

Wynn alters rules on tips

A restructuring of how Wynn Las Vegas manages its casino soon will leave many dealers there a little lighter in the wallet.

Starting Sept. 1, table game supervisors will share in the tips earned by dealers, a move gaming industry insiders said is unheard of along the Strip.

„This amounts to money out of my pocket to pay other employees,“ said one dealer, a 14-year veteran who has worked at the USD 2.7 billion Wynn Las Vegas since it opened in April 2005.

„It will cause a lot of disgruntled dealers. You’re taking frontline people and making them unhappy.“

The change will cause him to lose at least USD 30,000 a year in tip earnings, he said.

Wynn Resorts Ltd. Chairman Steve Wynn and other executives told table game employees of the pending changes Monday night.

Wynn had been in China working on preparations for next month’s opening of the USD 1 billion Wynn Macau. But he thought the issue was important enough to make a 15-hour flight to Las Vegas to tell his workers personally, Wynn Las Vegas President Andrew Pascal said Tuesday.

A widening disparity between the wages earned by dealers and casino floor supervisors caused the Strip casino to alter the structure of its table games division, Pascal said.

Starting next week, pit bosses and floor supervisors will be known as „casino service team leaders.“ Their responsibilities will cover the operations of specific table games, including game protection and customer service. The new plan will be phased in over several weeks.

Gaming Control Board sources said Tuesday they were unaware of any changes in policy at Wynn Las Vegas.

A source said the casino had applied to change some of its table game internal controls but did not advise gaming regulators about what modifications were being requested.

The most controversial part of the restructuring is a change in compensation.

Pascal said that Wynn Las Vegas dealers are the highest-paid dealers in the city, averaging about USD 100,000 per year in salary and tip earnings. But the employees supervising dealers average about USD 60,000 a year in salary, Pascal said.

„Because of our property, that disparity has gotten wider,“ Pascal said, citing Wynn’s emphasis on high-end play as one reason its dealers’ tokens are larger than most Strip properties. „There was no incentive in the division to advance and grow.

„Everybody wanted to become dealers,“ he added.

Dealers who split tips by shifts now will share those tokens with team leaders and supervisors, who also will receive a boost in base salary.

The result, Pascal said, will be dealers earning an average of USD 90,000 annually while supervisors will be paid USD 95,000.

„We’re still going to have the highest-paid dealers on the Strip,“ Pascal said. „What it does is rebalances the structure of our table games division and gives a person an incentive to take on more responsibility.“

But dealers said sharing tokens with supervisors is unfair.

Writing anonymously on a dealers Internet forum, several Wynn employees said they were disappointed that their paychecks could be reduced by an estimated 10 percent to 20 percent.

Some said they were upset by the short notice before the changes take effect; others said they will apply for different positions to avoid a pay cut.

„We will continue to go to work, smile, and do our jobs to the best of our ability. We have no choice,“ one Wynn dealer wrote.

„The image of ‚Steve Wynn‘ convinced us we were safe, but the image was just a mirage. I think I will be applying for a ‚team leader‘ position to minimize the financial damage that lies ahead.“

Another dealer wrote that Wynn Las Vegas mismanaged its staff and is forcing line employees to share in the burden.

„They say that it is because they think it’s only ‚right‘ for supervisors to make more than dealers because this is how things are in other industries,“ the dealer wrote. „Well, dealers making more than supervisors is how it has always been in this industry and this didn’t become the ‚right‘ thing to do until Wynn failed miserably to make their employees happy.“

MGM Mirage spokesman Alan Feldman said examples exist throughout the gaming industry of entry-level managers earning far less than the line workers they oversee. Bartenders and cocktail waitresses sometimes earn more than the assistant beverage manager.

„The management positions are on a completely different career path than the line employees,“ Feldman said.

Harrah’s Entertainment spokesman David Strow said that historically at Harrah’s-owned properties, including the upscale Caesars Palace, supervisors do not share in the tip pool with dealers.

Wynn Las Vegas will start incentive programs for dealers to earn annual cash bonuses to supplement their lost income,

Pascal said.

Dealers on the Web site said most of the heat from the change will be felt by table game supervisors, who are receiving a large bump in pay.

„I don't agree with the way this was handled, but this was the cheapest way for management to make the floor happy without it costing the company money,“ wrote a Wynn dealer. „Steve Wynn emphasized that he expects near perfection from the floor staff for this big pay raise.“

Wynn Las Vegas operates 140 table games, including baccarat. Pascal said about 820 table game positions at the casino will be affected in the restructuring.

The casino's poker room and slot machine area will not be affected by the changes.

Pascal said the property has operated for several months without a vice president of casino operations, the executive responsible for the table game division.

Several other middle management table game positions have been restructured too. A casino manager and two assistant casino managers will supervise each shift.

Former pit bosses and floor supervisors will assume new job duties. Pascal also hopes some dealers will want to move up to the team leader positions.

He said the concept allows dealers to have an incentive to increase their responsibility while increasing their wages.