



# TOPPERS RETAIN THEIR VALUE

**I**n these days of slot machines with two or three screens you could be forgiven for thinking that the importance of toppers has diminished somewhat.

However, those extra screens designed to sit on top of a slot machine, there to impart information or display a progressive jackpot across a gaming floor, are still an important part of the casino industry.

Gamesman sales director Martin Rigby told *InterGaming*: “Because the topper generally sits above the machine, giving it increased height and presence, it works as a great attract feature, independent of what is happening on the machine’s built-in monitors.

“In fact, Gamesman are seeing an increased interest and uptake of toppers, especially those using an LCD monitor, so that the customer can use it for a variety of purposes, such as advertising the game, special promotions, running video or displaying a progressive jackpot across a casino floor.”

Another major supplier of toppers, SuzoHapp, was in complete agreement. “In a way you would think that the demand for toppers would diminish with the new types of slot machines that have up to three screens. Yet walk into a casino or arcade and you’ll often see the majority of slots equipped with a topper.

“How can that be the case? We at SuoHapp have constantly focused on giving more added value to the toppers. Our best-selling topper, the SH-1950, is a video topper, meaning that it offers great graphics that can be combined into the game. A topper is not just an advert for the slot like it used to be. If we had not further developed our toppers, maybe the market would have diminished.

“As we have done this, slot manufacturers see the value of integrating a topper and players continue to enjoy slots with such toppers fitted. Quite simply, we have gone with the times. Now we offer the SH-1950 as a backlit topper, yet another benefit for the market.”

/// “WE HAVE DESIGNED AND MANUFACTURED SEVERAL CUSTOMER-SPECIFIC TOPPERS OVER THE YEARS FOR SOME OF THE INDUSTRY’S LARGEST MACHINE MANUFACTURERS” ///

Are the majority of toppers ordered by OEMs or by operators aiming to refresh existing products? “It is very much a mixture of both, although the majority probably falls with the OEMs,” said Rigby. “We have designed and manufactured several customer-specific toppers over the years for some of the industry’s largest machine manufacturers, including Novomatic, Aristocrat and Bally Gaming. Gamesman has subsequently created some striking ‘off-the-shelf’ topper products which have been hugely successful with both OEM customers and operators alike.”

Gamesman produced its first topper, the GT1000, as a custom designed product at the request of Novomatic in 2006 and have since produced more than a dozen design variants, with the latest version being introduced in 2018.

“We were approached by our existing push button customer, Novomatic, in 2005 who were looking for a high quality topper product to match their machines,” said Rigby. “They could not find what they were looking for on the open market and knowing Gamesman as an existing supplier and their propensity for attention to detail and high quality products, they asked if Gamesman would be interested in designing and manufacturing a bespoke topper for them. Hence the GT1000 was born and Gamesman’s entry into the topper market was complete.

“The biggest change over the years, like the machines themselves, is probably the overall size of the toppers. Gamesman always try to produce products that complement the machines they are being used with and no more



true is this than with toppers, which almost need to be an extension of the machine itself.

"Of course, over the past decade there have also been big advancements in the use of both LCD monitors in toppers, as well RGB LEDs and lighting which we have also employed in our topper designs, allowing for far more customisation."

As far as technological milestones are concerned, the move away from just single colour lighting to full RGB LED lighting has made toppers far more compelling - after all, their raison d'être is to attract. "Clearly another huge leap forward is the inclusion of LCD monitors in toppers, providing infinite possibilities for displaying content and that extra wow factor," said Rigby.

"To get to the basis of what sets our products apart from our competitors' products you have to refer back to the reason Gamesman came to the topper market in the first place. When a hugely significant customer requests that you design a product due to your proven track record for high quality and reliability, which is the case with the first GT1000 for Novomatic, it says it all. Gamesman produce fantastic, up-to-the-minute designs incorporating the very latest technologies in a quality package."

How does Rigby see the future of these products developing?

"I think it is inevitable that as well as size and customisation being key, connectivity will become a prerequisite for these products moving forward, with wifi built in and the ability to communicate across multiple devices, as well as synchronise lighting sequences, which incidentally is something Gamesman already offers as an option."

According to SuzoHapp, toppers tend to be a product that is driven by the OEM market. The company has been manufacturing such devices for more than 10 years now.

"Our entry into the field basically stemmed from demand from the market. We started in the US, manufacturing exclusive customised toppers for key gaming OEMs. With the knowledge we gained during this process, we created a full range of topper solutions.

"Our first products had basic single-colour LEDs or sometimes even lamps. Then we moved to RGB LEDs and today we see customers require individual, addressable LEDs. This makes our toppers much more interactive - that is the key difference. We started with a basic backlight by fluorescent tube, then progressed to LED backlight and currently have LCDs incorporated into our toppers.

"We use only quality components and the majority of the parts are made in our own factory. Also we have full control on the EMC approvals. We have always placed emphasis on toppers and that explains our market position. We have always been willing to invest in this product group and that will remain so.

"Thus, we expect toppers to remain an important product group within SuzoHapp, as it is our goal to work closely with our key OEM customers to build customised topper solutions. With the developments going on and the success we currently have, we see a bright future ahead of us." □

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