

## Interactive Scoring

# A NEW YORK CENTER'S INVESTMENT REAPS REWARDS

Longer dwell time, increased spending, and more visits **By Corrie Pelc**

In late 2022, Maple Lanes RVC in Rockville Centre, NY, decided to purchase and install an immersive, interactive scoring experience for their guests. According to Joe LaSpina, vice president of Maple Family Centers, they are traditional bowling operators who consistently look for new ways to upgrade the customer experience.

Ultimately the management team chose to add Spark® by Brunswick to provide different games and animations projected directly on six of their 34 bowling lanes.

"We have a lot of league bowling and a lot of traditional bowling," he explains. "Spark was cool because we could enhance the (casual) side of the business without having to change anything about the building. We didn't have to pull lanes out. We could live in both worlds and have an awesome enhancement for our casual customers without doing anything that messed with our business model of trying to have times when we're traditional and times when we're not traditional. It lets us do both."

### Increased Dwell Time

Since installing Spark, LaSpina says it has helped increase guests' dwell time in the center, helping to increase spending in other areas of the center, such as concessions.

"We want our customers to spend just enough time in the building where they'll keep spending money and then leave as the next group comes and spends money," he says. "That hour-and-a-half to two-hour visit is great; it's perfect for us [and] the kids are still entertained for that long. We're seeing many people buy one hour and then buy a second hour. And then that second hour — there's nothing more profitable than the next paid game of bowling — all your fixed costs are paid for."

Additionally, LaSpina says they have seen increased demand for birthday parties with Spark.

"We've been able to enhance our parties at a higher price point for a premium Spark package; we usually sell out the Spark lanes every party session every weekend," he continues. "It's created a nice demand for it. And again, at a higher price point that customers are happy to pay because it's an enhanced experience."

### New Customer Service and Marketing Opportunities

Another benefit they have seen is that Spark provides a new way for staff to engage with guests creating an upgraded customer service experience. After installation, all Maple Lanes staff were provided a tutorial on how to instruct guests using the system for the first time easily.

"Whenever we buy capital equipment, we spend extra time getting our team to use it," he continues. "We proactively get the staff (on the lanes) to play because they'll do a better job teaching customers how to do it. Even our older, more traditional employees play on Spark, and they all love it, knowing it's a different product than the traditional game they grew up with. We go out there and try to play with them so they understand how to use it and can help customers right away."

Training a guest on how to use the system usually takes about 10 seconds for staff to show the various features and access all the games. It enriches the play experience when a staff member goes to the lanes and quickly teaches the customer how to access the games, take a picture, or put an email address into the system.

LaSpina says the ultimate end game is collecting emails from Spark bowlers to add to their marketing list. "The more customer data we can get from them, the better.

These guests want to hear from us and get their pictures as memories from their visit." ●

