



parx Case Study
Casino • Sportsbook

High Stakes HR: Parx Casino's Winning Strategy for Elevating Employee Voices



Industry

Hospitality

Employees

2,600+

Headquarters

Bensalem, Pennsylvania

Parx Casino, the **#1 casino in Pennsylvania**, is owned and operated by **Greenwood Racing Inc.** and offers state-of-the-art gaming, thoroughbred racing, live entertainment, thrilling promotions and exciting events.



Parx Casino, Pennsylvania's top revenue-generating casino, is known for its diverse gaming experiences and its commitment to exceptional customer service. The complex features 3,200 slot machines, 188 world-class table games, a premier poker room with 48 poker tables, the Xcite Center entertainment venue, a state-of-the-art Sportsbook, the world-famous Parx Racing® — and an incredible commitment to elevating employee voices.

Parx prides itself on being more than just a gaming destination. “What makes us different from everyone else is our ability to give excellent customer service,” says Susan Eckert, who has led the HR department since the casino opened in 2006. “That is what makes us stand out from the rest of the crowd.”



Betting big on employee satisfaction

Susan knows a little something about standing out from the crowd, too. Though she is humble about mentioning it, her recent accolade as one of the [top HR women professionals of 2023 by CIO Magazine](#) is a testament to her relentless pursuit of creating an empathetic and responsive workplace.

When the Parx Casino opened, there was an intimate, “family-oriented” culture, says Susan — who started there on Day 1. For example, during the pandemic, the company set up an emergency fund for employees, which often covered unexpected expenses like family funerals.

Susan has worked to preserve this supportive atmosphere through rapid growth and the disruptions of recent years. “It is easier when you’re smaller,” she notes, “and much more difficult when you are larger. So we do a lot of things to make sure that the employees remain engaged and have someplace to go if they have any issues or concerns.”

That can be a challenging task when a company grows as steadily as Parx has over the past two decades. With 24/7 operations and a workforce that has expanded to nearly 3,000 employees — most of whom are frontline staff — the challenge of maintaining a cohesive and engaged employee experience is formidable.





Prioritizing communication to improve the employee experience

The effort Parx has invested in culture is evident in its competitive pay, comprehensive benefits, and community involvement. “We take care of our employees,” Susan says. “We have really great benefits. We probably have the most competitive pay in this area. In terms of competitiveness, we are at the top of that.”

As just one example, a few years ago, Parx implemented an \$18 per hour across-the-board rate of pay for line-level employees — some of whom were making \$13.50 at the time. “There is a huge push to make sure that the company can support employees and that they can support lives outside of work,” Susan says.

The company is also very open with communication and boldly honest about what it can and cannot fix. “Culturally, we are very strong,” Susan says. As a result, the vast majority of staff members feel supported and valued at the organization — something that is reflected in Parx’s high engagement and retention rates.

However, this success did not come without its challenges. The always-on nature of the business, having a majority of employees offline without corporate email access, and a post-pandemic shift in employee attitudes posed significant hurdles. Susan reflects, “There’s definitely been a different shift since COVID... People are generally not as happy, kind of more difficult with each other, less accepting and understanding.”

Addressing these pain points and engaging with empathy requires a nuanced approach. “We really try to have two-way communication across the board, but it can be challenging,” Susan admits.





Parx Casino identified two key areas it needed to address:

1

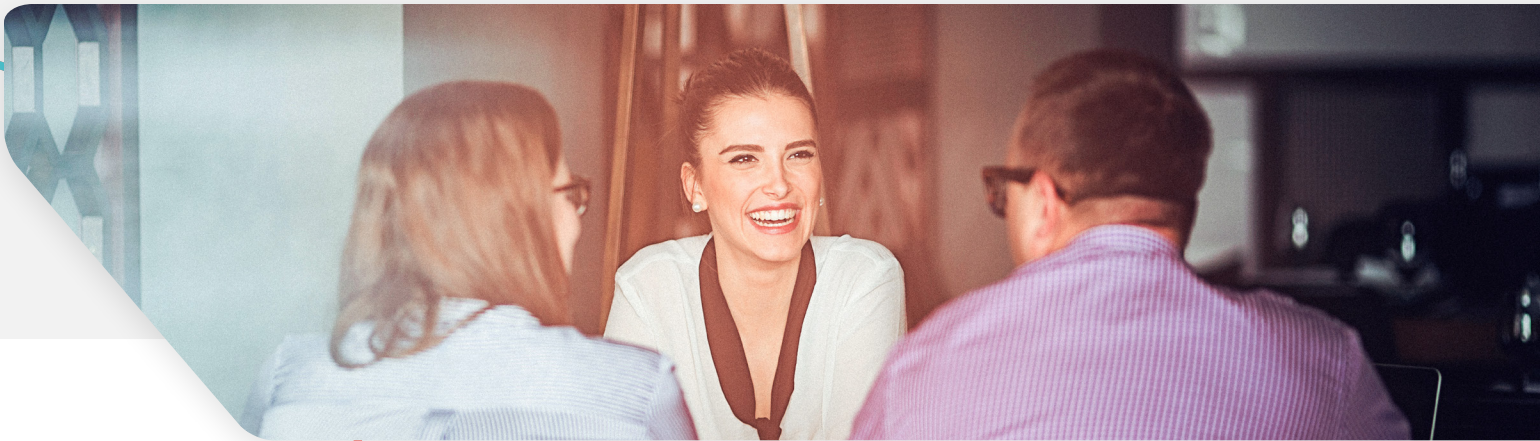
Maintaining a tight-knit, supportive culture amidst growth

With a workforce that has expanded to nearly 3,000 employees, the challenge of maintaining a cohesive and engaged employee experience is formidable.

2

Navigating post-pandemic shifts in employee sentiment

The 24/7 nature of the business, having a majority of employees offline without corporate email access, and a post-pandemic shift in employee attitudes posed significant hurdles.



Upping the ante with Betterworks Engage

Betterworks' [Engage](#) tool has been a pivotal support in this journey, she says. The tool allows Parx to conduct annual surveys, providing a platform for employees to share feedback anonymously and securely. "We are able to compare exactly the same metrics each year," Susan explains.

The company uses Engage to conduct an annual engagement survey — something Susan lets employees come to on their own terms, making rooms available for offline employees to step away from the floor at any time, 24/7, to complete.



“We say, ‘This is when the survey is coming out. These are the times that rooms are available for them to go in and take the survey,’” Susan explains. “And we do not push it. We encourage it, but we never push it. So we don’t force them to do it. If we force them, we’d have the opposite effect of what we want. I want to get honest feedback. I don’t want to get angry, honest feedback, because they feel the survey is a demand.”

This year, voluntary participation in the survey was 71%, a number Susan is happy with. “If we didn’t have space available for them to take the survey, it would make it more challenging, but we have 25 computers in a room that people can go in at any time — and we also have somebody available in the room to help them. So for a two-week period of time, we have a ridiculous number of hours available for people to go in and do that. We try to make it as easy for them as possible.”

The surveys are also complemented by other employee outreach, such as business resource groups, a company newsletter, holiday giveaways, and other fun activities. “We make sure that people feel like they’re supported and that they get to do fun things at work,” Susan says.



Betterworks allows managers to come back to the business and say ‘Look, this is what’s really important to my team and this is how I’m going to be able to support them and show that we’re listening.’

Susan Eckert | Director of Human Resources



The Betterworks Engage tool helps Parx Casino garner feedback and build trust.



Betterworks provides both a tool and a partnership to Parx Casino; empowering the organization to navigate its challenges effectively.



Betterworks has enabled managers to gain a better understanding of their teams' needs.

Hitting the employee satisfaction jackpot

The results speak for themselves — and they have had a real impact on the superior customer service that lifts Parx above its competitors. “We are focused on employees and making sure that we’re doing what we can do for them... That then trickles down to what they do for our guests. And that’s really important to us,” Susan says.

These efforts also show in the numbers. “Our engagement score is pretty high. This year, it was 79, and last year, it was 80,” Susan shares. The Betterworks Engage tool helps garner feedback and build trust. “It is helpful. Some people are definitely braver when they’re writing stuff, and they know — and actually believe — that it’s anonymous.”

In supporting this goal, Betterworks provides more than just a tool; it is also a partnership that has empowered Parx to navigate its challenges effectively. “I’ve established relationships with Betterworks that make it so helpful. They know that I probably will freak out right before the survey — making sure that certain things are done, and my account manager has been amazing and extremely supportive,” Susan shares, highlighting the personalized support that Betterworks offers.



Enabling managers with helpful insights

Tool has gained accolades for its ease of use and has enabled managers to gain a better understanding of their teams' needs. "It allows them to come back to the business and say 'Look, this is what's really important to my team and this is how I'm going to be able to support them and show that we're listening,'" Susan explains. This feedback loop has been crucial in shaping a responsive and empathetic management culture at Parx Casino, and Susan feels she comes away every year with real insights into the culture and action items that help team leaders shape and preserve the culture.

"We're pretty approachable. The Engage tool supports that and it helps us with some of the employees who might be a little bit more quiet or hesitant to say anything," Susan says. "Even if it helps 10% of our population, giving them a spot where they can express a concern or tell us something that they're happy about, it really is beneficial. It helps them feel they have a space where they can say something."



A winning hand in workforce management

Parx's story is a compelling one — highlighting the power of technology to bridge the communication gap in a predominantly offline workforce. And it hasn't gone unnoticed. CIO Magazine recently recognized Susan as one of the [top HR women HR professionals of 2023](#).



[Susan's] remarkable work ethic and passion for her role have garnered recognition and praise within the industry. Susan's relentless pursuit of excellence in managing the human resources of Parx Casino has set her apart as a truly inspiring leader. Her ability to cultivate a positive and inclusive work environment has contributed to the organization's overall success. Susan's outstanding achievements and contributions make her a role model for aspiring HR professionals in the corporate world.

CIO Magazine

"It was an honor," says Susan. "I was very happy to be included. It's probably one of the highlights of my career — of my past five years anyway."

Susan's visionary leadership has certainly propelled Parx Casino to the forefront of employee engagement in the gaming industry. Her partnership with Betterworks also underscores the significance of listening to the workforce and acting on their feedback, a lesson that should resonate in any industry.

