The gambling industry is moving ever closer to the introduction of new legislation, although its final shape in some areas is subject to discussion and possible challenge.

Having appointed the Budd Committee in 2001, the Government then considered its report and listened to industry responses before issuing its White Paper 'A Safe Bet for Success' in April 2002. The first sections of the Bill were then published in draft in November 2002, with more following in February and March 2003.

Despite this, significant sections were missing, some of which have subsequently been published piecemeal. This approach has caused concern among industry and legislators, and has been criticised by the Joint Scrutiny Committee, as it did not have the opportunity to consider the drafting of some important policy areas prior to the report being issued.

Over the course of the Bill there have been significant shifts in Government policy, the most notable being the scaling back of casino deregulation in response to concerns over problem gambling, which occurred after the Scrutiny Committee published its first report. The Government rejected some of the Committee’s recommendations and partially accepted others.

One of the Committee’s main criticisms was that it was unclear how gambling policy would fit with planning and regional policy, a point which remains unclear. The Government does not seem able to satisfactorily answer concerns voiced by the Committee and many in the gaming industry. At the heart of this appears to be an ongoing conflict between the policy priorities of the DCMS, which is responsible for gambling, and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, responsible for planning.

Interestingly, the Committee took the view that, where necessary, gambling policy should take priority. Whether this issue will be resolved fully during the passage of the Bill remains to be seen.

Any Bill has to pass through the House of Lords and the House of Commons before they can become law.

Bingo players to get their very own free magazine

The NBGA has joined forces with Profile Pursuits Publishing (PPP) to produce a quarterly free magazine for bingo players, available exclusively through NBGA member clubs.

The first UK title aimed firmly at bingo players, it will have an initial print run of a million and cover topics such as food, clothing, fashion and holidays, plus puzzles, winners’ profiles and NBGA news. The first issue, to be published in early November, will contain vouchers offering readers in excess of £50 worth of savings on products and services known to be of interest to bingo players.

PPP will develop the magazine to cater strongly to the interests of players and in doing so increase its value to them. This will involve getting feedback from club managers and members. The magazine has a cover price of £1.60 but is free to NBGA clubs for them to give away to members. This will enable clubs to give away an item with a perceived high value, at no direct cost to the club.

The magazine will be of newsstand quality and have the benefit of speaking directly to players. Production costs will be met by advertising sales, which it is hoped will

The only magazine produced for the bingo industry

Home entertainment
Bingo Party DVD hits the high street
Santa’s wish list
Seasonal gifts unwrapped
It’s party time!
Create a night to remember

Win a jumbo Christmas party pack! see page 9
**The National Game**

Quarterly news and update from Chief Executive, Paul Talboys

The final quarter of 2004 is certainly going to be a busy and exciting period for the National Bingo Game, setting the stage and pace for 2005.

October has two key dates – Bingo for Breakthrough, the Bingo Association’s charity fundraising week in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer (16-23) and our £500,000 game on Sunday 24. Avon cosmetics, which also supports Breakthrough, is for the first time also supporting Bingo for Breakthrough.

The first official NBGA DVD Bingo Game, Bingo Party (see right), will give the National Game logo an added high street presence. In addition to this, the NBGA is also producing its first free player magazine (see Cover), Issue 1 to be available in-club at the beginning of November. These two new products will allow us to promote bingo to a broader audience and provide other cost-effective promotional opportunities.

This year’s Christmas £500,000 game takes place on Sunday 19 December and plans are already underway for 2005. Having experienced considerable success with this year’s Ground Shaker promotion, we are already exploring the possibility of running Ground Shaker 2. The tentative dates are 2, 9, 16 and 23 April. Hopefully, full details will follow in the January issue. May I wish you all a happy Christmas and what we all hope will be a prosperous New Year.

### National Bingo Game: key statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total prize money since the game began</td>
<td>£796,252,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total prize money played for in 2003</td>
<td>£29,609,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total prize money played for in 2004 to date</td>
<td>£29,280,338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Biggest games for 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Ticket Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 23 November</td>
<td>£30,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday 24 April</td>
<td>£25,523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Biggest games to date for 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Ticket Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 8 May</td>
<td>£1,180,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 17 May</td>
<td>£962,292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**NBGA gets first official DVD**

The NBGA has signed an agreement with games and toys manufacturer/distributor, Hasbro, to produce the first official NBGA DVD bingo game, called Bingo Party.

The Australian based company, Imaginext, is a world leader in DVD game design and manufacture and has agreements in place with MGM Entertainment (films), Nickelodeon (children’s television) and a number of other leading brands around the world. Hasbro is the largest manufacturer and distributor of toys and games in Europe.

By signing with such well known and sizeable organisations, the NBGA will be putting its name to a quality product that will introduce bingo to an ever wider number of new players. The DVD features the current NBGA National Bingo Caller of the Year, Mike Vyse, who introduces the games and acts as caller. Initially available through Woolworths, which is expected to feature the game in its Christmas 2004 catalogue, Bingo Party is expected to be priced under £14.99. The product will also be sold by the NBGA for PR and promotional work.

**Bingo in the news**

The second quarter of 2004 got off to a great start with 162 pieces of press coverage for bingo in April, a figure helped by the coverage generated specifically around the National Bingo Game’s Ground Shaker promotion. The vast majority of this coverage was also consumer based rather than broadsheet or business press.

May followed with a respectable total of 157 pieces, but June performed poorly. During this quarter Scotland came out as a clear winner in terms of coverage for a region, achieving 17 per cent in May and 28 per cent in June. West Midlands and the North West took honours at 14 per cent each for April.

### Number of press hits by month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer magazines</td>
<td>7 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>8 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic media</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National papers</td>
<td>13 (8%)</td>
<td>17 (7%)</td>
<td>9 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional dailies/weeklies</td>
<td>140 (87%)</td>
<td>143 (81%)</td>
<td>130 (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>162</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Summer competition winners**

Thanks to PMS International for providing the prizes for Issue 66, which are on their way to the following people:

- Melanie Sheppard, Crown Bingo, Bognor Regis wins the rechargeable screwdriver. The folding lightweight chair with drinks holder goes to E Nichols, Alhambra, Penrith and one pen radio goes to each of the following: Steve Race, The Ritz, Ilkeston; James S Allan, Quayside Bingo, Lossiemouth; Kelvin Jordan, Mecca, Kingstanding, Birmingham; M Chapman, Gala, Plymouth; Fiona Laurie, Mecca Dingle, Toxteth, Liverpool; G Mason, Gala, Wakefield; Belinda Holmes, Mecca, Wishaw; Christine Hughes, Shipley’s, Oxteth, Liverpool; G Mason, Gala, Wakefield; Belinda Holmes, Mecca, Wishaw; Christine Hughes, Shipley’s, Oxteth, Liverpool; G Mason, Gala, Wakefield; Belinda Holmes, Mecca, Wishaw; Christine Hughes, Shipley’s, Oxteth, Liverpool.

Thanks to PMS International for providing the prizes for Issue 66, which are on their way to the following people:

- Kelvin Jordan, Mecca, Kingstanding, Birmingham
- M Chapman, Gala, Plymouth
- Fiona Laurie, Mecca Dingle
- Toxteth, Liverpool
- G Mason, Gala, Wakefield
- Belinda Holmes, Mecca, Wishaw
- Christine Hughes, Shipley’s, Oxteth, Liverpool
- G Mason, Gala, Wakefield
- Belinda Holmes, Mecca, Wishaw
- Christine Hughes, Shipley’s, Oxteth, Liverpool

The folding lightweight chair with drinks holder goes to E Nichols, Alhambra, Penrith and one pen radio goes to each of the following: Steve Race, The Ritz, Ilkeston; James S Allan, Quayside Bingo, Lossiemouth; Kelvin Jordan, Mecca, Kingstanding, Birmingham; M Chapman, Gala, Plymouth; Fiona Laurie, Mecca Dingle, Toxteth, Liverpool; G Mason, Gala, Wakefield; Belinda Holmes, Mecca, Wishaw; Christine Hughes, Shipley’s, Oxteth, Liverpool; G Mason, Gala, Wakefield; Belinda Holmes, Mecca, Wishaw; Christine Hughes, Shipley’s, Oxteth, Liverpool.

**2004 Diary**

- 5–6 October
  - G2E, Las Vegas, USA
  - www.globalgamingexpo.com
- 16–23 October
  - Bingo for Breakthrough 2004
  - Tel: 020 7025 2493
- 24 October
  - NBGA £500,000 Game
- 7 November
  - NBGA Players’ magazine published – Issue 1
- 19 December
  - NBGA £500,000 Christmas Game
- 25-27 January 05
  - ATEI, Earls Court
  - www.ateionline.co.uk

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**Bingo Link** is published by The Bingo Association, Lexham House, 75 High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1JF.

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Produced by Axon Publishing Ltd, 11 Plough Yard, London EC2A 3LP.
Tel: 020 7684 7111. E-mail: mail@axonpublish.com

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The bingo sector continues to look carefully at the opportunities and threats that the forthcoming re-regulation of the UK gambling industry may bring. ECM Systems, the Yorkshire-based technology provider to the UK bingo industry, is leading the exploration of how new and existing systems can be used to prepare its clients with the best possible foundations.

Main stage ‘ticket’ bingo, for instance, holds many opportunities. As well as being the main entertainment focus of the bingo experience, it provides the key draw for player attendance. Technology, such as TED and ECM’s e-Box gaming platform, allows operators to give a section of their audience the ability to play as many tickets as they wish, irrespective of skill level. Often, players who are new to bingo, or not as adept as they used to be, find these new ways of accessing the game invaluable. Also, the operator’s prize offer can be maintained or enhanced without the need to find the additional admissions that would normally be required.

Multi-club link games have, for many years, been hugely popular with players and the natural progression into mechanized cash bingo (MCB) games has enhanced the format further. Big money prizes with instant ‘coin-in-the-slot fun are a major hit with the players and deliver impressive results for operators too. ECM has been working hard on the systems that deliver linked MCB and the technology can now link up to 32 clubs into one fast-paced game over a live audio and data conference. Having successfully delivered the technology for the largest ever live link game of stage bingo with 509 clubs for the Ground Shaker promotion, ECM is developing designs that permit similarly large numbers of clubs to link regularly for both ticket and MCB games.

Moving forward with MCB is always a priority at ECM. The successes enjoyed with dual card systems can now reach any part of the club. ECM’s new FreedomCard offers a portable dual card position. Using radio technology to link into existing club systems, FreedomCard enables players to take their position anywhere in the club – bar, balcony, even next to a friend playing at a fixed position. Using ‘smart change’, players pay for their games using a preloaded smart card which plugs into the FreedomCard.

Looking beyond that, ECM is actively working on its ‘third generation’ of MCB technology which offers many new features. To guard against the uncertainties of the new Act, the systems feature reloadable software, allowing new game designs that take advantage of the new rules to be offered at the press of a button. Central to the whole design is player tracking. MCB players are one of the key customer groups that contribute to a successful business. Knowing who plays MCB and what they spend and win is, therefore, provided as standard with these systems. Game operation is enhanced with the latest user interfaces, ensuring maximum benefit with all levels of staff.

Contact Jim Moss, Sales Manager, on 01964 672000 or Paul Whitbread, Chairman & MD, on 01964 672000.
Following two bouts of acquisition in the past two years, Top Ten bingo has more than doubled in size to 24 clubs.

Formed in 1991, it has clubs scattered throughout south Wales, the south west, Midlands, north west and north east. In 2002 the group, part of AIM-listed Top Ten Holdings, bought Welcome Social Clubs, adding a further five sites in south Wales and south west England and in October 2003 then snapped up a further eight sites from the Sunderland-based Mason Organisation. As a result, Top Ten has become the third largest member of the Bingo Association, with 24 bingo clubs, which it operates along with six adult gaming centres and two snooker halls.

All of the new clubs have been re-branded and an extensive refurbishment programme is underway in the north-east venues. The club in Billingham, near Middlesborough, has had a £1 million face-lift after being closed for more than four years. Silksworth, Sunderland, has also been revamped and improvements at Southwick and Durham clubs will be complete by the end of 2004.

Joint Managing Director Bruce Roberts said, ‘We set out with the intention of growing by acquisition, but we are also looking for new-build opportunities. Being a listed company has provided us with the funds to expand quickly and has reinforced our working relationship with suppliers. Expansion and profitability also help when it comes to recruitment, as potential employees see scope for moving up within the company. But the group is equally proud of the strong community spirit in its clubs. Top Ten members around the country showed they can pull together for charity when, earlier this year, they helped Porth club Assistant Manager Lee Ellsmore to raise over £5,000 for Children with Leukaemia. Also, all 24 clubs take part in Bingo for Breakthrough week to raise funds for Breakthrough Breast Cancer.’
Work has begun on-site for a new £6 million state-of-the-art bingo club at Fife Leisure Park, in Scotland. Following the granting of detailed planning permission by Fife Council last month, West Fife Divisional Licensing Board has now granted bingo and entertainment licences to Carlton Clubs for the project, which will create around 70 new jobs.

The 2,000-seat club, which will occupy 35,000 square feet on a 3.3 acre site, is on track to open next summer. Plans include a licensed bar and bistro along with the very latest in bingo technology and customer comfort.

Building and fit-out of the new club is to be overseen by Carlton Clubs Director of Operations Chris Barr, who said, 'The building will take approximately six months to erect and with a four to five months fit-out to follow, we're on track for a summer 2005 opening for our first new-build bingo club.' Carlton Clubs is one of the largest independent bingo operators in the UK, with 14 bingo clubs across Scotland and four in the north-east of England. There are also plans to build another new club in Inverness, which has been the subject of much debate locally. The proposal for the Beechwood site on the outskirts of Inverness has received outline planning consent and, subject to detailed planning permission being granted, should also come online in 2005.

This computer-generated image shows what the new state-of-the-art Leisure Park will look like when it's completed next summer.
New asbestos legislation

Following the amendments to the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (CAWR) 1987 introduced in November 2002, there is still one vital piece of this legislation to come into force. After an 18-month lead-in period, Regulation 4 applies from 21 May 2004.

This will impose an explicit legal duty to manage the risk from asbestos in non-domestic premises. Non-compliance is a criminal offence, punishable with fines and/or imprisonment. Directors and Officers of companies may also be personally liable for breaches attributable to their companies.

If you own, occupy, manage or have responsibility for non-domestic premises which may contain asbestos, you will either have a legal duty to manage the risk from this material, or a duty to co-operate with whoever manages the risk. If you have information on the whereabouts of asbestos you will be required to make this available to those responsible for managing these risks.

The duty to manage
This requires those in control of premises to:
- Take reasonable steps to determine the location and condition of materials likely to contain asbestos
- Presume materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not
- Keep an up-to-date record of the location and condition of the asbestos-containing materials in the premises
- Assess the risk of the likelihood of anyone being exposed to fibres from these. Prepare a plan setting out how the risks from the materials are to be managed
- Take the necessary steps to put the plan into action
- Review and monitor the plan periodically
- Provide information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone likely to work on or disturb them.

Risk management
The protection previously enjoyed by virtue of risk transfer to the insurance market has significantly reduced following the introduction of exclusions as determined by the re-insurance community. This has served to heighten the need for maintained and improved risk management. It is not just the risk of uninsured liability claims, the mismanagement of asbestos could result in:
- Risk of asset depreciation, as asbestos risk management programme could defer asset or property depreciation
- Additional costs, as unplanned removal of asbestos is estimated to cost up to 50 per cent more than material removed under a pre-planned control regime
- Prosecution
- Adverse publicity and loss of reputation.

Advice and information
Jardine Lloyd Thompson Consultancy can assist with:
- Formulating a risk management programme
- Advice on consultants regarding asbestos identification and removal
- Advice on information to be provided to public.

Contact Steve Fletcher on 020 7309 8361 or email steve_fletcher@jltgroup.com

Steve Fletcher, of Jardine Lloyd Thompson Leisure
New legislation still being debated

House of Commons in order to become law, with each House following the same legislative procedure. The First Reading of a Bill is a formality, followed by a Second Reading at which the key aspects of the legislation are set out and debated.

The next and probably longest stage is Committee, where a group of MPs or Peers, depending on the House, considers a Bill clause by clause and amendments are tabled. The Committee is structured to reflect an overall balance of the political parties and often contains members with a particular interest in the subject being discussed. The Minister responsible for the policy area and the Opposition Spokesperson are included in this group.

While many amendments are tabled and debated, in practice many will fail unless they are tabled by Government, due to the in-built majority of the Committee. The Committee then reports back to the House. At this stage, any amendments made are discussed and can be overturned or new amendments are tabled.

Finally, the Bill progresses to a Third Reading, followed by Royal Assent. It is likely that any new Gaming Act will not take effect immediately because of the need to set up the Gambling Commission and for other delegated legislation to be introduced.

While this process has been long and at times might seem tortuous, it is likely that there is much debate and argument still to come. Most sectors of the gambling industry will have aspects of the Bill with which they disagree, or would like to see changed in some way, and so will be lobbying MPs and Peers throughout the passage of the Bill. Trade associations will also no doubt be poised to respond.

A continuing matter of concern is whether all the existing rights that bingo operators have will continue to be allowed under the new legislation. While accepting that there will be a new definition of gaming machines, the present status of prize bingo could well be changed, with undesirable effects for both customer and operator. Furthermore, the Association still awaits confirmation that some of the recommended changes, which would help the industry, will be included in the final Bill, as they have not appeared in the clauses published to date.

Bingo players get their own magazine

also provide the NBGA with a surplus that can be used on promotional activity. The advertising revenue will depend greatly on the quantity of magazines distributed to bingo clubs and the clubs’ commitment to promoting it to members. A further benefit to the industry is the saving made in buying advertising to promote high-value games. While advertising will still appear in other titles, we will have a ready-made means of promoting to existing customers.

Paul Talboys NBGA Chief Executive said, ‘This represents a great opportunity for the industry, both in terms of building and cementing relationships with players and in terms of business development. Producing such a magazine will help the industry lay very firm claims to its customers and place us in a stronger competitive position both now and post deregulation.’

The initial print run will be distributed to all NBGA member clubs, based roughly on their weekly National Game ticket sales. Individual clubs can then amend the quantity for the second issue.

Address & Membership Services

Q Services provide highly effective computer solutions to help your business not only save money but dramatically increase your customer base.

Q-Services have been providing address related services and software to the Bingo industry for the past 7 years. With our underlying knowledge of membership requirements, we have created products that focus on the core values of your business; Helping you to retain, improve and attract new members.

- **Address cleaning** - Validates post codes, produces consistent & accurate addresses, maximises mailsort discounts & confirms the name details at an address.
- **De-Dupe** - Identifies duplicates and close-matches, using the address, name and date of birth.
- **Post-code mailing** - You select the post code you wish to target and we obtain voters roll information to match. By using the de-Dupe service we can remove your current customers from this post code and then process the mailing to those remaining.
- **Mailing** - Mail your customers for free. Postage discounts on mailsort can equal the cost of handling!
- **Database Profiling** - Analysis using postcodes, Mosaic, Financial Mosaic & Touchpoint profile codes.
- **Swipe based membership system** - Comprehensive analysis of visits and member’s information.
- **Stock control** - Ideal for club stock requirements. Easy to install, setup and use.

For more information on how Q-Services can help you, contact Simon Kemp on: 07850 333987 or E-mail simonk@qservices.co.uk

“Business solutions to your business problems”
Have a cracking good Christmas!

Before the chestnuts start roasting, Jack Frost starts nipping or the partridge takes its place in the pear tree, Novelties Galore is offering three lucky Bingo Link readers the opportunity to get ready for the festive season by winning one of three jumbo Christmas party packs!

Inside, you’ll find:
1. 200 Christmas crackers
2. 216 party poppers
3. 200 foil full-size hats
4. 100 rolls of flame-retardant streamers (12 streamers per roll)
5. 200 blowouts

Each pack is worth £130. Just add turkey for an instant Christmas party! If you want to have an opportunity of winning one of three packs, please complete the Bingo Link competition entry form, or put your club name, address and your name on a post card, then send it to:
Novelties Galore Competition
Bingo Link
Lexham House
75 High Street North
Dunstable
Bedfordshire
LU6 1JF

All entries must be received by 5 November 2004. Winners will be notified in writing and announced in the next issue of Bingo Link.

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www.parlaygroup.com
It’s time to think pink!

It’s only a few weeks until Bingo for Breakthrough is back and the bingo industry will be turning pink once again. Last year a phenomenal £414,000 was raised towards breast cancer research and awareness, so let’s see if we can reach the magic £500,000 this year.

Make the most of your fantastic, all new Fundraising and Information pack which is jam-packed with wacky ideas to help you really pink it up and have fun in your club. Around 380 clubs have signed up to take part in this year’s activities and nearly all have ordered the crazy pink wigs, which should make for some interesting pictures! Remember, Breakthrough Breast Cancer is offering an award for the best picture featuring pink wigs – so it’s an opportunity to really let your hair down.

If your club is not involved we have a limited amount of materials left, so it’s still not too late. To take part, call Laura Jones on 020 7025 2493 and sign up. Laura is new to Breakthrough and has come on board especially to support Bingo for Breakthrough. Please call her with any queries from 9.30-5.30, Monday to Friday.

You may be aware that more than 1,000 women die of breast cancer every month in the UK alone, so please do your bit this Bingo for Breakthrough week. The charity needs to raise a minimum of £10 million each year to fund its vital breast cancer research and awareness work, so every penny means a lot! Most of all, make sure you put the fun into fundraising!

Marketing appointment at Rank

Rank Group Gaming Division is pleased to announce a new addition to its marketing team with the appointment of Amy Collier as PR Manager. This move reflects the Gaming Division’s commitment to communicating company developments to its external audiences. The Division will be taking a far more proactive approach to PR with its first internal presence in over five years.

Amy, who will be working across the Mecca Bingo, Grosvenor Casino and Hard Rock Casino brands at both a national and local level, comes from an agency background, specialising in technology. Her experience includes working for market leaders such as Sybase, Netgear and Concerto Software.
Great novelty value

Novelties Galore is an established wholesaler of party and carnival goods, which supplies the hospitality industry with party packs for almost every occasion.

As Christmas is the party season, we thought it would be a good time to get to know them. Stocking a comprehensive variety of novelty products, ranging from noisemakers and glow-in-the-dark accessories to inflatables and life-sized character cutouts, they have everything you need to turn an occasion into a party. And for those customers with specialized requirements, they also offer a tailor-made sourcing service.

Throughout the year there are many opportunities to generate increased business by planning themed celebrations. Whether it’s Valentine’s Day, Christmas or New Year’s Eve, you’ll find everything you need for a great party atmosphere.

Richard Monjack, the Managing Director of Novelties Galore, believes that there are some basic key points to remember when planning parties or themed nights. His expert advice is:

- Decide which themes will be most popular with your customers. Halloween may be more appealing than Valentine’s Day.
- Make a visual impact to promote the event, but also save some budget to provide giveaways which will encourage customers to become involved with the celebrations.
- Plan how you will theme the evening. Aside from the decorations, will you be changing your menu, bringing in entertainment, planning a fancy dress competition, hosting a quiz, etc?
- Ensure that you provide something extra for customers so they leave feeling as though they have received value for money and are keen to return for the next planned event.
- Vary the themed nights you put on from year to year, repeating only one or two of the most popular events.

- Don’t celebrate every themed date that comes along or your customers may get ‘partied out’!

Tel: 020 8424 9966 or email: sales@noveltiesgalore.com. Alternatively, visit the website at www.noveltiesgalore.com

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GENERAL MANAGER

We currently have a vacancy for a general manager within our organization.

We are looking for someone who is ambitious and self-motivated with a professional approach to bingo management and who possesses genuine ability to improve admissions and profitability.

In return we will offer an excellent basic salary (significantly above industry average) together with profit share incentive scheme, BMW Company car, BUPA and pension.

Applications to: Brian Fitzsimmons, Foster Properties, The Grange, Boglemart Street, Stevenston, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA20 3JN.

EMAIL: FOSPROPERTIES@AOL.COM
TEL: 01294 473054/6
Gamestec strengthens communications team

Gamestec, the leading amusement machines operator, has extended and strengthened its communications team with the appointment of Alex Myers as Public Relations Officer.

Reporting to commercial director Peter Slattery, Alex’s role involves consolidating Gamestec’s communications with the industry, its customers and its staff.

Alex joins Gamestec from The Planet Group UK, a publishing, marketing and design company based in Huddersfield, where his role included PR account management, feature writing and editorial responsibilities.

Alex has worked for the BBC in Manchester as a copywriter, and was also a contributing writer for its online material.

Alex said, ‘My new role at Gamestec is an excellent opportunity for me to utilise my skills and experience in a dynamic and exciting industry. I am looking forward to the challenges ahead and further improving the external and internal communications of the company.’

Commenting on the appointment, Peter Slattery said, ‘We are pleased that Alex has joined the team at such an interesting time for the company. Since acquiring the machine interests of Rank PLC last year, Gamestec has almost doubled in size to 70,000 machines throughout the UK. Our latest market position, combined with the changes and opportunities likely to face the industry from the proposed new Gambling Act, means that the need for accurate and regular communication in all areas of our business is more important than ever. Alex’s appointment means that we are in an ideal situation to take advantage of all the communications opportunities available to us.’

Alex, 23, is based at the company’s head office in Horsforth, Leeds.
CTL and NRM join forces

Established for more than eight years in the UK and the first to facilitate ISDN wide area gaming and linked slot games, NRM is a company proud of its achievements in supporting the majority of the UK’s major gaming operators. Rank Group Gaming Division, Gala Group and the National Bingo Game Association are all operators who benefit from the unparalleled expertise that NRM brings to the management of wide area games, whether the format is local, regional or national.

The company has been closely associated with innovation within the UK gaming industry for over 20 years, establishing many of the advanced technological gaming platforms in use today. This means that, along with CTL, NRM is ideally placed to deliver the right solutions based on a thorough understanding of customer and market demands.

To protect the interests of the public, the Gaming Board for Great Britain issues and regulates certificates, licences and registrations in gaming and, through the Board’s Inspectorate, demands some of the highest operator and supplier standards in the world. As one of the UK’s leading suppliers to major gaming and leisure organisations, NRM meets the exacting standards set by the Gaming Board for Great Britain.

With the systems expertise of NRM, CTL aims to offer a total wide area gaming and facilities management service, from sales enquiry to implementation and help desk support that sees all aspects of a customer’s requirements met.

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Leon Summers of Just Everything shed some light on what the bingo sector is buying for this year's promotions. He told Bingo Link, ‘We’ve had major success with our Christmas sets, where clubs give away a different item every week. This allows their customers to build up a collection of useful products for the festive period.’

This type of campaign sees visitors pick up merchandise such as Christmas cards, wrapping paper, tree decorations and lights over consecutive weeks. As each item costs between 70p and £1.20, it’s possible to give them away as a door gift over a six-week ‘combination’ promotion.

Just Everything has improved and extended the range available to operators for this simple promotion, which Summers describes as ‘a nice way to show loyalty to the customers. While it won’t bring in extra people, it will show your existing customers that you value them.’

For the stamp card promotions, Just Everything says that the animated figures are a winner year on year and the current favourite is the ‘Let It Snow’ singing penguin. Also very popular are the eye-catching fibre-optic light displays.

‘People want novelty,’ Summers explained. ‘It gives them a talking point at home, but it also helps the bingo halls. An item will be more popular if it can be presented better. For example, a singing toy that can be held up to a microphone will generate more interest than a regular static toy.’

Just Everything’s range, which costs between £3 and £15, can be used for stamp promotions lasting between two to eight weeks. However, Summers is in no doubt about what the most popular item is for prize bingo: ‘Remote control vehicles. We even have our own brand. Boys N Toys, for this sort of thing. We have two new items – an F1 racing car and a hovercraft, which have shop retail values of over £80. These are definitely more prize bingo than stamp card.’

The company also has another brand called Life Essentials, which includes generic products such as shower radios. Although they are available all year round, the volumes increase around Christmas as players look for gifts for the family.

Just Everything has been concentrating heavily on the needs of the bingo sector this year and the appointment of Jim Dunne to handle bingo customers is an example of its commitment to the industry.

Jim has over 20 years of leisure industry experience, which started with his days as club manager. Just Everything is very excited by his appointment, which will allow them to work more closely with customers.

When it comes to buying items for promotion, PMS International believes that bingo operators each have their own individual taste, which is why the firm offers around 3,500 Christmas items alone. The company’s Barry Davies explained: ‘Each bingo hall has a different idea about what will work in their sites. An item may be excellent in one location but will not work in another and the club managers are the best judge of that. We provide a massive selection so that clubs can find what will work best for them.’

Davies agrees with Summers that the radio control cars have really caught the imagination of bingo operators, with customers keen to obtain the products to use as gifts for young boys in their families. PMS has invested in a wide selection of the radio controlled equipment, which even includes boats. But girls haven’t been left out and the company has a range of dolls and toys, including ‘Super Shopping’, which would make welcome Christmas presents.

The large selection of plush toys (PMS has around 6,000 items) are also favourites with bingo customers, but it is not all toy based. As well as the novelty products such as the light-up Santa and light-up snowman, there is still a demand for more generic items such as the saucepan set.

 Whereas other firms may sell a frying pan one minute and a carriage clock the next, Ace Ltd concentrates solely on soft toys, knowing where its strength and expertise lie. Managing Director Andrew Hempsall said that, this season, Ace had taken a more traditional route with its product offering, which the bingo industry has responded to in a positive manner. He told us: ‘In putting together our Christmas range we decided to go for the very traditional product, such as bears with hats and scarves, rather than produce a lot of gimmicky items for the season. We’ve tried to move away from the Santa Claus ranges, although we still have a couple of snowman products, and have concentrated on a high quality selection of toys.’

As Hempsall explained, the latest range ensures that bingo operators
are not left with time-specific stock, as the traditional toys could be offered throughout the winter period rather than just over Christmas, which would happen with a Santa Claus toy for example. He added, ‘The reaction we’ve had from operators, both independent and national, has been outstanding and we’ve already taken a large number of orders, so it’s obviously what the market is after.’

The company also ensures that the operator is given the choice to use the toys in any promotion they would like as each item is available in a variety of sizes. Hempsall added, ‘If an operator wants a door gift or something for prize bingo, we have it. Our 40-inch bears are available at very reasonable prices but would retail in the shops at around £200, giving them enormous perceived value.’

In comparison, Edward Thompson has embraced the kitsch side of Christmas with as many Santas and snowmen as you could ever need. Commercial Manager Chris Garrity commented, ‘There’s quite a demand for our animated snowmen and also the latest items in our fibre-optic range. While the fibre-optic products have been around for a few years, there is still great interest in them and our latest versions involve snow scenes, Santas and Christmas trees.’

Garrity also revealed that the company does a roaring trade in its presentation baskets. The wicker baskets are mainly just a presentation device, but they add a lot to the customers’ perceived value of the prizes. He said, ‘They are very popular because we can personalise them for the companies. It is easy to create bespoke versions and add other things to the basket, such as crackers etc.’

Because of the size of the business, Edward Thompson is able to include all kinds of things, such as bags or holographic items, in the mix. Garrity explained, ‘We can produce items on site through our other divisions, so it is simple to personalise items.’

The company’s Christmas-specific range consists of approximately 100 different items, ranging from Christmas cards to 3ft tall gift baskets, and Garrity says that operators are planning ahead earlier than ever for the festive season. ‘We started getting orders for Christmas items in June this year, so it is getting earlier and earlier.’

Barry Davies from PMS agrees: ‘We actually start taking Christmas orders at the Spring Fair at the NEC. Slowly but surely Christmas buying is getting bigger and bigger. Some people might feel a bit strange dealing with so many Christmas things before summer has even started, but you get used to it!’

So, whether you are interested in the traditional gifts and prizes or you want to find something a little more unusual, as ever, the leading suppliers to the bingo industry have got it covered.

Contacts

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- **Ace Ltd**
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- **PMS International**
  Barry Davies, 01268 50 50 50

- **Edward Thompson**
  Chris Garrity, 0191 514 4199

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