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WELCOME

Get ready to view one of the best issues yet of TribalHub's Magazine.



I'm going to let this issue's table of contents speak for itself when it comes to what's top of mind for the largest community of technology minded professionals from tribes across the U.S. There is sooooo much great content and updates in this read that wraps up our mag series for 2024.

Our next issue won't be out until summer of 2025 and with the pace of technology and this amazing industry, it is crazy to think how much will have changed by then. This issue could seem like a lifetime ago by summer so make sure you are staying up to speed TODAY with us and all the news and resources available on TribalHub's LinkedIn page. I know you have a lot coming at you in the next six months- we are here to help! As you near the end of 2024 and set your sights on the 2025 budget and projects, be sure to reflect on all you and your teams have accomplished in 2024- it was one of the good ones (even though challenging) for so many. Give yourselves a round of applause.

As far as the TribalHub team goes, we celebrated 25 years of TribalNet this fall with THE best event ever! Seven regional events across the U.S. that brought together so many tribes and connections. We've hosted and broadcasted countless webinars and podcasts and gained so many new members as part of the TribalHubClub. We already have big plans in place in 2025 that are of so much value to our readers- all of the above on repeat plus a Virtual Community Symposium, an In-Person Cybersecurity Summit and two new Tribal Technology Certifications just to name a few. What a year to reflect on behind us and a great one ahead with all of you!

We hope you enjoy this issue and a special thanks to our advertisers for continuing to allow this great publication to come to your desktops and phone in this cool digital format - complimentary!!!

Cheers!

Shannon Bouschor

Director of Operations, TribalHub

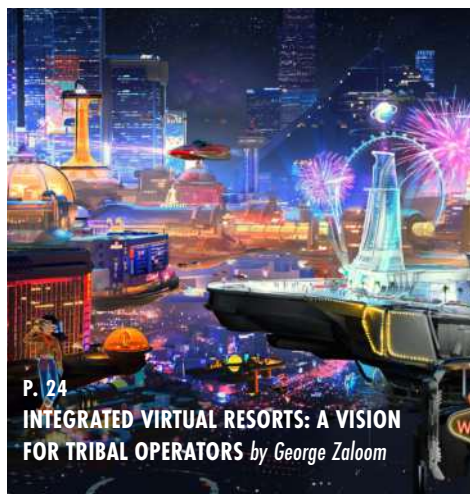
The Largest Community of Technology Minded Professionals from Tribes Across the Country

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BREAKING THE BARRIERS TO INFORMATION SHARING:

Changing the Discussion from Legal Risk to C-suite Opportunity

Sharing information is critical to bolster defenses against increasingly sophisticated threats. Cooperation between organizations can strengthen everyone's defenses, but the approach requires openness and transparency, policies that many organizations have been reluctant to adopt.

To a certain extent, the reluctance is understandable. The decision to share information about incidents, vulnerabilities, and best practices is often hindered by concerns over legal risks. Traditionally, legal advisors have been cautious

about sharing information on cybersecurity, advising against dispensing sensitive information because of the perceived risk of exposing such information. Though well-intentioned, this approach often fails to recognize the broader benefits of information sharing, including the resilience of organizations and industry-wide security.

Businesses must formulate strategies to share information about cybersecurity risks and breaches. Sharing information about an incident opens the possibility of learning from others who have experienced similar incidents – enabling organizations to recover quicker and more efficiently. Companies should share information that can enhance the defense of other organizations because, in the long run, they'll be protecting themselves from future cyber threats. The process starts with support from top-level management.

The C-suite – comprising top executives such as the CEO, CFO, CIO, CISO, and others – plays a critical role in shaping an organization's approach to cybersecurity. The C-suite's role is pivotal in driving the cultural and operational changes necessary to transition from a risk-averse stance to one that recognizes the strategic value of collaboration and information exchange.

One of the most successful initiatives that C-suite leaders can champion is participation in industry-specific ISAC. ISACs were designed to facilitate the trusted exchange of information among critical infrastructure sectors and offer a proven model for how information sharing can be

managed effectively and securely. In fact, the 25th anniversary of the first operational ISAC – [the Financial Services ISAC](#) – was just celebrated on October 1, 2024.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INFORMATION SHARING

Cyber threats are not isolated incidents; they often follow patterns and repeatedly exploit common vulnerabilities across industries. When one organization falls victim to an attack, the lessons learned can be invaluable to others facing similar threats. Information sharing can preemptively strengthen defenses, improve incident response, and foster a collaborative approach to cybersecurity across sectors. Embracing information sharing within and across industries can provide several compelling advantages, including:

- **Enhanced risk management**
- **Cost savings and resource efficiency**
- **Compliance and legal benefits**
- **Innovation**
- **Individual Professional Development**

CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION SHARING

Despite the clear business case for information sharing, there are both real and perceived legal and compliance challenges that might prevent organizations from sharing information about cybersecurity incidents. These challenges span various domains, including legal and regulatory complexities, risks of exposure and misuse, trust issues, technical barriers, and cultural and organizational obstacles.

NEW CROSS-SECTOR GROUP HOPES TO BREAK THE BARRIERS

Through the National Council of ISACs, a new cross-sector working



BY

ERROL WEISS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Errol Weiss, Health-ISAC Chief Security Officer, has over 25 years of experience in Information Security beginning his career with the National Security Agency. He created and ran Citigroup's Cyber Intelligence Center and was a Senior Vice President Executive with Bank of America's Global Information Security team.

group has been created to address the real and perceived challenges that often lead legal counsel to advise companies not to share information about an incident or other cybersecurity matters.

The Breaking the Barriers initiative hopes to bring this discussion to C-suites across all critical infrastructure organizations to educate them on the benefits of information sharing and change the perception of sharing from a legal risk to a comprehensive business benefit.

The working group intends to create several deliverables including:

- Information sharing model contract language
- Information sharing guidance
- A primer outlining existing information-sharing laws and legal protections

THE PATH FORWARD

To overcome the challenges of information sharing, a shift in perspective is necessary, one that views the practice not as a legal risk but as a strategic business imperative. This shift must be driven from the top, with the C-suite playing a pivotal role in fostering a more secure, resilient, and collaborative cybersecurity environment.

When members of the C-suite change the discussion around information sharing from a narrow focus on legal risks to a broader understanding of business benefits, organizations can unlock the full potential of collaborative cybersecurity efforts. This approach not only strengthens individual companies but also enhances the security and resilience of entire industries.

In an interconnected world, the strength of one organization's defenses depends on the collective knowledge and vigilance of the entire community. It's time to break the barriers and embrace a future in which information sharing is not a risk to be avoided, but a strategic advantage to be leveraged. By doing so, C-suite members can protect themselves, their organizations, and the customers they serve in an increasingly complex and dangerous cyber landscape.

If you're interested in participating in the Breaking the Barriers cross-sector working group, please email Errol Weiss at eweiss@h-isac.org.

To read more information on information-sharing best practices, including tips on how to "break the barriers," read Health-ISAC's [whitepaper here](#).

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AGENCY UPDATE

FCC: Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Office of Native Affairs and Policy (ONAP)

BAMBI KRAUS
ONAP Chief

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FOR TRIBAL LEADERS, GOVERNMENTS, AND OTHER
ORGANIZATIONS, WRITE TO:**

Native@fcc.gov



MEP ALERT CODE – As FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel highlighted in her recent [remarks](#) to the National Congress of American Indians, the FCC authorized the use of a three-letter Missing and Endangered Persons (MEP) event code for alerts sent through the Emergency Alert System and the Wireless Emergency Alerts system, to enhance the dissemination of information regarding missing and endangered persons across multiple jurisdictions. The FCC encourages tribes to become Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) alert authorities so they can send missing persons alerts. Please see [FEMA's Fact Sheet](#) for more information on IPAWS.

LIFELINE BENEFIT FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND RELATED CRIMES – Implementing a key provision of the Safe Connections Act, survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and related crimes can get easier access to discounted phone, internet, or bundled services through the FCC's Lifeline program. Survivors can make a request with their service provider to separate their mobile phone lines from family plans where the abuser is on the account. Survivors experiencing financial hardship can receive up to six months of emergency Lifeline support and may qualify for the Lifeline program longer-term after this initial support. For more information, visit the Survivor Benefit page: [Lifeline Survivor Benefit](#).

NEW E-RATE TRIBAL LIBRARY PROGRAM – The Tribal Library E-Rate Advocacy Program (T-LEAP) has launched! T-LEAP builds on the success of the Tribal Library Pilot Program and provides technical one-to-one assistance to Tribal Libraries interested in participating in the E-Rate program for schools and libraries. To sign up for T-LEAP, complete the form available [here](#).

BROADBAND MAP – The FCC's latest version of the [National Broadband Map](#) provides location data and information about internet availability. We encourage you to review the map for your community. You may submit a [Location Challenge](#) if you identify missing or misidentified locations or an [Availability Challenge](#) if you believe the availability data is inaccurate.

TRIBAL-SPECIFIC ENTITY TYPES ADDED TO CERTAIN ULS FORMS – The FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau has enhanced the Universal Licensing System (ULS) by adding tribal-specific entity types to certain ULS forms. The use of the new entity types will exempt applications filed by Tribal Nations and tribally-controlled business entities from related FCC Application Fees. This enhancement will also improve the identification of how and where Tribal Nations are directly accessing licensed wireless spectrum.

ONAP WELCOMES NEW STAFF – Kraynal Alfred and Jack Jackson, Jr., both members of the Navajo Nation, join ONAP as Policy Advisors.

The Five Cs of Effective Technical Communication



BY

LAURIE BROWN

CSP

LAURIE BROWN - COMMUNICATION SKILLS
EXPERT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An expert in communication skills for STEM professionals, Laurie Brown, CSP, empowers IT and engineering teams with essential skills in technical presentations, persuasive communication, and customer service. Known for blending brain science with practical training, Laurie Brown delivers impactful coaching, training, and speaking services that elevate communication and drive results.

To ensure success in your job, you need more than technical expertise. This is especially true when speaking to a non-tech or leadership audience. Translating your knowledge without “dumbing down” your information is an essential skill.

This article explores the five Cs of better communication: Clear, Complete, Correct, Concise, and Compassionate. These principles can enhance professional relationships, improve productivity, and advance your career.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION: SIMPLICITY IS KEY

The first pillar of effective communication is clarity. Conveying your message clearly is invaluable. Here are some strategies to enhance the clarity of your communication:

- **Use simple, straightforward language:** Avoid complex words when simpler ones will do. Your goal is to be understood.
- **Avoid jargon, technical terms, and acronyms:** Unless

your audience is familiar with industry-specific language, avoid jargon, tech talk, and acronyms. If you must use technical terms, explain them clearly.

- **Structure your message logically:** Coherently organize your thoughts. Use headings, bullet points, or numbered lists to break complex information into digestible chunks.
- **Provide examples and analogies:** When explaining abstract or complicated technical concepts, use concrete examples, analogies, and metaphors to make your point more relatable and accessible.

COMPLETE COMMUNICATION: LEAVE NO QUESTIONS UNANSWERED

Effective communication is about more than what you say; it also involves anticipating what your audience needs to know. Complete communication ensures that your message contains all the necessary information for your audience to understand and act

on it. To achieve completeness in your communication:

- **Identify your audience's needs:** Consider who you're communicating with and what they require to understand your message fully.
- **Address potential questions proactively:** Anticipate and address your audience's concerns in your initial communication.
- **Provide context:** Ensure your audience has enough background information to understand the significance of your message.
- **Include clear action items or next steps:** If your communication requires action, clearly state what needs to be done, by whom, and by when.

CORRECT COMMUNICATION: ACCURACY BUILDS TRUST

The accuracy of your communication directly impacts your credibility in professional settings. Correct communication involves factual accuracy, proper language use, and appropriate citation of sources. To ensure the correctness of your communication:

- **Double-check facts and figures:** Verify all data before including it in your communication.
- **Proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation:** Even minor errors can detract from your message and diminish your professional image and credibility.
- **Cite sources properly:** When referencing external information, provide proper attribution to build credibility and avoid plagiarism.
- **Seek feedback:** Have a colleague review your work for accuracy and clarity before sending important communications.

CONCISE COMMUNICATION: LESS IS OFTEN MORE

You are not alone if "TL/DR" (too long, didn't read) is your reaction to communications you receive. The ability to communicate concisely is highly valued. Concise communication respects your audience's time and helps ensure that your key messages are not lost in a sea of words. To make your communication more concise:

- **Focus on the main points:** Identify the core message you must convey and build your communication around it.
- **Eliminate unnecessary details:** Include only information that directly supports your main message.
- **Use active voice:** Active voice typically requires fewer words and creates a stronger, more direct tone.
- **Avoid repetition:** Unless you're deliberately emphasizing a point, say things once and move on.

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION: CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

The final C, compassionate communication, is about considering the human element in your interactions. By adopting a respectful, professional, and empathetic tone, you can build stronger relationships and increase the effectiveness of your communication. To communicate with compassion:

- **Consider your audience's perspective:** Consider how your message might be received and adjust your tone accordingly.
- **Show empathy:** Acknowledge the feelings and challenges of others, especially when delivering difficult news or feedback.
- **Be respectful:** Maintain a professional tone, even in casual settings or when disagreeing with others.

- **Practice active listening:** Show genuine interest in others' viewpoints and ask thoughtful questions to deepen your understanding.

CONCLUSION: INTEGRATING THE FIVE CS

Mastering these five Cs can significantly enhance your professional effectiveness. By consistently applying these principles, you'll find that your messages are better understood, your ideas are more readily accepted, and your professional relationships are strengthened. Remember, effective communication is a skill that can be developed with practice. Continuously seek feedback and refine your approach. As you improve, you'll likely see a positive impact on both your career and personal relationships.

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BUILDING AN ORGANIZATIONAL CYBERSECURITY CULTURE: RAISING RESILIENCE; REDUCING RISK



BY

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy is co-founder and Managing Director of Gate 15, where he oversees Gate 15 operations providing Gate 15's threat-informed and risk-based approach to analysis, resilience and operations and participates in Gate 15's podcasts. He is also involved on the Board and as volunteer with several other homeland security-focused organizations.

In the last few months, I've had more conversations than I could ever have expected about the concept of building a security-minded organizational culture. It's an important, but under-discussed topic. To build a strong culture, we need to be deliberate, and that means setting aside time to think about what being security-minded means to us, and how we can reasonably get our organization's leadership to support and buy into the importance of having a healthy organizational cybersecurity culture. In fact, building a strong organizational cybersecurity culture was a main topic in the last two Gate 15 Interviews:

- The Gate 15 Interview - [TribalNet! Building a Cybersecurity Culture, Tribal-ISAC, and How We Rock!](#)
- The Gate 15 Interview - [Rob Sherman on CISOs: "Focus on risk, focus on resilience"](#)

I'll revisit a few of the highlights from those discussions in a moment, but let's start with a better understanding of what we mean by "Organizational Cybersecurity Culture." In June, the UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) released an update to their [Cyber Security Toolkit for Boards](#), which includes a section on developing a positive cybersecurity culture. They define "security culture" as, "the values that determine how people are expected to think about

and approach security in an [organization]. These are shaped by the goals, structure, policies, processes, and leadership of your [organization]."

The NCSC continues, "A positive cyber security culture is essential because **people** make an [organization] secure, not just technology and processes. If this is in place, people view security as a collective and collaborative [endeavor] that supports and is supported by their everyday work." The guidance lists some of the benefits of a strong organizational security culture and lists several "essential activities," which include **leadership**, clear communication, simple reporting for incidents, and training.

There are other areas one may want to add, possibly including risk assessment and management, policies and procedures, regular exercises and evaluations, technical controls, and continuous improvement, among others. All of these are important, but it all starts with the first one - leadership. Leadership buy-in and commitment are the foundational part of a successful organizational security culture.

CISOs and other leaders charged with or taking the initiative to build a strong organizational cybersecurity culture will struggle to be successful if they don't have the support of and

resources provided by leadership to effectively invest in the effort. In the TribalNet podcast, we discussed the importance of leadership buy-in but also noted that our goal is really a whole-of-organization effort.

“It really takes involvement from the CEO down to the housekeeper and cocktail server. It’s a top-down, bottom-up approach. We need [the] CEO buying in... the CEO, CFO... they have to walk the walk, they have to feel the same pain that everybody feels, they have to be out there living the same experiences, and we have to be involving every team member from the bottom up as well.”
 “Cybersecurity is not just your IT department... it’s literally everybody – from your security [team]...[and] your Marketing Department to your house – every... person has a part...”

Between the two podcasts, some of the ideas we highlighted for

building a strong cybersecurity culture included:

- Prioritize efforts! “Focus on risk, focus on resilience.”
- [Join Tribal-ISAC!](#) Tribal-ISAC provides a safe and secure environment for the nation’s federally recognized sovereign Native American tribal organizations to share and mitigate security threat information, to share best practices, and is the conduit for security information sharing.
- Develop foundational plans and procedures and build more robust processes over time.
- Training & education! Get involved in new hire education activities, frequently putting educational posters and other materials in front of personnel and keeping everyone aware of emerging threats and tactics, such as the malicious use of QR codes.

- Conduct exercises! Start with your core security team and exercise them at least annually. Add in senior leader exercises and build out to include other parts of the organization: suppliers, public sector partners, etc...
- Manage the process and take things in “chewable bites.” Consider developing an Implementation Roadmap with short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals and milestones.
- [Take advantage of grants!](#) They’re there for you to use them!

Building a strong organizational cybersecurity culture takes time and commitment, but most of all, it takes getting started!

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CISA: CISA Releases Resources to Boost Infrastructure Security

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Each November, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) promotes the importance of Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience Month. Throughout the month, CISA is focused on educating and engaging all levels of government, infrastructure owners and operators, and the American public about the vital role critical infrastructure plays in the nation's well-being and why it is important to strengthen critical infrastructure security and resilience.

This year's theme – ***Resolve to be Resilient*** – emphasizes nationwide preparations for and investment in resilience today, so that our nation can withstand and recover quickly in the event of an incident tomorrow. Examples of critical infrastructure in your community may include communications systems, schools, healthcare, and other services Americans depend on every day. Due to the interconnectivity of critical infrastructure, there is an increased risk that a disruption in one place can ripple near and far.

CISA has several resources to support tribal efforts to ***Resolve to be Resilient***.

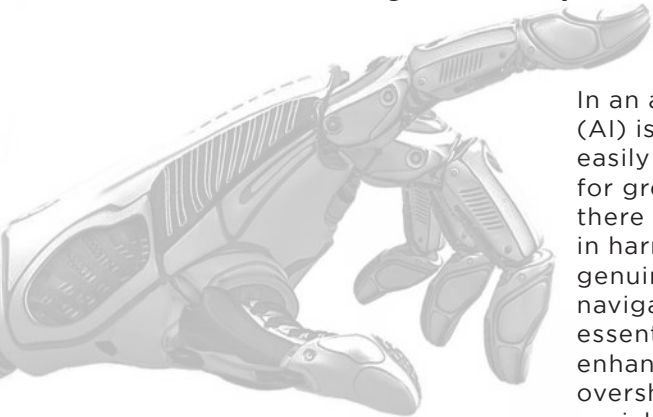
Taking the following actions can help tribal departments and agencies make their critical infrastructure more secure and resilient.

- Conduct or participate in a training or exercise to improve security and resilience.
- Check if you qualify for the Department of Homeland Security's Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program: [Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program | CISA](#).
- Connect public safety officials with private-sector businesses.
- Meet with local business owners to discuss dependencies on critical infrastructure and distribute relevant materials.
- Include a message about the importance of infrastructure security and resilience in newsletters, mailings, and websites.
- Meet with CISA representatives in your [area](#) to better understand your local infrastructure and the risks it faces.
- Host a meeting to identify and discuss tribal critical infrastructure issues and potential solutions.
- Publish an opinion editorial in community newsletters about the importance of critical infrastructure security and resilience.

To learn more about CISA's Resolve to be Resilient effort and access additional resources, please visit www.cisa.gov/cisr. For more information on CISA Tribal Affairs, please contact CISATribalAffairs@mail.cisa.dhs.gov.

HARMONIZING AI AND HUMANITY

“Did you hear that Artificial Intelligence got kicked out of school? It was trying to cheat on its homework with Google!” (This joke has been brought to you by ChatGPT.)



BY

KATY PICKENS

IT BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP MANAGER
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katy Pickens is an IT Business Relationship Manager at the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, focusing on Cultural and Special Services. Certified as a Business Relationship Manager (CBRM), she leverages her background in IT, public relations and development to foster strong connections between stakeholders. Outside of work, Katy enjoys spending time with her husband and children on their family farm.

In an age when Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping our lives (including easily generating cheesy jokes for great article introductions), there tends to be a real challenge in harmonizing technology with genuine human connection. As we navigate this new landscape, it's essential to explore how AI can enhance our experiences without overshadowing the emotional and social bonds that define us. I find this to be especially true in our Native American communities, where we strive to connect education, culture, and tradition across the reservation, throughout the country, and even around the world.

THE RISE OF AI: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The rapid advancement of AI has transformed industries, introducing efficiencies and capabilities that were once unimaginable. From healthcare to finance, AI systems can analyze vast amounts of data and generate insights that drive decision-making. However, this technological revolution also prompts a reevaluation of how we connect with one another. In a world where virtual assistants can fulfill our needs almost intuitively, there is a risk of prioritizing efficiency over the rich experiences that come from genuine human engagement. This shift can lead to surface-level connectivity, overshadowing the deep emotional ties that define our humanity.

THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN CONNECTION

At the heart of meaningful relationships is empathy – the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. This emotional resonance fosters trust, support, and a sense of belonging. While AI can simulate conversations and

provide information, it cannot replace the warmth of human interaction.

For our Native American communities, maintaining these connections is especially vital. Cultural identity, storytelling, and communal bonds are integral to our way of life. In an increasingly AI-driven world, there is a critical need to protect and enhance these relationships while leveraging technology for the greater good.

LEVERAGING AI TO SUPPORT TRIBES

AI presents unique opportunities to support tribes in ways that enhance both cultural preservation and community development. Examples of some of these are: Cultural Heritage Preservation: AI technologies can assist in digitizing and archiving traditional stories, languages, and art forms. By creating interactive databases and virtual reality experiences, tribes can preserve their cultural heritage for future generations while making it accessible to a broader audience – a borderless cultural experience.

- **Educational Resources:** AI-driven platforms can provide personalized learning experiences for tribal youth, integrating cultural education with contemporary skills. By blending traditional knowledge with modern technology, these platforms can foster a sense of identity while equipping students for future challenges.
- **Community Health Initiatives:** AI can play a role in addressing health disparities in Native American communities. By analyzing data on health outcomes and service

utilization, AI can help identify gaps in care and inform targeted interventions, ultimately improving community well-being.

- **Economic Development:** AI tools can support tribal enterprises by optimizing resource management and enhancing operational efficiency. By leveraging AI for data analysis, tribes can make informed decisions that drive sustainable economic growth while maintaining their cultural values.
- **Facilitating Connections:** AI can enhance communication within and between tribes, fostering collaboration on projects and initiatives. Platforms that connect individuals and organizations can help facilitate partnerships and strengthen networks, amplifying voices within and beyond tribal boundaries.

NURTURING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AMIDST TECHNOLOGY

While embracing these AI applications, it is crucial not to lose sight of the importance of human relationships. Some strategies for maintaining these connections in an AI-enhanced world are:

- **Prioritize In-Person Interactions:** Encourage face-to-face gatherings and community events that foster personal connections. Whether through cultural celebrations or shared projects, these interactions build trust and deepen relationships.
- **Encourage Storytelling:** Facilitate spaces for storytelling that honor tribal traditions and encourage intergenerational dialogue. This practice not only preserves cultural narratives

but also strengthens community bonds.

- **Cultivate Emotional Intelligence:** Promote workshops and programs that enhance emotional intelligence and communication skills among community members. These initiatives can empower individuals to engage more deeply with one another.

As we move forward in an AI-generated world, the importance of human relationships cannot be overstated. For our tribes, balancing technological advancement with cultural preservation is paramount. Ultimately, I believe, the future will belong to those who can harmonize the benefits of AI with the richness of human relationships, ensuring that technology enhances rather than diminishes our connections.



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BY

PAUL WIRSZYLA
IT SECURITY ENGINEER
SYCUAN CASINO

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Wirszyla has been with Sycuan Casino for 2 years and is the current IT Security Engineer. He has a passion for Cybersecurity and strives to continue to grow as a professional in the field. Special thanks to Nicole Varone for helping me throughout the writing process.

THERE IS NO PC"I" IN TEAM!

Cybersecurity and Information Technology are ever-growing and changing fields. The profession is a daily grind of keeping up with technology advancements and trends. Despite the grind, it is a rewarding field to be in. However, there are times that the job presents a unique challenge that even IT professionals only have theoretical knowledge of. In this narrative, I will describe one such challenge that I faced and my approach to overcoming it.

I was given the opportunity of a lifetime when I was hired by Sycuan Casino in 2022, and it has been an incredible journey for me. During my first few months, the previous Security Engineer was wrapping up a pre-existing PCI-DSS compliance audit, which was a huge accomplishment for him before he left. I knew that this audit would require renewal, and as time went on the renewal was always on the horizon, getting closer.

Renewal day began with a meeting with the company doing our renewal audit, and they tasked me with a list of almost 140 requirements that I would need to gather evidence for. Nowhere in my college or CISSP education did I learn that there were this many requirements to check boxes for. The vast list of requirements was daunting to look at and my brain went into a state of, "How am I going to do this?"

In my schooling, there was only one chapter regarding different compliance types with definitions and a quick rundown of the industry sector they cover!" It was overwhelming.

It is ok to have to have those feelings – we are only human. What do you do in a situation in which you think you cannot get the project done because you have never practically done it? You stay calm and reassure yourself that this project can be accomplished. Others have come before you and had similar thoughts, but they were able to get the project done, and you will get it done, too. What did I do? After reading the list, I took a walk to calm myself and produce a strategy. I told my brain, "Hey, you need to stop with those thoughts OK!?" Several tasks were low-hanging fruit and easily achievable. There were also times I would just have a picture of evidence submitted from the initial audit but no clue where to get it from. I made an inventory of what I already knew out of those 140 requirements. For example, I knew I could find a network diagram. Did I feel better? No, not at that moment. I still had 139 requirements left!

Once I fulfilled around twenty of the easily-accomplished requirements, my confidence to develop a strategy to approach

the other requirements increased. That is when it hit me like a sack of bricks, "Why aren't you asking for help? This requirement clearly asks for paperwork on the last hard drive shredding. I may not be involved with the process, but I can ask someone who is!" That moment changed my entire thought process about gathering the documentation for the audit and it is when I hit my stride in submitting evidence. I took keywords from each requirement and asked anyone and everyone where I could get the requested evidence - and I mean everyone, including my Vice President of Information Technology, Patrick Tinklenberg! When there were gaps encountered, I would shoot an email to our QSA and hop on a team's call for clarification.

It took a long time to complete the evidence-gathering, even after hitting that stride, but I did it. I reached the end of the tunnel with

the help of my team. I now have notes on the process and who to ask for clarification and have officially experienced a practical PCI-DSS audit renewal cycle. This will not be the last time I encounter something I have read about but have never done. Now, I know that when the next challenge arises, I will again seek a collaborative effort with the valuable team of experts within my team and through my TribalHub community. As a member of the TribalHub community, you have a team that can support you from across the nation. All of our members have a variety of backgrounds and have experiences to share. So, next time you run into something that you are not too sure you can handle, don't be afraid to reach out on the discussion boards or through LinkedIn - because if we work together, we can accomplish anything.

“

AS A MEMBER OF THE TRIBALHUB COMMUNITY, YOU HAVE A TEAM THAT CAN SUPPORT YOU FROM ACROSS THE NATION. ALL OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS AND HAVE EXPERIENCES TO SHARE. SO, NEXT TIME YOU RUN INTO SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE NOT TOO SURE YOU CAN HANDLE, DON'T BE AFRAID TO REACH OUT ON THE DISCUSSION BOARDS OR THROUGH LINKEDIN - BECAUSE IF WE WORK TOGETHER, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.

- Paul Wirszyla

”



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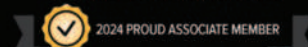


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AGENCY UPDATE

FBI-CJIS: FBI fingerprint-based services help identify deceased persons and resolve missing person cases

KRISTI NATERNICOLA AND JULIA LUCAS

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SPC_Team@fbi.gov

FOR GENERAL FINGERPRINT-BASED MISSING PERSON OR DECEASED IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONS, AS WELL AS FINGERPRINT ENROLLMENT QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

[DPI_Services at DPIServices@fbi.gov](mailto:DPI_Services@fbi.gov)



The FBI's Deceased Persons Identification (DPI) Services was designed to address the unique needs and challenges of law enforcement, medical examiner, and coroner communities by providing fingerprint-based deceased identification for active and cold cases. Each year in the United States, more than 4,400 individuals die without an identification and more than 11,000 sets of unidentified human remains are held at medical examiners' and coroners' offices.

Identification is critical to resolving investigations. Deceased identification helps preserve the individual's dignity, offers an opportunity for them to be buried and memorialized with their name, provides resolution for family and friends, and helps to resolve law enforcement cases. Enrollment and retention are the key to obtaining identification. In their review of numerous resolved unidentified person cold cases, the FBI's DPI Services staff found that fingerprint retention in the Next Generation Identification (NGI) System is the most important factor in timely identification. In many cases, failure to retain fingerprints creates significant identification delays, even when robust searches are conducted. Simply put, a fingerprint match cannot occur if the database does not contain fingerprints for the decedent. Who may submit deceased identification requests to the DPI Services? Federal, state, territorial, local, tribal, and international law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and authorized medical examiners and coroners may submit deceased identification requests to the NGI System with biographic information and fingerprints, when available. International contributors should work with their FBI Legal Attaches for assistance. The service is provided free of charge.

Each year more than 100,000 individuals go missing.

A missing person might be across town or across the nation and may be endangered, homeless, affected by a medical condition or mental illness, or even deceased. The FBI offers the NGI Missing Persons Services to provide an opportunity to bring the missing person home. The NGI Missing Persons Services resolves active and cold missing person cases when the missing person's fingerprints are reported to the NGI System and a fingerprint match occurs to a civil, criminal, or deceased fingerprint. Fingerprint retention is the key to resolving missing persons cases. Failure to retain fingerprints in the NGI System creates significant identification delays, even when robust fingerprint searches are conducted. Simply put, a fingerprint match cannot occur if the database does not contain fingerprints for the missing person. Many missing persons are reported with biographic information in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Missing Person File, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), or both. However, unless fingerprints for the missing person are retained in the NGI System, subsequent searches of the NGI System have no opportunity to hit on the missing person's fingerprints and therefore provide the person's potential location. Today, the three databases are not connected.

For immediate deceased identification assistance or assistance with deceased identifications/missing persons while programming, please email SPC_Team@fbi.gov. For general fingerprint-based missing person or deceased identification questions, as well as fingerprint enrollment questions, please contact DPI Services at DPIServices@fbi.gov. To coordinate programming for the Unknown Deceased, Known Deceased, and/or Missing Person Types of Transaction, please contact your CJIS Division Customer Service Group representative at CK_CSG@fbi.gov.

INTEGRATED VIRTUAL RESORTS: A VISION FOR TRIBAL OPERATORS



BY
GEORGE ZALOOM
CHIEF EVANGELIST
WORLD VEGAS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

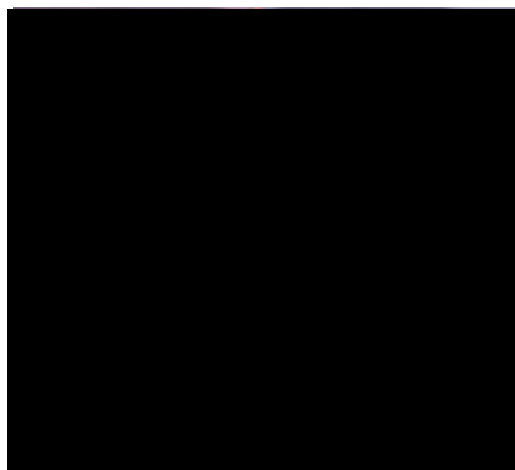
George Zaloom is the Chief Evangelist for World Vegas and the founder of The Las Vegas Whaling Company, a noted incubator of digital casino gaming platforms. Its partial client list includes leading resort operators such as Boyd Gaming and Melco Entertainment.

The online casino gaming landscape is changing rapidly, and tribal operators have a unique chance to lead in this transformation. Metaverse-based Integrated Virtual Resorts (IVRs) offer tribal casinos the ability to merge traditional casinos with immersive digital environments in the metaverse, positioning them at the forefront of the next-generation iGaming experience.

WHAT ARE IVRS?

IVRs combine the real-world appeal of casino resorts with virtual, interactive environments. Users can access these virtual spaces through mobile devices, desktop computers, or virtual reality (VR) headsets, enabling them to explore gaming floors, nightclubs, concerts, pool parties, and shopping experiences in a seamless digital environment.

A preview of what the future brings



For tribes looking to transition to digital, IVRs present a significant opportunity. By deploying cutting-edge software like Unreal Engine and Unity, operators can design virtual environments that reflect their unique cultural heritage. Tribal operators can engage a global audience by showcasing their traditions through these virtual spaces, offering an experience that blends entertainment with cultural preservation. Technologies like Nvidia's Avatar Cloud Engine allow for conversations in Indigenous languages, adding another layer of authenticity to the virtual experience.

REIMAGINING THE CASINO FLOOR

In the metaverse, casinos can break free from the constraints of physical spaces. Instead of following traditional layouts, operators can create immersive, themed environments tailored to their games. Imagine spinning the reels of Aristocrat's Buffalo while surrounded by a prairie landscape filled with bison or playing Wheel of Fortune inside a virtual amusement park. By incorporating game mechanics found in massive multiplayer online games (MMOs), players in these virtual resorts can progress through levels, unlock new experiences, and build reputations. Interactive missions and themed games will encourage

players to explore further, driving additional revenue streams and engagement.

ENGAGING THE NEXT GEN CUSTOMER

Land-based casinos are engaged in an ongoing struggle to attract younger players. Millennials and Generation Z digital natives are less interested in traditional online slots and table games. They prefer interactive social experiences that align with their digital lifestyles.

IVRs, inspired by platforms like Roblox and Fortnite, can allow tribal operators to reach the younger demographic. These virtual resorts will not just offer real-money gaming, but also immersive social experiences like virtual concerts, shopping, and more. By blending entertainment with gaming, operators can create a virtual experience that resonates with younger players and keeps them engaged.

Creating virtual versions of their real-world amenities, from nightclubs to entertainment venues, will help operators connect the digital and physical worlds, ensuring that the younger audience remains engaged both virtually and in person.

VIRTUAL GOODS: A NEW REVENUE STREAM

One of the most lucrative aspects of deploying an IVR is the sale

of virtual goods. Players can personalize their avatars with accessories, outfits, and items that enhance their in-game experiences. For tribal operators, this represents a new and untapped revenue stream. For instance, patrons of a digital nightclub could purchase a virtual magnum of champagne, which could come with real-world utility rewards like receiving the physical bottle when they visit the land-based casino. Similarly, virtual items like an Ojibwe asabikeshiinh (dreamcatcher) might be sold to bring good luck during gaming sessions. These virtual goods create new ways to engage players while driving additional revenue, loyalty, and brand awareness.

BUILDING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

While platforms like Decentraland and The Sandbox have explored virtual worlds, they don't fully support regulated iGaming or third-party gaming content. As a result, they lack the broad appeal necessary for mainstream iGaming.

In contrast, platforms like World Vegas are being developed specifically for regulated gaming. The planned World Vegas will allow multiple operators to host digital casinos within a virtual "gameoplous," merging real-world commercial and tribal casinos in fantasy 3D environments. The platform will offer a "Games

as a Service" (GaaS) model that includes everything from payments and fraud prevention to a virtual goods marketplace to customizable world-building tools. Such a shared technology platform will create economies of scale and position tribal operators as leaders in the virtual gaming space.

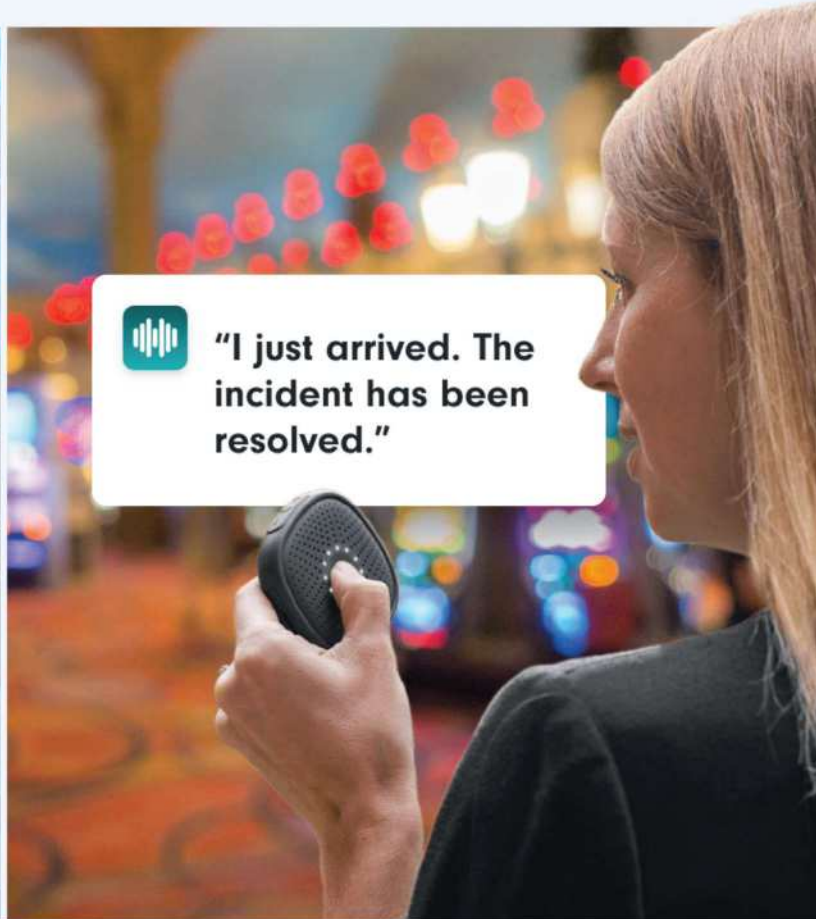
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The emergence of Integrated Virtual Resorts marks a new frontier in the gaming industry. Much like the early days of the Internet in the 1990s, IVRs have the potential to reshape how people experience entertainment and gaming. For tribal operators, this is a unique opportunity to connect with younger, tech-savvy players, ensuring their casinos remain relevant in the digital age.

The future of gaming is virtual, and tribal operators who embrace this transformation will be at the forefront of an exciting new era. The opportunities are limitless, and the time to digitize is now.



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ENGAGING WITH TRIBAL NATIONS: A Guide to Respectful and Successful Collaboration



BY

FRANCES ALVAREZ (KUMEYAAY)

FOUNDER & CEO

REZONATE LLC

A TRIBAL RELATIONS FIRM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frances Alvarez (Kumeyaay-lipai) is a respected leader in the tribal gaming industry with over 23 years of experience. As Chairwoman of the Tribal Gaming Protection Network and President of the National Native American Hall of Fame, she focuses on strengthening relationships and reshaping narratives around tribal relations through her firm, Rezonate LLC.

Let's face it – Indian Country is booming, and businesses are finally catching on to the incredible potential of partnering with Tribal Nations. These communities, rich in culture, history, and resources, offer exciting opportunities for mutually beneficial collaborations. However, navigating these partnerships requires a thoughtful and intentional approach that acknowledges and respects the unique nature of Tribal Nations.

Working with Tribal Nations comes with its own set of considerations. First and foremost, understanding and respecting sovereignty is crucial; it's not open for negotiation, and attempts to undermine it can hinder collaboration. Tribal nations have the inherent right to govern themselves and make their own decisions. Period.

Now, let's talk about diversity. Indian Country is incredibly diverse, comprising various cultures and identities. We're talking tribes, pueblos, nations, rancherias, villages, bands – each with its own unique way of doing things. Leadership titles also vary – Chief, Chairman, President, Governor, and more. Familiarizing yourself with the specific nation you're engaging with demonstrates respect for their individuality. It is crucial to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and to tailor your engagement strategies to the specific needs and goals of each Tribal Nation.

Governance structures? They also vary widely, but in all instances,

tribal leaders are accountable to their communities. Their decisions have a real, tangible impact on people's lives. So, approach these Nations with respect and understand that decision-making might involve a whole lot of voices and perspectives. This process may take longer than in other business environments, but it is crucial to respect these traditions and to engage in a transparent and inclusive manner.

Here's another key point: economic development goals may differ in Indian Country compared with other communities. Tribal Nations aren't always driven by the bottom line like corporations. Sure, economic growth is important, but it's not the only goal. Community well-being, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability are often top priorities for Tribal Nations. So, make sure your goals align with theirs. It's not just about making a profit; it's about making a positive impact that benefits both the Tribal Nation and your business.

Let's not forget about the legal and regulatory side of things. You have to navigate both tribal laws and federal regulations, which can get complex. Seeking expert guidance on these matters can help to avoid potential pitfalls and ensure compliance with all applicable laws. And what about resources? Many Tribal Nations are working with limited resources, so be mindful and respectful of that. This might mean adapting your expectations and timelines and being willing to provide additional support or resources where possible.

Now, let's talk about building strong relationships. Trust and collaboration are key, and this starts with active and respectful participation. Attending trade associations and events specific to Indian Country is a great way to show you're genuinely interested in and supportive of tribal businesses and industries. These events provide valuable opportunities to network with tribal leaders and community members, learn about their priorities and concerns, and build lasting relationships.

Sponsoring a project or organization that benefits Indian Country can be a powerful way to build bridges, but remember, it's not about buying your way in. True engagement comes from a genuine desire to contribute and make a difference. It is important to approach sponsorships and other forms of support with humility and a focus on the needs of the community.

And here's a little secret: Indian Country is full of economic opportunities beyond just gaming. We're talking agriculture, renewable energy, tourism, technology – the list goes on. Be open-minded, explore the possibilities, and you might be surprised about what you find. By diversifying your understanding of the economic landscape in Indian Country, you can identify new opportunities for collaboration.

So, how do you get started? Here are a few tips:

- Learn about the community and its history. Take the time to research the specific Tribal Nation you're interested in engaging with. Learn about their history, culture, governance structure, and economic priorities.
- Work with a tribal relations professional – they can be invaluable in navigating the

complexities of this work and assisting with the right introductions.

- Show your support by joining trade organizations and offering sponsorships.
- Hire within Indian Country – it's a win-win.

And finally, remember that building trust takes time and effort. Be patient, be consistent, and be sincere in your commitment. Indian Country values loyalty, and the rewards of a strong, trusting relationship are immeasurable.

Remember, engaging with Tribal Nations is more than just a business opportunity; it's a chance to build meaningful relationships, contribute to a thriving community, and be part of something bigger than yourself. Let's approach this with the respect and dedication it deserves. Together, we can build a future where everyone prospers.

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AGENCY UPDATE

FIRSTNET: Investing in Broadband Coverage for Tribal Nations, Rural Areas

JASPER BRUNER

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At the [First Responder Network Authority](#) (FirstNet Authority), we oversee the building, deployment, and operation of [FirstNet](#), the nationwide public safety broadband network. We work to ensure FirstNet supports all responders — including those operating on tribal lands.

Our work is guided by the needs of America's first responders, and they have made it clear that broadband coverage remains a top priority for public safety nationwide.

FIRSTNET COVERAGE AIDS TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Access to broadband on tribal lands has long been a challenge for tribal public safety officials.

Meskwaki Nation Police Chief Jeff Bunn knows this firsthand. “The Meskwaki settlement is a hilly area with lots of valleys,” he said. Prior to FirstNet, he explained, “It was really hard to get any kind of reception on our phones and we would lose connectivity on our computers if we were trying to run information or calls through CAD [computer-aided dispatch].”

With [FirstNet, Meskwaki first responders](#) now maintain communication during everyday operations, emergency response, and planned events, including the Meskwaki Annual Powwow. Chief Bunn added, “It has made a huge impact for us because all those areas that were dead areas are no longer an issue.”

SUITE OF COVERAGE SOLUTIONS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

Since launching the buildout of FirstNet, our network partner, AT&T, estimates an increase of more than 60% in coverage on tribal lands. The network now covers more than 2.97 million square miles nationwide, but the FirstNet Authority recognizes additional coverage is still needed.

In response, the FirstNet Authority has invested in several coverage-enhancing solutions over the past several years, including small cell technology to [boost in-building coverage, portable cell sites](#) to provide on-demand coverage, and [1,000 new cell sites](#) to be built over the next two years.

Most recently, in August 2024, the FirstNet Authority Board approved [plans to invest approximately \\$2 billion to expand FirstNet coverage](#), particularly in tribal, territorial, and rural areas. This investment is part of a [10-year investment initiative](#) to enhance mission-critical services, bring full 5G to FirstNet, and expand coverage nationwide.

ENGAGING WITH TRIBES TO IMPROVE THEIR NETWORK EXPERIENCE

FirstNet remains committed to improving coverage for tribal public safety agencies like the Meskwaki Nation Police Department. Through ongoing investments in coverage for tribal and rural areas, as well as continued partnerships with tribal leadership and organizations, we are working to improve the network so it meets the unique needs of responders in Indian Country.

As the network continues to evolve, we want to learn more about your coverage challenges and needs. For a tribal consultation, please reach out to tribal.consultation@firstnet.gov or contact me directly at Jasper.Bruner@firstnet.gov.



BY
KIMI GORDY
PARTNER
BAKERHOSTETLER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kimi Gordy is a partner at BakerHostetler, focusing on cybersecurity and privacy matters, particularly for tribal nations. She was cybersecurity counsel for the two largest cyberattacks affecting tribal nations, and her team is one of a kind in advising on the unique privacy and cybersecurity needs of Native American clients.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT – Why an Interdisciplinary Information Security Program is the Reboot We Need

What is the first thing you think of when you hear the phrase “cybersecurity and IT?”

Is it “ransomware,” or “MDR,” or “threat intelligence?” This makes sense – in today’s cyber-forward culture, isn’t resiliency on everyone’s mind?

Well, I will let you in on a secret... based on the hundreds of incidents I’ve handled, and dozens of tabletops I’ve conducted, the most common phrase people think of when asked about IT remains:

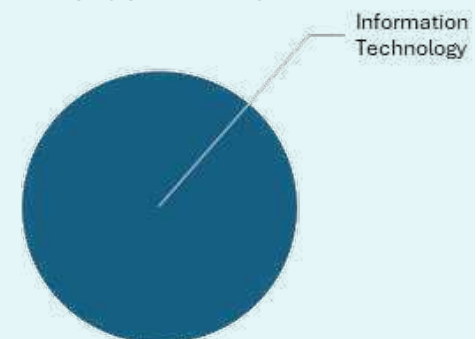
“Try turning it off and back on.”

In the cybersecurity community, this likely invokes a laugh. But, for most end users, this phrase captures their very real impression of what IT professionals do every day. The idea of “The IT person clicking a bunch of things” and fixing a user’s computer persists, and desktop support and information security are still understood as one and the same by the average end user. And when something goes wrong, the most common phrase I hear from leadership is, “I don’t know anything about that – Joe/Mary/Jim/Sue in IT does all of that.”

This siloed approach to cybersecurity is as real a vulnerability as any flaw in a firewall and should be managed just as aggressively. To address this challenge, an effective information security program will reach beyond the IT Department to include an interdisciplinary leadership team or steering committee.

The inclusion of leaders from non-technical departments such as Finance, Human Resources, Guest Relations, and even Marketing, provides significant advantages when compared to an IT-exclusive information security program. Similarly, when tribal economic enterprises share initiatives

CYBERSECURITY BEFORE



with the Tribal Council, it yields mutually beneficial results: Tribal Council members gain technical knowledge and the information security program gains support – often in voice and funds – from the highest levels of government.

If you are thinking, “These stakeholders, especially the Tribal Council, are too busy and they just aren’t technical,” I will counter that I will counter that the lack of technical knowledge is all the more reason to establish an interdisciplinary information security program.

Here’s why:

EXPERIENCE

Your organization’s leaders are your subject matter experts. The operational leaders possess experience and knowledge that they can leverage to advance information security initiatives and buy-in at all levels. Basic proficiency in the tools, acronyms (e.g., MFA, SIEM, DLP), and challenges, such as patching with minimal disruption, will only enhance support and cooperation. Simultaneously, the technical team can learn how other departments do their jobs, including how they process data and the applications or AI tools they use (including tools that perhaps didn’t quite make the application inventory). Leaders cannot advocate for what they don’t understand and involving even the most non-technical leaders will empower them to make information security a priority.

COHESIVE GOVERNANCE

In contrast to a sole IT department, an interdisciplinary leadership approach to cybersecurity has the advantage of a bird’s-eye view of the organization. This will help the entire organization – be it the casino, health clinic, or government – determine priorities, allocate financial resources, implement formal policies, and enforce standards.

The bird’s-eye view also allows for a more thorough understanding

CYBERSECURITY AFTER



of knowledge gaps in the organization, especially the IT fluency gap. All employees who interact with their Nation’s technology – even if it’s limited to an email address – will benefit from a basic information security skill set. I’ve seen Tribal Nations hold technology workshops for employees (and even for tribal members of all ages, involving younger generations as “cyber coaches” for the elder members) to better learn about cybersecurity issues. While every employee doesn’t need to understand the mechanics of cybersecurity tools, understanding their purposes and roles demystifies the IT Department in a way that makes everyone feel accountable.

SECURITY-FOCUSED WORK CULTURE

The first time a casino General Manager or Tribal Council Chairperson considers whether or not to shut down operations should not be during an actual ransomware event. Incorporating information security into their “day jobs” will result in better preparation and business continuity if, and when, an incident occurs. These leaders serve as an example to the rest of the workforce and their respective Nations. By participating in the security program and initiating

conversations, the leaders communicate that information security is a priority. Over time, the leadership’s priority then becomes the workforce’s priority.

Department leaders can also create a positive security culture by including compliance as a criterion in performance evaluations. This can look like recognizing employees who flag phishing attempts or participate in tabletops. Because leaders weigh in on career progression, employees are more likely to value this recognition over a “thank you for completing your annual training” email.

WHAT’S NEXT? TRY “REBOOTING” YOUR INFORMATION SECURITY PROGRAM.

As we move forward from Cybersecurity Awareness Month and into the holiday season – a peak time for cyberattacks – this is the perfect time to consider expanding your information security program beyond the four walls of IT. Even a monthly meeting or initiative with non-technical leaders can help fortify your enterprise in this season of festive phishing.

AI AGENTS REVOLUTIONIZING CASINOS AND HOSPITALITY: Present Innovations and Future Possibilities



BY
RAM PATRACHARI
PRESIDENT
SPENTARKAI

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ram Patrachari is the President of SPentarkAI, specializing in AI-driven solutions for enterprises. With over 30 years in IT, he has held leadership roles at Jamul Casino, Viejas Casino, AT&T, and Bell Labs. Ram has received multiple industry awards and holds an MBA and Master's in Electrical Engineering, with certifications in PMP, CISSP, and Scrum. He can be reached at Ram@SPentarkAI.com

The integration of AI agents in casinos and hospitality represents a major shift from traditional systems to intelligent, adaptive, and responsive environments. AI agents, powered by machine learning algorithms, can transform how businesses operate, personalizing guest experiences, optimizing revenues, and improving operational efficiency. Some of these technologies are already in use, while others are futuristic innovations that will further reshape the industry in the coming years.

AI AGENTS IN CASINOS: REALITIES AND VISIONS

Personalized Gaming Experiences (Now)

AI agents enhance player engagement by analyzing real-time data on player preferences and behaviors and providing personalized game recommendations and promotions.

This technology is already in place in many casinos, helping to increase engagement and player loyalty by offering customized experiences that adapt to an individual's gaming style. By analyzing large data sets, AI agents can deliver insights that improve customer satisfaction and drive revenues.

Fraud Detection and Security (Now and Evolving)

AI agents can identify suspicious behavior or unusual betting patterns, making them critical for real-time fraud detection. Some casino vendors are already using machine learning models to monitor gaming floors and online platforms for signs of cheating or fraud. These systems can flag anomalies in real time, allowing security (and surveillance) teams to respond quickly. In the future, AI agents could act autonomously to address potential fraud without human intervention, making fraud detection more efficient and precise.

Revenue Optimization (Present and Future)

AI systems are already being used to optimize machine placement and enhance revenue on the floor. Machine learning models predict spending patterns and help manage slot machine settings to maximize profitability. The future of AI in revenue management lies in fully autonomous systems, in which AI agents continuously learn and adjust strategies in real time.

AI IN HOSPITALITY: INNOVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Virtual Concierge Services (Now)

Many hotels and resorts have implemented AI-powered virtual concierges to provide 24/7 guest support. These AI agents handle routine inquiries, make recommendations, and assist with bookings, improving efficiency and freeing staff to focus on more complex tasks. Virtual concierge services have become common, offering instant assistance and enhancing the guest experience by ensuring prompt responses.

Personalized Guest Experiences (Now and the Next Frontier)

AI agents are already personalizing guest experiences in hospitality by analyzing preferences and providing tailored services, such as custom room settings or dining recommendations. In the near future, AI will push personalization even further, proactively predicting guest needs and offering seamless experiences.

Operational Efficiency (Now and Expanding)

AI agents are improving operational efficiency by automating tasks such as scheduling housekeeping, managing inventory, and handling maintenance requests. AI systems ensure that resources are allocated optimally, reducing costs and improving guest experiences by

ensuring timely service. The next step in automation could include AI agents fully managing hotel operations, from room service to maintenance, without requiring human oversight.

TECHNICAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Scalability and Performance (Addressed and Future-Proofing)

As AI agents become more widespread, scalability is a critical challenge. Casinos and hotels are already implementing real-time load balancing and performance optimization strategies to manage current demands, and future systems will need to accommodate even larger data loads and more complex AI tasks.

Security and Privacy (Constantly Evolving)

With AI handling sensitive data, security and privacy are top priorities. Multi-layered security measures, including encryption and AI-driven threat detection, are already in place to protect guest and player information. As AI agents gain more autonomy, new challenges will arise, requiring advanced threat detection systems to safeguard against potential security breaches.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS: WHAT'S NEXT FOR AI AGENTS?

Autonomous AI Decision-Making (The Horizon)

The future of AI lies in fully autonomous agents capable of making decisions without human input. In casinos, AI systems could autonomously recommend strategies to engage players. In hotels, AI agents could manage entire operations, from check-ins to maintenance schedules, based on predictive analytics. These AI agents would continuously learn and improve allowing businesses to operate more efficiently.

Balancing Innovation with Risk

While AI agents offer tremendous potential, they also come with risks. As AI agents become more autonomous, they introduce new challenges related to security, oversight, and unintended consequences. For example, AI systems in banking have raised concerns about synchronized actions, such as mass withdrawals or market crashes triggered by a single AI decision. These risks also apply to casinos and hospitality, where AI could potentially make costly errors without proper safeguards in place.

To mitigate these risks, businesses must implement robust security measures, regulatory compliance frameworks, and clear auditing processes for AI-driven decisions. Future AI systems must be transparent, explainable, and accountable, ensuring that any autonomous decisions made by AI agents are traceable and justifiable.

CONCLUSION

The integration of AI agents in casinos and hospitality continues to evolve rapidly. While current implementations demonstrate significant advantages in operational efficiency and guest experience, future developments promise even greater advancements. Success will depend on balancing innovation with appropriate risk management and regulatory compliance. The industry must maintain a careful approach to implementation, ensuring that technological advancement enhances rather than replaces the human element in hospitality services. As these systems continue to evolve, the focus remains on creating seamless, personalized experiences while maintaining the highest standards of security and service quality.

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FOSTERING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS



BY

PAULA ALLEN

DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND
GUEST SERVICES
7 CEDARS RESORT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paula Allen is the Director of Leadership Development and Guest Services at 7 Cedars Resort. With 29 years of experience, she focuses on creating training solutions aligned with organizational goals. Paula has initiated programs emphasizing relationships over job mechanics. She now extends her expertise to other Tribal enterprises, ensuring they meet strategic needs.

When leadership development is executed effectively, the entire organization, along with the wider community, reaps the reward. Increasingly, individuals are turning to indigenous communities for solutions to contemporary challenges. Moreover, effective resource management within tribal organizations can contribute to healing our communities. For this evolution to occur, it is crucial to ensure the organization and our teams are prepared to embrace new initiatives and establish systems that lead to desired outcomes. It is widely recognized that leadership sets the tone, but what does this entail? How deeply should leadership be involved for a program to thrive? The answer is.... they must be entirely engaged, from the initial concept through implementation and any subsequent revisions. Leadership is a measure of commitment to the program. Leaders should evaluate their level of participation and reassess the effectiveness of the leadership development program within their departments.

One way to do this is to establish Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART) goals for each team so team members clearly understand how they can contribute and feel directly involved in the success of each endeavor. Additionally, leadership must define the program standards necessary for the organization

to exceed guest expectations. Engagement levels vary by position and leaders should adjust accordingly, acknowledging that the Heart of the House has distinct behavioral standards. The coaching framework should also be tailored to meet specific needs: front-line team members should receive weekly coaching, those with low engagement might need bi-monthly sessions, and Heart-of-the-House members should be coached quarterly on behavioral standards. Furthermore, it is vital to distribute coaching responsibilities; every leader should mentor or coach someone within the organization. This structure allows for formal coaching, serving as a check-in for reward and recognition.

A leadership development program must receive administrative support from the outset. While many organizations excel at planning a leadership system, implementation often falls short. The system's day-to-day operations must be managed effectively to prevent quick derailment. Each department should appoint a Department Coordinator – a liaison between the department and the Guest Service Program Director. Department Coordinators manage development cycles and align departmental priorities with reality. Their presence is crucial for the success of leadership development systems and they

can also facilitate team member promotions, fostering engagement and enhancing communication with the Guest Service Program.

It is also vital to keep publications current and ensure clear communication about training as a leadership development program evolves. At 7 Cedars Resort, we publish a weekly newsletter called the Cedar Session, highlighting all promotions and essential information for team members. Another approach to maintain the overall health of a program is to establish oversight committees. For example, creating a Program Design committee with members from different levels and departments within the organization ensures that diverse voices contribute to the implementation and maintenance of the program and that a variety of perspectives and ideas are considered. By involving a range of voices, the program can be

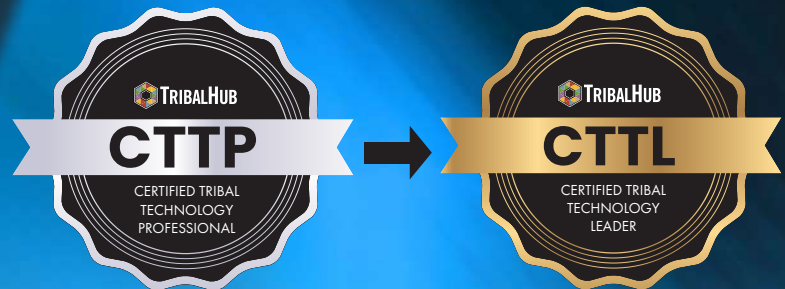
more adaptable and relevant to the entire organization.

Furthermore, it's essential to cultivate a culture of continuous feedback and improvement. Encouraging open communication allows team members to express their thoughts and suggestions, fostering an environment where innovation thrives. Regularly scheduled feedback sessions and surveys can help identify areas for improvement and celebrate success, ensuring the program remains dynamic and effective. Celebrating milestones and achievements within a leadership development program is also crucial. Recognizing the progress and contributions of individuals and teams not only boosts morale but also reinforces the value of the program. Celebrations can take many forms, from awards to recognition ceremonies to simple shout-outs during meetings or in internal newsletters.

In addition to structured leadership development programs, informal mentoring and peer support networks can greatly enhance leadership development. Encouraging employees to seek mentors and build relationships across the organization can lead to organic growth and learning opportunities. These relationships can provide guidance, support, and new perspectives, enriching the leadership journey. Ultimately, a successful leadership development program is one that evolves with the organization, remaining aligned with its goals and values. By fostering a supportive environment, encouraging involvement from all levels, and continuously seeking improvement, organizations can cultivate strong leaders who drive positive change and contribute to the broader community.

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AGENCY UPDATE

NTIA: Funding & Program Updates

MARGARET GUTIERREZ

mgutierrez@ntia.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

<https://ntia.gov/funding-programs/internet-all>

NTIA TRIBAL AND NATIVE ENTITY PROGRAM UPDATES

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) **Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program** (TBCP) is a nearly \$3 billion program funded by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (\$2 billion) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (\$980 million). The program deploys high-speed Internet infrastructure, establishes affordable Internet access programs, and supports digital inclusion projects for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.

The program is split into two funding rounds; the first round (TBCP I) opened in 2021 and the second (TBCP II) in late 2023. As of September 2024, NTIA has made 227 TBCP I awards to tribal entities, representing more than \$1.8 billion in awards. In April 2024, NTIA announced that it had received more than 160 TBCP II applications requesting more than \$2.64 billion with approximately \$980 million available for awards. While NTIA is reviewing applications and making awards under TBCP II, awards made under TBCP I have begun to clear environmental review requirements and break ground. A total of six projects have successfully completed groundbreaking and are currently under construction, while another six projects are scheduled for groundbreaking and have received environmental approval. In addition, 54 Use and Adoption projects from TBCP I are currently underway with a total of 869 Digital Literacy and Workforce Trainings conducted, 10,922 devices distributed, and 4,544 newly served households now receiving access. NTIA is also supporting Native Entities in addressing their digital inclusion needs through other grant programs. On September 25, 2024, the application window opened for the **Native Entity Digital Equity Capacity and Planning Grant Program**. This grant funding opportunity supports Native Entities in promoting meaningful use of the Internet, empowering communities to leverage digital tools and skills for long-term growth and well-being. In addition, the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program ("Planning") and the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program ("Capacity"), set aside funding specifically designated for Indian Tribes, Alaskan Native Entities, and Native Hawaiian organizations (collectively referred to as "Native Entities"). This funding empowers Native Entities with the agency and sovereignty to design programs that enhance digital access and expand opportunities within their communities. NTIA hosts **regular webinars and provides ongoing application guidance** for both TCP-eligible and Native Entity Digital Equity Capacity and Planning Grant Program-eligible entities. NTIA also convenes the **Tribal Broadband Leaders Network** to provide grants management technical assistance to TBCP awardees and other networking opportunities for tribes, Tribal Organizations and their selected appointees. Additionally, NTIA has offered several in-person technical assistance sessions throughout the country at events including the Alaska Federation of Native Annual Conference and the National Congress of American Indians Annual Convention. NTIA is also working with the Federal Communications Commission to assist tribes with challenges to the National Broadband Map through online office hour sessions. Please visit NTIA's Technical Assistance Hub at **<https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/technical-assistance-hub>** for webinar recordings and other technical assistance.

For more information about NTIA's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and other Internet for All programs (Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, Broadband Infrastructure Program (BIP), Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) Pilot Program, Digital Equity Act Programs, and Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program), please visit **<https://ntia.gov/funding-programs/internet-all>**.

INNOVATION PIPELINES: U.S. INFRASTRUCTURE, SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY



BY
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dynamic CEO and strategic leader with a decade of expertise in tech-driven growth, large-scale program management, and innovation. Currently spearheading Bois Forte Development Corporation's diverse portfolio—including a destination resort, casino, world-class golf course, convenience stores and cannabis. Co-founder of Genesis Innovations, focused on biotech breakthroughs. Champion for high-performance, global teams, and passionate about advanced tech and impactful solutions.

My name is Drew Ebert, and I have the honor of informing tribes to some of the largest federally-backed tech programs in the United States.

To my knowledge, I was the first – and so far, only – tribal organization executive in initiatives like the EDA Tech Hubs and NSF Science Engines. There are immense opportunities in the tech space. As I became familiar with these federally-funded networks, I was energized by finding ways to weave these systems together to benefit tribal communities whose voices have been largely absent.

The scope of these initiatives is tremendous: 58 NSF Science Engines and 31 EDA Tech Hubs were awarded, each receiving millions to hundreds of millions in funding, with added support through the \$280 billion CHIPS (Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors) Act.

The CHIPS Act aims to fortify U.S. tech infrastructure and global competitiveness by accelerating semiconductor research and manufacturing, providing further stability and resources to these hubs and engines. Altogether, these programs create an expansive cooperative network and open doors to a trillion-dollar tech ecosystem. They connect various federal agencies and catalyze innovation in semiconductor

technology, clean energy, critical minerals, biotechnology, precision medicine, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and more.

The EDA Tech Hubs program focuses on establishing regional technology clusters that unite the public and private sectors, academia, and local communities. The aim is to establish globally competitive hubs within 10 years – a transformative directive with vast implications.

As a tribal economic executive in this program, I was honored to bring a tribal perspective into this space. I was also very excited about the EDA Tech Hubs. The directive in these advanced tech spaces is to go hyper-vertical and become globally competitive in less than 10 years. Through involvement with these hubs, tribes can attract tech companies, create skilled jobs, and establish tech-focused educational pathways, making tribal lands an integral part of regional tech ecosystems.

The NSF Science Engines program is another essential opportunity, supporting interdisciplinary research that addresses nationwide challenges. This program empowers tribes to tackle urgent issues in their communities – sustainable agriculture, water resource management, and climate resilience – through advanced

research. Participation in the Science Engines program brings resources and partnerships with universities, federal agencies, and private sector leaders. It enables tribes to develop solutions that combine Indigenous knowledge with new technologies and foster STEM careers for Indigenous students.

Further opportunities include the Department of Energy's National Labs, which grant tribes access to world-class research facilities, enabling participation in areas like renewable energy, energy storage, and environmental management. Through technology transfer programs, tribes can adopt lab innovations to advance clean energy infrastructure and address local environmental needs, bridging cutting-edge research with real-world solutions for energy independence and resilience.

The Department of Defense's APEX Accelerators program also opens pathways into defense contracting, thereby helping tribes secure contracts in cybersecurity, logistics, and manufacturing, which strengthen tribal economies and position them within the national defense supply chain. Additionally, the SBA's SBIR and STTR programs offer essential funding for high-tech tribal businesses to innovate in fields like environmental monitoring and health technology, promoting entrepreneurship and economic self-sufficiency in tribal communities.

On this journey, I've built relationships with large consortiums that include multinational corporations, universities, health systems, and smaller organizations, helping bring a tribal voice to spaces where it has been largely absent. These federally funded programs

are far more than capital; they provide opportunities for profound tribal participation in the future of tech and national innovation. Few people understand the depth and breadth of these networks, which are powerful tools for tribes to foster innovation, build resilient communities, and drive sustainable growth.

By actively engaging with these programs, tribes can address local needs, generate skilled jobs, and solidify their place in an increasingly tech-driven world. Together, these initiatives empower tribes to shape their economic and technological futures and demonstrate the lasting impact a tribal presence can bring to the national tech ecosystem.

For more information, please contact me through LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/drewebert>

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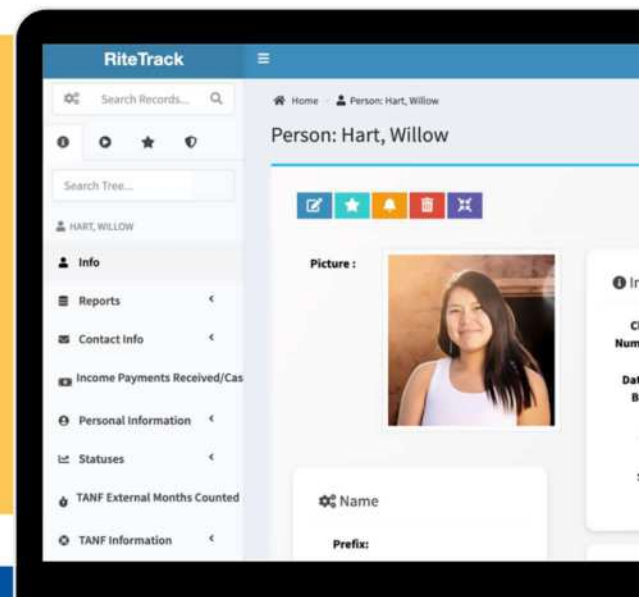
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THE ART OF THE PHISH: WHY YOU SHOULDN'T BITE



BY
TROY BOUCHARD
IT SECURITY SPECIALIST
ILANI CASINO

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Troy Bouchard is a retired U.S. Coast Guard veteran and a proud member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. Currently, he works at ilani Casino. With a passion for security and technology, Troy enjoys applying his skills in the IT field while embracing new challenges in his civilian career. In his free time, he explores various tech and online gaming.

Phishing is the digital version of those old infomercials that promise you'll lose 20 pounds in a week by eating cake. It looks tempting, but deep down you know it's too good to be true. Yet, people still fall for it every day. You might think, "Oh, I'm too smart for that. I know how to spot those obvious emails from the 'Prince of Terra' offering me a million dollars." But here's the kicker: phishing attacks have gotten sneaky – really sneaky – (thanks AI).

WHAT IS PHISHING, ANYWAY?

Phishing attempts are like digital con artists – smooth, deceptive, and more common than we'd like. The idea is simple: a scammer sends you an email, text message, or even a phone call pretending to be someone legitimate. They could impersonate your boss, someone from your bank, or a long-lost cousin you didn't know you had. They'll use every trick in the book to make their message look authentic, like a subject line that screams **URGENT** or a fake login page that looks eerily like the real deal.

Once you fall for it – boom! They've got you. Whether it's your passwords, credit card information, or access to your company's sensitive data, you just handed it over like you were giving candy to a trick-or-treater.

"BUT I'D NEVER FALL FOR THAT!"

Oh, but wouldn't you? Gone are the days when phishers were just random dudes in their parents' basements sending "You've won a prize" emails. They're slick. They may know exactly how to hit your weak spots. Take, for example, the "CEO scam," in which a criminal impersonates your boss, sending an urgent email that looks legitimate, asking for sensitive information. You don't want to upset the boss, so naturally, you respond.

Or the "delivery scam," for which you get a fake email from a shipping service saying, "Your package is delayed, please verify your address." Considering we're all drowning in Amazon packages these days, you might not think twice before clicking. You are now hooked, and you're the catch of the day.

THE RED FLAGS

So how do you avoid getting caught in a phishing net? Keep your eyes open for these telltale signs:

1. **Strange Senders:** If the email is from an address like "support@amazorn.com," that's a sign. It may look legit at first glance, but if the email address has weird misspellings

or extra characters, it's as fake as a \$3 bill.

2. **Too Good to Be True Offers:**

If someone's promising you free money, a luxury vacation, or the secret to abs without working out (sigh, if only), then it's probably a scam. No one's handing out Ferraris for filling out a survey.

3. **Urgency or Threats:**

Phishers want you to act without thinking. If the email says, "Your account will be locked unless you respond immediately!" take a breath and verify the message through other means. Legitimate companies don't threaten you like a movie villain.

4. **Weird Links:**

Hover your mouse over a link without clicking on it. If the address looks

suspicious or doesn't match where the email claims to send you (like "paypal-support.com" instead of "paypal.com"), stay far away.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU TAKE THE BAIT?

Let's say, hypothetically, that you clicked the link. What now? First, don't panic. Second, panic a little bit – but only a little! Go change your passwords immediately, starting with the one you use for your email, because that's the key to most of your digital life. Then, let your bank or relevant company know ASAP if any sensitive data was compromised. Also, run a virus scan because let's be real, your computer is probably going to need a deep cleaning after that.

THE BOTTOM LINE: DON'T GET REELED IN

Phishing might sound silly, but it's big business for cybercriminals.

These aren't amateurs – these are pros who know exactly how to push your buttons. And, thanks to AI, they're getting more convincing every day.

So, the next time you get an unexpected email that looks a little fishy (pun intended), take a minute. Double-check everything before you click. It could save you from a world of headaches. And remember, when in doubt, don't take the bait. The only good fishing trip is one where you're on a boat, not trying to reel in your stolen identity from the deep web.

Never, ever trust an email offering you free money – unless it's from your actual grandma. She's trustworthy... probably.

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IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHOOSING AI SOLUTIONS



BY

DR. ANASTASIA (STASI) BARAN

COO

nQUBE DATA SCIENCE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Anastasia (Stasi) Baran is the COO of nQube Data Science, an AI analytics company that has been developing in-house AI systems since 2007. Dr. Baran specializes in AI applications for casinos, is passionate about AI education, and encourages responsible, impactful AI adoption.

It's no secret that AI is the hottest topic in business right now.

With applications ranging from financial services to agriculture, there's tremendous potential for AI to revolutionize operations. However, it is unclear how many organizations have implemented AI technology or processes. Even more uncertain is how many of these implementations have achieved tangible benefits such as increased efficiency or revenue.

The potential of AI is exciting, but the current market is flooded with buzzwords and hype, resulting in a chaotic landscape of new AI applications. With so much noise in the marketplace, how does one find true value in solutions that are available while avoiding vendors that are just taking advantage of AI's popularity?

When planning an AI implementation, decision-makers should ask themselves and the AI vendors they're considering the following questions:

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS AI CAN HELP SOLVE, AND DO THEY ALIGN WITH OUR ORGANIZATION'S GOALS? AI promises to revolutionize many industries. In healthcare, predictive modeling can optimize scheduling, resource allocation, and patient management with the goal of reducing wait times and improving the efficiency of healthcare delivery. AI can analyze data and track trends to prioritize health initiatives that best serve community needs.

In tourism and hospitality, AI can personalize guest experiences and optimize hotel room pricing. AI-driven chatbots using natural language processing can interact with guests for inquiries and bookings and can enhance their experience by interacting with them in a timely manner. Casinos use computer vision to assist with security and surveillance and to increase revenue through enhanced marketing campaigns, player analysis, and slot floor optimization.

There are also numerous applications of AI in retail, agriculture, financial services, and more. Many use cases rely on different algorithms and architectures, so alignment of an AI technology with your technical and strategic goals is key.

DOES OUR ORGANIZATION NEED AI TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

Some problems can be solved without complex models or substantial investments. Consider the problem you're trying to solve and whether AI capabilities, like performing real-time analysis, are required. Traditional tools like SQL, descriptive analytics, or Excel could be sufficient. These tools have been widely used for a reason – they can perform many required analytical tasks.

IS THE AI EXPLAINABLE? Many, if not most, decision-makers prefer to understand the “why” behind important decisions. They would likely be uncomfortable

with black-box neural network approaches. Fortunately, explainable AI systems exist. Many AIs function as black boxes that learn from data and provide a prediction. However, they can't tell you why they made that decision. Alternatively, explainable AIs can provide some information on why a decision has been made. In both cases, case studies or validation tests go a long way in demonstrating the success of the product or service.

WHAT'S THE ACTUAL COST OF THIS AI IMPLEMENTATION? The true cost of the AI product or service is not always what's written on the price tag. AI solutions typically require a considerable amount of computing power, which could mean additional cloud costs or hardware purchases if relying on GPUs for processing. Additionally, if your organization is implementing a new AI

software solution, there could be costs associated with data integration and training staff. Keep in mind that the expense of training could extend beyond initial implementation and continue with any new updates to software features or with new hires at your organization. Other costs to consider are consulting, subscription, and software maintenance fees.

WHAT DATA IS REQUIRED, AND HOW WILL IT BE USED? There is no AI without data. Data security and privacy are paramount to any organization. When considering an AI solution or service, you must ensure the vendor informs you if the system accesses Personally Identifiable Information (PII), and if so, if that access is justified. Furthermore, the vendor should inform you of any data anonymization techniques they might be using. It's also

important to understand if your data is stored, and if so, for what duration.

After training an AI, a vendor should verify what happens to the data used in the process. Ownership of the data and the trained models is another key aspect, particularly if they are accessed outside of your organization. Ownership should be clear in any agreement terms entered into with an AI vendor.

With such a rapidly evolving technology, it's important to balance innovation with caution, but that doesn't mean we should be afraid of AI. There are countless opportunities available for those willing to put in the time to successfully implement AI into their businesses.

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AGENCY UPDATE

FEMA: Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) plans 10th annual Tribal Nations Training Week

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TRAINING VISIT:

<https://cdp.dhs.gov/>



Tribal leaders visit the Center for Domestic Preparedness' simulated emergency department to view some of the tools used during exercises to train first responders.

THE CENTER FOR DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS (CDP) ANTICIPATES ITS 10TH ANNUAL TRIBAL NATIONS TRAINING WEEK.

The weeklong training event, which will be conducted April 26-May 3, 2025, is for state, local, tribal, and territorial responders who work in an emergency response capacity and are affiliated with one or more tribal nations or the Indian Health Service.

The 2025 event will feature courses in 10 separate tracks: Cyber, Climate, Continuity of Operations, Tribal Curriculum, Executive, Funding/Grants, Exercise, and three Healthcare tracks.

In addition to the CDP, training will be provided by FEMA's National Disaster and Emergency Management University (NDEMU), the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium (RDPC), National Center for Domestic Preparedness (NCDP), Texas A&M's Engineering Extension Service (TEEX), and the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC), among others.

The Cyber track will include TEEX courses, such as "Demystifying Cyber Attacks" and "Preparing for Cyber Attacks and Incidents," as well as CDP courses focused on communication and preparedness.

The CDP's "Hospital Emergency Response Training for Mass Casualty Incidents" (HERT), "Managing Public Information" and "Healthcare Leadership for Mass Casualty Incidents" (HCL) courses will be the focus of the three Healthcare tracks. The HERT and HCL tracks will culminate with Integrated Capstone Events, or ICEs – comprehensive exercises where students work together in response to simulated mass casualty incidents.

NDPTC will share its "Climate Adaptation Planning for Emergency Management" course and NCDP offers its "Understanding Climate Risk: Hazard, Vulnerability, and Community Resilience" and "Understanding Climate Change and Social Vulnerability for Disaster Management" courses in the Climate track.

The Continuity of Operations track will feature two NDEMU courses: "Continuity Planning for Tribal Governments" and "Tribal Continuity Planning Workshop," as well as the RDPC's "Community Based Planning for All-Hazards Threats in Tribal Nations" course.

NDEMU's "Emergency Management Framework for Tribal Governments" will be the featured course in the Tribal Curriculum track.

The Funding/Grants track will have NDEMU's "Fundamentals of Grants Management" Course.

The Exercise track offers NDEMU's "Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program" and "Exercise Design and Development" courses.

The Executive track features a variety of courses from various partners centered on preparedness and response as well as a senior officials workshop and a tour of the CDP.

For more information, contact FEMA-tribalnationscdp@fema.dhs.gov.

State, local, tribal, and territorial responders who are affiliated with one or more tribal nations or the Indian Health Service who cannot attend training in person are encouraged to contact FEMA-tribalnationscdp@fema.dhs.gov to discuss the virtual instructor-led courses being offered in May 2025.



Responders prepare to decontaminate a 'survivor' during a simulated mass casualty incident. The realistic training provided ensures responders are prepared with the knowledge and skills needed.



A first responder assesses 'victims' during a simulated mass casualty incident at FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness.



TRIBAL NATIONS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: *A Complex Relationship and Pathways to Reconciliation*



BY

DR. BYRIAN RAMSEY

IT DIRECTOR & SENIOR COMPLIANCE OFFICER
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Byrian Ramsey is the Information Technology Director and Senior Compliance Officer for the Poarch Band Creek of Indians Federal Services. Dr. Ramsey has been in IT for more than 30 years and specializes in project management, cloud services, federal technology compliance and regulations, and much more.

The relationship between Tribal Nations and the U.S. federal government is shaped by centuries of treaties, laws, policies, and practices that have evolved over time. While federal law recognizes Tribal Nations as sovereign entities, the trust responsibility assumed by the federal government has often led to a complex and, at times, contentious relationship. Historical injustices, loss of land, cultural suppression, and the denial of sovereign rights have left lasting impacts on Tribal Nations. Despite progress in recent decades toward improving tribal-federal relations, many challenges remain. Strengthening this relationship requires meaningful dialogue, trust-building, and structural reforms that respect tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRIBAL-FEDERAL RELATIONSHIP

The foundation of the tribal-federal relationship is grounded in the United States Constitution, early treaties, and the federal trust responsibility. Under the federal trust doctrine, the U.S. government has a fiduciary responsibility to protect tribal assets and uphold the rights of Tribal Nations. This responsibility encompasses providing funding and resources for healthcare, education, and other critical services for Indigenous populations. However, the implementation of these obligations has been inconsistent, and issues surrounding tribal sovereignty have led to disputes over governance, resource management, and the federal government's role in tribal affairs.

HISTORICAL CHALLENGES AND MISTRUST

- **Broken Treaties and Land Seizure:** Throughout history, the U.S. government entered hundreds of treaties with Tribal Nations, promising land, resources, and protection. However, many of these treaties were broken, leading to the displacement of Native communities and the loss of significant portions of their ancestral lands.
- **Termination Policies and Forced Assimilation:** Policies such as the Indian Removal Act, the establishment of boarding schools, and the Indian termination policy further strained tribal-federal relations. These policies sought to dissolve tribal governments, enforce assimilation, and disrupt traditional ways of life.
- **Challenges in Federal Funding and Resources:** Funding shortfalls in federal programs meant to support Tribal Nations have also deepened mistrust. Tribal healthcare, infrastructure, and educational programs are often underfunded compared to similar services provided to the general population. This disparity hinders tribal efforts to meet the needs of their communities and weakens tribal-federal trust.

PATHWAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE TRIBAL-FEDERAL RELATIONSHIP

To truly mend and strengthen the relationship between Tribal Nations and the federal

government, it is essential to take actions that respect tribal sovereignty, recognize past injustices, and support economic and social development for Tribal Nations. Here are several pathways that can facilitate this process:

- **Formalizing and Strengthening Tribal Consultation:** True government-to-government consultations are necessary for a constructive relationship. Federal agencies should engage Tribal Nations from the start of policy formulation processes rather than only at the end. Ensuring these consultations are legally binding could prevent decision-makers from bypassing tribal input on key issues.
- **Increased Federal Investment in Tribal Programs:** Adequate and sustained funding is essential to support tribal healthcare, education, and infrastructure. The federal government must

honor its trust responsibility by closing the funding gaps in these critical areas.

- **Recognition of Tribal Sovereignty and Jurisdictional Authority:** Strengthening tribal sovereignty means recognizing the legal jurisdiction Tribal Nations hold over their lands and communities.
- **Co-Management and Land Restoration Initiatives:** Co-management arrangements in federal lands allow Tribal Nations to participate actively in the stewardship of natural resources. The Department of the Interior's ongoing efforts to facilitate co-management offers a promising way to integrate Indigenous knowledge and preserve cultural and environmental assets.
- **Addressing Historical Injustices through Truth and Reconciliation Initiatives:** Truth

and reconciliation commissions, like those implemented in countries like Canada, could be established to investigate and acknowledge historical injustices against Native communities. The process should involve collaboration between Tribal Nations, government representatives, and community leaders, and must focus on restorative justice and tangible reparations.

- **Educational and Cultural Preservation Programs:** Supporting the preservation of Native languages, customs, and cultural sites is essential for healing and strengthening relationships. Federal funding for Indigenous language programs, cultural preservation initiatives, and educational resources can help sustain cultural heritage while fostering respect for Tribal Nations' contributions to society.

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AGENCY UPDATE

IHS: Indian Health Service

MITCHELL THORNBRUGH

Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Director of Office of
Information Technology (OIT), Indian Health Service (IHS)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE IHS HEALTH IT
MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:**

<https://www.ihs.gov/>



The Indian Health Service (IHS) is excited to share updates on our ongoing collaboration and efforts across the [Health Information Technology \(IT\) Modernization Program](#). The Program is working with tribal and urban partners to build a new enterprise electronic health record (EHR) solution by General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) using Oracle Health technology. There have been many recent milestones, including the naming of the new EHR solution, [PATH EHR](#).

PATH EHR represents “Patients at the Heart,” which demonstrates our continued dedication to assisting individuals on their journey to healing while promoting empowerment and advancement of health and wellness in line with nature and community values. PATH EHR reflects the Modernization Program vision, which aims to provide the best possible EHR to drive high-quality health care through sustainable, modern, and easy-to-use tools. The emblem itself symbolizes the significance of community guidance, regional connection, and holistic well-being. The navigational element symbolizes the journey of life we are on, while the 12 points recognize the 12 physical areas that IHS serves.

As IHS progresses with the development and implementation of PATH EHR, the Division of Health Information Technology Modernization and Operations (DHITMO) team remains dedicated to building this solution with our partners, not for them. To support this goal, IHS selected the Lawton Service Unit, which includes Lawton Hospital, Anadarko Indian Health Center, and Carnegie Indian Health Center as the pilot site for implementing PATH EHR. This pilot site will test the functionality, usability, and compatibility of PATH EHR in a real-world healthcare environment prior to a wider deployment.

IHS and the Lawton Service Unit are collaborating to help ensure a seamless pilot site implementation of PATH EHR. Pilot site implementation will require a substantial degree of hands-on management by the Modernization Program and will be supported by the Enterprise Collaboration Group (ECG), a user-focused body that will inform the clinical and administrative configuration of the new PATH EHR.

Focus groups were launched this year for interested IHS, tribal, and urban organization members, regardless of their selected EHR solution, to inform and support decisions and governance of the Program. The Program hosted six focus group sessions, which covered health IT implementation, interoperability, and data management and analytics, with the intent that more will be established as needed in the future.

By actively collaborating with our partners and leveraging their feedback, the IHS is committed to achieving excellence in health care. We will implement PATH EHR with a focus on innovation, quality, and user experience, ensuring that it not only meets the diverse needs of Indian Country but also fosters a sustainable, patient-centered approach to health and wellness for generations to come.

For more information about the IHS Health IT Modernization Program, please visit our website. You can also follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#) (formerly known as Twitter) to stay updated on our progress.



EVALUATING YOUR EMR IN A TIME OF CHANGE



BY
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Popp is president of MJP Healthcare Consulting, a company of 14 employees providing consulting services for electronic health records, project management, HIPAA, and revenue cycle management.

In his spare time Michael likes to fish and snowmobile and spends much of his spare time in the Northwoods of Wisconsin.

We are experiencing an unprecedented shift in healthcare operations in Indian Country. Indian Health Service has announced the sunset of RPMS and chosen Oracle Cerner as a replacement electronic health record system. The question on everyone's mind is "Is this new EMR the right solution for our facility?" The answer to that question is...maybe. To answer this question, every tribal and urban health center across the country will need to assess their needs and determine the product that best suits their requirements going forward.

Some tribal and urban health centers across the country have already made the decision to migrate from RPMS to other EMR solutions. These migrations have had varying success based on the platform chosen and the organization's adaptation to change. The first step to evaluating if and when a change is right for your facility is to evaluate your current solution. In order to understand what solution will be a good fit in the future, you need to understand the capabilities (or lack of) of your current solution, and the practical use of those

current capabilities. A software change is only beneficial if we understand what was effective in the old solution and utilize that knowledge to improve moving forward. The most successful implementation of any new software occurs when we can leverage change to improve our workflows. We often get so busy using our current tools we forget to take a step back and look for ways to improve. Take the time to understand how your organization as a whole, and each employee individually, uses the software to get a true understanding of your needs.

There are many EMR solutions on the market today. When evaluating any solution, it is imperative that your needs are clearly identified. This step can be accomplished by an RFP or creating a needs assessment to provide to prospective vendors. We have unique workflows and data reporting needs that cannot be met by every vendor in the market. Whether you choose to solicit RFP responses or to interview vendors on your own, defining your needs and making any potential vendor demonstrate those needs is crucial in your review process. Before

signing any contract, be sure your specific needs are defined contractually so you have legal grounds to break your contract should those needs go unmet. Many facilities have experienced this situation and are stuck with an EMR that does not meet their needs.

After reviewing several options, you need to determine if a change is beneficial. If you use RPMS today, you will be making a change at some point. If you have made the change to another vendor, you need to see enough benefit in changing software. Transitioning from one electronic health record to another is a big process. It takes a large amount of time and expense to make a transition, and the decision to change should never be taken lightly. Whether your practice has used its current solution for a few months or many

years, you have built current workflows around that product's functionality. You will be changing many of those workflows to adapt to a new solution. This change needs to have support from a tribal, administrative, and employee level to be successful.

Lastly, find the ROI. No matter what solution you choose, there needs to be a return on your investment. Your ROI should come in multiple forms. A number one component of ROI should be helping provide better care for your patients. Reduced time spent charting, decision support tools, and improved clinical workflows meet our goals of improved patient care. The byproduct of clinical improvement is more time for providers to see additional patients, which ultimately improves the clinic's financial standing.

No matter your timeline for EMR migration, taking the time to understand the use of your current EMR in your facility is important. If you are looking to make a change soon, it is imperative to have an understanding of your current EMR and immediate needs. If you plan to look further down the road, you can spend more time gathering information from others' experiences. After learning about options, you may decide to make a change on a different timeline than originally anticipated. We are all guilty of looking at shiny new cars even when ours gets us from point A to point B just fine. Sometimes we do not know how much better something else is if we do not take a look. An educated consumer is a smart consumer.



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AGENCY UPDATE

ECD/CISA: Cyber Resilient 911 Program Update

KARIMA HOLMES

Emergency Communications Division, Cybersecurity and
Infrastructure Security Agency

LEARN MORE AT:

cisa.gov/911-cybersecurity-resource-hub



As cyber threats continue to evolve, critical infrastructure such as 911 systems are increasingly vulnerable. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has taken significant steps to strengthen the resilience of the nation's 911 ecosystem through the Cyber Resilient 911 (CR911) program, which encourages emergency communication centers (ECCs) to be proactive about embracing a culture of cyber awareness and risk management.

Launched in alignment with the [Next Generation 911 Roadmap](#), CISA's CR911 program is designed to support the management of cybersecurity risks within the 911 ecosystem, ensuring these services improve their security and resilience. This program was mandated by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, reflecting Congress's recognition of the need for stronger cyber defenses across emergency communication systems. It specifically addresses the vision of CISA's leadership, ensuring that the 911 community is effectively equipped to enhance national cybersecurity resilience.

The program's vision is clear: enable 911 communities to defend their critical infrastructure through initiatives, such as [Secure by Design 911](#) solutions, cyber resilience tools and services, enhanced information sharing, and training/technical assistance. To achieve this, the CR911 program remains dedicated to working closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, along with federal agencies like the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA).



Our stakeholder engagement efforts in 2024 revealed key challenges for 911 centers, including gaps in education and training, vendor management issues, limited funding, and a lack of urgency around cybersecurity. Identifying these gaps allows the CR911 program to build relevant and impactful solutions for the 911 community. CISA is hoping to engage more deeply in Indian Country to better understand the unique needs of tribal governments and validate our understanding of cybersecurity requirements for tribal emergency communications systems. In 2025, the CR911 program will host a series of virtual and in-person events across the nation to facilitate these important conversations.

If you are interested in participating in future events or would like to learn more about the program's offerings, please contact CR911@mail.cisa.dhs.gov for more information.

AI-POWERED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:

Enhancing Tribal Casino Hospitality



BY

MOHSEN GHAZIZADEH

FOUNDER

AGILE REALIZED

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mohsen Ghazizadeh, a visionary leader with 25+ years of experience, spearheads Agile Realized's groundbreaking initiatives in the gaming industry. His expertise in Generative AI for Casino Operations and AI Strategy is transforming tribal gaming. Mohsen's innovative approach combines agile methodologies with cutting-edge AI, unlocking new efficiencies and revenue streams for casinos and gaming enterprises.

In the ever-evolving landscape of tribal gaming, enhancing the customer experience has become a crucial aspect of maintaining competitiveness and fostering loyalty. With the advent of generative AI technologies, tribal casinos have the opportunity to revolutionize their hospitality offerings. This article explores how generative AI can create personalized, engaging experiences that meet the diverse needs of guests, streamline operations, and establish a new standard of excellence in tribal gaming hospitality.

UNDERSTANDING GENERATIVE AI

Generative AI refers to a class of artificial intelligence systems capable of creating new content – be it text, images, or audio – by analyzing existing data. Unlike traditional AI, which primarily focuses on data analysis and pattern recognition, generative AI can produce unique outputs based on learned information. This capability can be harnessed by tribal casinos to enhance customer engagement, optimize service delivery, and elevate overall operational efficiency.

PERSONALIZING CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS

One of the most compelling applications of generative AI in tribal casinos is its ability to analyze customer data and deliver personalized experiences. By tapping into data from loyalty programs, previous visits, and even social media interactions, casinos can tailor their offerings to individual guests. For instance, a generative AI system might recommend specific gaming options, dining experiences, or entertainment events based on a guest's preferences and past behaviors. Such personalization not only enhances guest satisfaction but also encourages loyalty and repeat visits.

ENHANCING CUSTOMER SUPPORT WITH AI CHATBOTS

The integration of AI-powered chatbots into customer service functions can significantly improve response times and service

quality. These intelligent systems can handle common inquiries, assist with reservations, and provide information about gaming options or upcoming events. With advanced natural language processing capabilities, AI chatbots can engage in conversations that feel more human, enhancing the overall customer experience. This allows casino staff to focus on more complex customer needs, ensuring that all guests receive timely and attentive service. Generative AI also has the capability to engage in predictive analytics, which can play a pivotal role in optimizing casino operations. By analyzing customer behavior and demand trends, tribal casinos can forecast peak periods and adjust their staffing and resource allocation accordingly. For example, if data suggests an increase in visitors during holiday weekends or special events, casinos can proactively ramp up their marketing efforts and prepare their staff for heightened demand. This foresight not only improves operational efficiency but also ensures that guests receive the attention and service they expect.

ENHANCING GAME DESIGN AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

The influence of customer preferences on game design is growing, and generative AI can significantly contribute to this process. By analyzing player engagement data, AI can suggest modifications to existing games or even inspire the creation of entirely new gaming concepts. This capability ensures that tribal casinos remain at the forefront of gaming innovation, continually attracting new customers while retaining the interest of existing ones. The ability to adapt and evolve games based on player feedback fosters a dynamic gaming environment that keeps guests engaged and entertained.

CREATING IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES WITH AI

The potential of generative AI extends beyond traditional gaming

experiences. By integrating augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies, tribal casinos can create immersive experiences that captivate and engage guests. For instance, AR applications can enhance physical slot machines or table games, adding interactive elements that make gameplay more engaging. VR environments can transport players to different worlds, offering unique gaming experiences that traditional settings cannot replicate. These immersive experiences not only elevate customer satisfaction but also provide an opportunity for tribal casinos to differentiate themselves in a competitive market.

FOSTERING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Generative AI can also aid tribal casinos in fostering deeper connections with their communities. By analyzing customer feedback and sentiment,

casinos can better understand the needs and desires of their guests. This insight enables the development of targeted community programs, special events, and initiatives that resonate with tribal values and cultural heritage. Engaging the community not only enhances the overall customer experience but also reinforces the casino's role as a vital community hub.

ENSURING ETHICAL USE OF AI

As tribal casinos embrace generative AI technologies, it is crucial to address ethical considerations, particularly regarding data privacy and security. Establishing clear guidelines for data usage and maintaining transparency with guests will foster trust and confidence in AI systems. By prioritizing ethical practices, tribal casinos can position themselves as leaders in responsible AI usage within the gaming industry.

CONCLUSION

The integration of generative AI presents tribal casinos with an unprecedented opportunity to enhance customer experiences and operational efficiency. By leveraging AI to personalize interactions, streamline operations, and create immersive gaming experiences, tribal gaming operators can elevate their hospitality offerings to new heights. As the gaming landscape continues to evolve, those who embrace these innovative technologies will lead the way in providing exceptional customer experiences, ensuring guests feel valued and engaged during every visit.



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A CRASH COURSE ON BUILDING YOUR CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM

Business leaders have more responsibilities than you can swing a giant weirdly-shaped stick at, but one of the most important duties of any good leader is building a solid team. Think about the Chicago Bulls of the 90s, the Temptations, and the Avengers. What made each of these groups special is that they were well-built teams that functioned better as wholes than as individuals. The '96 Bulls had the greatest player to ever step foot on a basketball court (we will not be entertaining discussion on this topic), but even he needed Scottie Pippen and Dennis Rodman and the team to win six titles. The Temptations needed each soulful voice, but they also needed the songwriting of Smokey Robinson and the musicianship of the Funk Brothers to create the



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sound that launched the Motown Era. The Avengers had...well they had a Hulk. The point is this: you must have a strong team in order to execute your plan and have organizational success.

So, the next logical question is, "How do I build a great team?" You're in luck, because I'm going to tell you.

The first and most important step to building a good team is having a clear understanding of what you're looking for and what you're working with. While you can't always change the individuals on your team, you should take the time to get to know them and their talents. This will help you best place each person with your overall organizational goals in mind. You accomplish this by simply being observant. Spend time with your employees to see who they go to for answers. Pay attention to your process design to see which employees are the central point of contact for moving things forward. Figure out who your leaders are, who your big role players are, and who could be the next big thing on your team. Once you have this information, you can start on step two, putting all the pieces together.

The key to step two is having a thorough understanding of what it is that you're trying to build. Now that you've completed step one and you know your players well, putting everyone in the right place is the next logical thing to do. Keep in mind when building your team you can't just go placing people where you want them without considering what they want from their position in your organization. Some people who may otherwise seem like exceptional leaders may not have a desire to lead. Some people who might be best suited to background positions may want

to take on more responsibility or be more 'out front'. It's like one of those 1,000-piece puzzles. The answer is there, but you have to take the time to put it together. Ultimately, success in step two is driven by your ability to convince people that it's both in their professional best interest and in the best interest of the organization for them to be where you want them to be.

The final step is turning all the moving pieces into a functional team. Phil Jackson found a way to take one of the most eccentric characters in the 90's NBA (Dennis Rodman) and keep him focused on grabbing rebounds and winning games. Berry Gordy took the varying personalities of his roster of superstars, including the infamous dispositions of the great David Ruffin, Diana Ross, and the legendary Rick James, and channeled them into songs that will live on forever. Weaving your team into a seamless machine is about knowing where you're going and using your resources to get there. Imagine your team like a recipe. Each ingredient goes in at a certain time and plays a specific role in making the dish. The oven is your organization and you are the chef. If you want to make a Michelin-star meal, you have to stir at the right time. Sometimes, you have to let it rest. Other times, you need to turn up the heat. But after you put in the work, you get the delicious world-famous peach cobbler that everyone has been waiting to try. Each person, each tool, and each resource all go together in a specific way that helps you achieve your organizational goals.

Put all these steps in motion... this is how you win games, make beautiful music, cook a great meal, and – most importantly – build an excellent team.

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BREAKING DOWN SILOS:

TRANSFORMING TRIBAL CASINO OPERATIONS WITH AI AND COPILOTS



BY

ANTHONY RAMIREZSENIOR SPECIALIST
MICROSOFT FEDERAL

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Ramirez is a Senior Specialist at Microsoft Federal, renowned for his expertise in leveraging AI and Copilots to transform operations within Tribal Nations. With a strong background in Dynamics 365, private cloud architecture, and infrastructure deployment with Azure, Anthony has been instrumental in breaking down silos and enhancing operational efficiency for Tribal Casinos, Enterprises, and Governments. His work has significantly contributed to enabling Tribal Nations to harness the power of technology for improved customer engagement and streamlined processes.

In the fast-paced world of casinos, one of the most significant challenges is the fragmentation of systems. Many casinos are grappling with siloed systems that hinder their ability to gain comprehensive insights and streamline operations. Each area of a casino, from the food court to the spa, or from reservations to the table games, operates on a different system, leading to inefficiencies and a lack of real-time data integration.

To address these challenges, casinos look to adopt a unified approach to their operations. By integrating disparate systems into a single Microsoft platform, casinos can achieve real-time data consolidation. This integration provides a holistic view of customer interactions, including booking spa appointments, playing table games, or using their player rewards card.

The benefits of this unified approach are manifold. Casinos can now access real-time insights, reducing the time and effort spent on manual data consolidation and reporting. This not only enhances operational efficiency but also enables more personalized marketing strategies. For instance, casinos can now target players based on their preferences and behaviors, creating a more engaging and tailored customer experience.

Moreover, the integration of AI and advanced analytics into this system opens new possibilities. Casino staff can quickly generate reports and gain insights by simply asking [Microsoft Copilot](#) questions, such as, "What is the average daily theoretical (Theo) for a given player or segment of players?" or "Are any players on the casino floor celebrating a birthday today?" This capability transforms how [casinos](#) operate, allowing them to make data-driven decisions swiftly and accurately. Additionally, staff can inquire about the preferences of high-net-worth players or

seek suggestions for improving customer engagement.

By implementing these innovative AI-based solutions, casinos can unlock a new realm of possibilities and future-proof their operations, making it easier to integrate new technologies and adapt to changing market demands. Personalized guest experiences can be enhanced through AI-driven recommendations for games, dining, and entertainment, significantly boosting guest satisfaction and loyalty. AI-powered surveillance systems can detect suspicious activities and potential fraud in real time, ensuring a safer environment for both guests and staff. Predictive maintenance can minimize downtime by forecasting equipment failures, while dynamic pricing can optimize revenue by adjusting prices based on demand. AI-driven chatbots can provide instant, personalized support around the clock, enhancing customer service. Additionally, AI can elevate VR and AR experiences, creating immersive gaming environments that attract tech-savvy guests. Marketing efforts can be more effective with AI analyzing guest data to create targeted campaigns and promotions. Lastly, AI can optimize energy usage, reduce costs, and support sustainability initiatives. By partnering with Microsoft, casinos can continually innovate and stay ahead in the competitive landscape, ultimately enhancing the guest experience, improving security, and increasing revenue.

In conclusion, it is evident that there is a critical need for casinos to move away from siloed systems and embrace a unified, cloud-based single pane of glass approach. With [Microsoft cloud and AI solutions](#), the possibilities are endless, paving the way for a new era of customer insights and innovative experiences.

It's Here



Six ways Tribal Nations can transform operations with Microsoft Cloud and AI Solutions:



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AGENCY UPDATE

USDA Rural Development High-Speed Internet Programs

ANDREW BERKE

USDA Rural Utilities Service Administrator

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The Biden-Harris Administration has invested \$40 billion to expand access to high-speed internet in rural and tribal communities. This is part of the Administration's Internet for All initiative to help ensure every American has access to affordable high-speed internet by 2030 – even in the most remote parts of the country.

Rural and tribal communities tend to be the most marginalized, distressed communities in America. They have been completely left out of the digital economy. They want the same things everybody else has – the ability to attend school or grow their business, new economic opportunities, and the chance to provide a better quality of life for their families. But it's hard to do those things if you don't have high-speed internet.

USDA administers several programs that help supply new opportunities and improve the quality of life in rural communities by providing high-speed internet, and this year USDA accepted applications through four telecommunications programs: ReConnect Loan and Grant Program, Broadband Technical Assistance, Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) and Community Connect Grants.

RECONNECT LOAN AND GRANT PROGRAM

The [ReConnect Loan and Grant Program](#) provides funding to build, improve, or acquire facilities and equipment to provide high-speed internet in rural communities lacking sufficient access. The application window for the program's fifth round of funding closed on May 21, 2024. During this round, USDA prioritized projects that served tribal areas and applications submitted by tribal entities. For instance, the Department made available \$150 million in grants for Alaska Native Corporations, Tribal Governments, and projects serving Colonias, Persistent Poverty Areas, or Socially Vulnerable Communities. Additionally, USDA encouraged non-tribal applicants to coordinate with tribes early in the application process to obtain the proper tribal consent prior to submitting applications. So far, USDA has announced 10 awards across nine states under this round, totaling \$173 million. Two of these projects will benefit tribal areas. USDA expects to announce additional awards in the coming months.

BROADBAND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In summer 2024, USDA opened its second application window under the [Broadband Technical Assistance](#) (BTA) program, receiving 49 applications from technical assistance providers and 33 applications from technical assistance recipients. The program serves tribal areas by providing funding for broadband feasibility studies, application development and assistance, environmental reviews, and more. USDA continues to prioritize projects that plan to provide services to tribal communities. The Department is reviewing applications and expects to announce awards by the end of the year.

DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE (DLT)

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grant program assists tribal and rural communities by financing equipment to help people access virtual education and healthcare resources. Like other USDA programs, the DLT program prioritizes projects serving tribal lands. Applicants also receive additional points for projects using distance learning to protect, revitalize, and promote the use of Native American languages. Federally recognized tribes and entities wholly owned by tribes also receive additional points. Earlier this year, USDA received 321 applications requesting over \$243 million in funding. Application reviews are now complete and award announcements are forthcoming.

COMMUNITY CONNECT GRANTS

USDA also accepted applications for Community Connect Grants this year from tribes and other eligible applicants seeking to provide high-speed internet service on a community-oriented connectivity basis. USDA continues to require tribal consent from non-tribal program applicants proposing service on or over tribal lands. This year, the Department received 57 applications requesting more than \$188 million in funding. Application reviews are complete and awards will be announced soon.

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