

# CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT

## Making It Great by Making It Personal

By Anthony Schoettle

In terms of Best Places to Work in Indiana, not many employers get more raving reviews from their employees than Caesars Entertainment. The company has had at least one of its properties on the list each of the last 10 years.

This year, Caesars officials decided to enter as a whole – under the Caesars banner – and not surprisingly employee input put the gaming, casino, horse racing and hospitality company near the top of the heap in the major category (companies with 1,000 or more U.S. employees). Caesars has 2,400 of its 52,000 employees in Indiana.

Caesars' property managers gush that the company's top executives in Indiana and Nevada are ever accessible and always personal in their interaction with and support of each operation, manager and employee. Caesars sets the tone for top-notch culture from the top down while allowing each operation to have autonomy to run its unique facility, operations managers emphasize.

*BizVoice*® recently caught up with Dan Nita, the regional president with Caesars Entertainment. He oversees Horseshoe Hammond in northern Indiana, Harrah's Hoosier Park Racing & Casino in Anderson and Horseshoe Indianapolis in Shelbyville as well as Caesars' property in Windsor, Canada in Ontario – across the border from Detroit.

Nita, a 31-year Caesars veteran, has been based out of Horseshoe Hammond since 2009, first as the general manager then as regional president.

Caesars has owned Horseshoe Hammond since 2004, and acquired Hoosier Park and what was known at the time as Indiana Grand in Shelbyville in 2018.



Leaders from the highest perches at Caesars Entertainment set the tone for a culture that helps them recruit and retain employees at a high level while offering each facility the autonomy to develop unique employee benefit programs.

***BizVoice:* What is the underlying culture Caesars strives for throughout its company and across its properties?**

**Dan Nita:** “We recognize the slot machines, table games and food and beverage are very similar with us and our competitors. We believe the difference in terms of trying to drive guest loyalty is by having very loyal and excited team members. We start at the beginning of that service profit chain focused on trying to drive team members that are excited to come to work. Everything else manifests itself from that. Our focus is on trying to figure out how we take care of those team members.”

***BV:* How do the leaders at Caesars set the tone for the importance of culture – looking out for the good of the customers and employees as well as the company itself – at its properties near and far?**

**DN:** “In a lot of different ways. We have organizational structure, but there’s not a whole lot of hierarchy within our teams. Our general managers are eating in the same team member dining room as the front-line team members. We have a program called Walk In My Shoes where the senior leadership throws on a uniform at peak times. When I was a general manager, I would work valet in December on a big show night in Hammond on the coldest day of the year. A, it makes sure the leadership remains humble and always remembers all the different elements to the job. B, it’s a great way to bond with team members. And C, we can identify where there are opportunities for us to make the work experience better.

“And there’s no strict career pathing at Caesars. Of my three general managers in Indiana, I have the general manager at Hoosier Horse Park, he started off as a bellman. The general manager I have in Horseshoe Hammond came out of the Marines and joined one of our properties as a security supervisor. And the general manager of Horseshoe Indianapolis started on the backside of the racing facility down at a casino racetrack in Louisiana. They all came from front-line roles that have made their way up over time. I get excited that’s the kind of culture we established. No matter where you start in our organization, should you want to and should you demonstrate aptitude and passion and humility, you can make your way up to the highest levels in our company.”

***BV:* How do you allow your managers at each facility – and the employees there as well – to have some level of autonomy while still maintaining the overall underlying culture Caesars strives for?**

**DN:** “A good example of that is we have a program called the Founders Award, which is where we recognize the top 10 to 20 team members from across the country. That is a program that every property ultimately funnels up their best team members to, but how each property develops that, rewards that, recognizes that is purely up to the team. Some are more formalized, have dinners and announcements and other properties do it on the casino floor in front of their fellow team members and guests. The individual property has its own unique way that makes that team excited to come to work every day. We don’t have a cookie-cutter way to do team member celebrations, but in each case, they form their own way. And then (our property managers) get feedback from their team members.

That’s the way we solicit the buy-in from our team members.”



It's not uncommon for Caesars facility managers to know their employees by name and visit them often to experience the work conditions and morale on the front lines.

**BV: One of Caesar’s property managers previously told me in an interview that there are two things – among others – that Caesars stresses in terms of its culture: Servant leadership and being open to employee feedback – good or bad. Why are those two aspects important?**

**DN:** “I think that people by nature want to know their leaders can understand them and the roles they’re in. These are hard jobs. And so that servant leadership focus is so important. When I walk across the casino floor with (a property manager), team members smile because he knows their name, he knows something about them, and that

matters. That person is more than just a number. They realize, ‘Oh, the boss knows who I am, and so I can go and I can feel comfortable talking to him or her when it comes to how to make my job better.’

“I’ll tell you the thing that I get most excited about is if I attend a new-hire orientation and I’ll go around and ask what role you’re going into and then how did you find out about this job? And when someone says, ‘My mom has worked here for 20 years.’ As a parent, we all want something better for our children. The fact that a parent would recommend their child come work for us means that it’s a pretty good place to be.”

**BV: What does the Best Places to Work in Indiana honor mean to the company as a whole, and is it an affirmation of what it has been striving for in terms of culture?**

**DN:** “We have internal surveys that we do to gauge how team members feel about coming to work, and we break it down between shift and department and length of tenure, but it’s all internal. From a customer standpoint, we have surveys through Medallia (management platform) or TripAdvisor or Yelp that gauges what the guest experience is. But we are so excited and proud about what the Best Places program is and that we are seeing how our team members feel about us (via an external source). And so this is why, since 2011, our company has made it a point to make sure we participate.

This honor is on one hand something we’re very proud of, but on the other hand, we know that we have to continue to strive to get better because we can’t be complacent.”

**RESOURCE:** Dan Nita, Caesars Entertainment, at [www.caesars.com](http://www.caesars.com)

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