in the short run to place your main rides and attractions near the entrance, that's really not the best long-term strategy. Most of the larger attractions will not only block the guests' view of the rest of your FEC, but are also very difficult to move once set up.

Most people are right-handed and the world tends to accommodate the majority, so let's use this to our advantage to make more money. In the U.S., we are all taught to run around the bases or a track counterclockwise and to reach right when opening or closing a single door. People also tend to walk around a store counterclockwise. When they enter, they take their "snapshot" for orientation, then they turn their heads to the right.

When I go shopping, I notice retailers like Nordstroms display their wares in clusters and circular displays so people can walk around the displays and browse. Have you ever watched people do this? Most will walk counterclockwise almost fully around a cluster before proceeding to the next cluster. The days of aisles are diminishing. I also did some tests where teenagers, who had just walked down an aisle with 12 games on each side, were asked to name as many games as they could. When the games were rearranged into five clusters, visitors took longer to walk around them all. This time, the teenagers surveyed could name more than twice as many games.

Give your facility a new look by changing the clusters

Dynamic Clusters

Put a few colorful and action games into a circular pattern (a star or "x") to create what I've termed a "dynamic cluster". Groups of at least three games, and as many as seven or eight, in one cluster are dynamic attention-getters. And clusters of games make multiple-player games (such as four-player video games) easier to operate than those in lines, where the games may end up placed too close together.

The "lead-in" cluster is the most important. This cluster is the first thing a customer sees on entering the FEC. Give your facility a new look by changing the clusters. Change at least one game in each cluster every two weeks. Try changing the position of the games within a cluster. Different games can be featured in the front position of the lead-in cluster, too. You can see how easy it is to change your layout, simply by swapping the games of a few clusters and moving games within a cluster.

Color and Movement

Color and movement also have a lot to do with attracting the customers' attention. Robo Bop or Circus Hi Rise (renamed Cannonball) are great for lead-in clusters, or in a cluster where their bright colors and blinking lights can be seen from the entrance. Cranes with flashing lights and colorful prizes will also attract attention, turning passersby into guests.

Can this work? We brought only one new game into an FEC with over 100 games, removed one game, and changed games in eight of the nine game clusters. We then asked repeat customers what they thought about the FEC. Most said they liked all the different games that were added since their last visit! Some estimated that as many as 10 new games were brought in during the couple of weeks since their last visit. Perception counts a lot.

You don't, however, need to get carried away and put all your games into clusters. There are large, high games, such as

Skee Ball and adult sports games (basketball, baseball pitch, football toss), that are best suited placed up against walls. The point to remember is that the remainder of your games will look and perform best in dynamic clusters rather than in lines.

Dynamic cluster layouts can increase an FEC's game revenue substantially. Proper game layout, selection, percentaging, and maintenance can often double game revenue. Paying attention to details certainly pays off.