FREE PLAYBOOK · NO. 08

THINK LIKE THE HOUSE.

CASINO PSYCHOLOGY, USED HONESTLY



A FREE PLAYBOOK FROM

BINA

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BEFORE YOU START

CASINOS START WINNING BEFORE YOU PLAY.

No clocks. A path past every machine. Chips instead of cash. Lights for every win. None of it changes the odds. All of it changes how long people stay and how much they spend. Here are five of the moves, the study behind each one, and the honest version you can use in your own business.

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 **THE ROOM**
Why there are no clocks

02 **THE PATH**
Why every turn passes another machine

03 **THE CHIPS**
Why $100 in chips feels like less

04 **LIGHTS AND SOUNDS**
Why players remember more wins

05 **THE NEAR MISS**
Why almost winning feels so close

✓ **THE LINE**
Smart or sneaky, and the rules on one page (p. 8)

01 · THE ROOM

NO CLOCKS. BARELY ANY WINDOWS. TIME SLIPS AWAY.

Walk onto most casino floors and the outside world is gone. Nothing tells you if it's 2pm or 2am. A room that never changes makes it easy to stay one more hour.



SUPERMARKET SALES VOLUME, FAST VS SLOW MUSIC



After Milliman (1982): slower music slowed shoppers down, and sales volume was about 38% higher than with fast music. Indexed so fast music = 100.

The honest version

Make your place easy to stay in. Calm music, somewhere to sit, nothing that rushes people out. People who aren't rushed look around.

Over the line

Hiding the time when it matters to the customer, like a booking that's about to lapse or a sale that's ending.

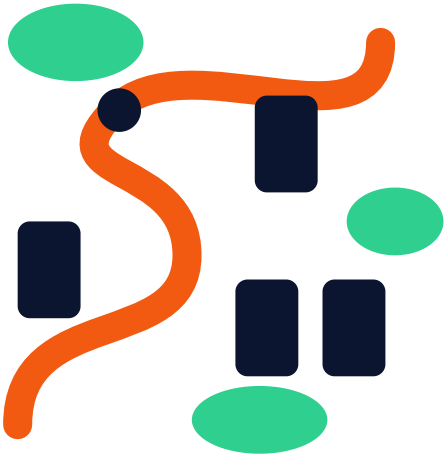
THE RULE

Slow the room down. Give people a reason to stay, then let them leave whenever they want.

02 · THE PATH

EVERY TURN LEADS PAST ANOTHER MACHINE.

Casino designer Bill Friedman argued for maze-like floors: short sightlines, winding aisles, and games at every turn. To get anywhere, you walk past another table and another chance to play.





The honest version

Plan the path. Put the thing people came for at the end, and one useful extra on the way there: the sauce next to the steak, the case next to the phone.

Over the line

Making it hard to find the exit, the cancel button or the cheaper option.

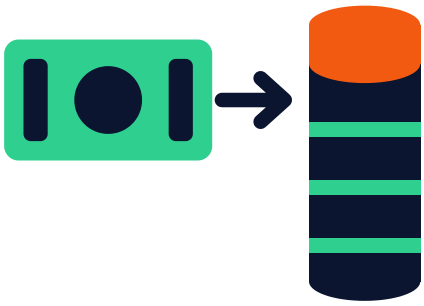
THE RULE

Every step between "I want it" and "I've got it" is a place to help. Put one good extra there, not ten. (Our rule of thumb.)

03 · THE CHIPS

A $100 CHIP DOESN'T FEEL LIKE $100.

Chips turn money into plastic. The research on paying backs this up: people spend more with gift certificates than with the same value in cash, and in one test people offered up to twice as much for basketball tickets when paying by card.



PAYING IN CASH

1x

WHAT PEOPLE OFFERED

PAYING BY CARD

up to 2x

FOR THE SAME TICKETS

Prelec & Simester (2001), sealed bids for sold-out basketball tickets. Gift certificates vs cash: Raghubir & Srivastava (2008).

The honest version

Make paying feel like one decision. A pack of ten classes, a monthly plan, a bundle with the extras already in. Fewer moments of "ouch".

Over the line

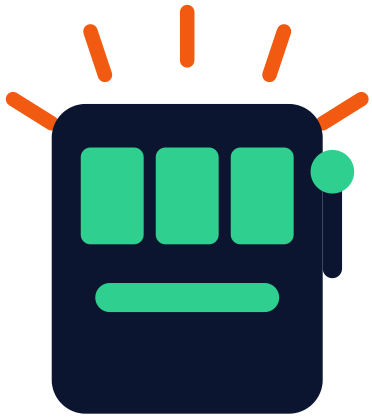
Hiding the real price behind points, credits or tokens. However people pay, they should be able to see the dollar amount.

THE RULE

Make paying easy. Keep the real price easy to see.

04 · LIGHTS AND SOUNDS

THE MACHINE CELEBRATES. PLAYERS REMEMBER MORE WINS.



In one study, 96 people played a slot machine set to pay out 28 wins, once with sound and once without. Afterwards they guessed how many times they'd won. The celebration sounds pushed the guesses up.

REAL WINS	GUESS, SOUND OFF	GUESS, SOUND ON
28	33	36
SET BY THE MACHINE	WINS	WINS

Dixon et al. (2013), Journal of Gambling Studies. Slots also play win sounds for "wins" smaller than the bet, which researchers call losses disguised as wins.

The honest version

Celebrate real wins out loud: the booking confirmed, the order on its way, the money they saved, the first result. Good moments that feel good get remembered.

Over the line

Celebrating something that isn't a win, so the customer thinks they did better than they did.

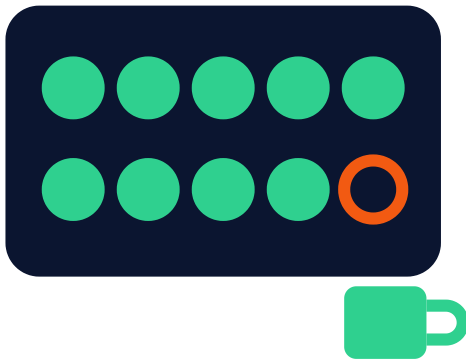
THE RULE

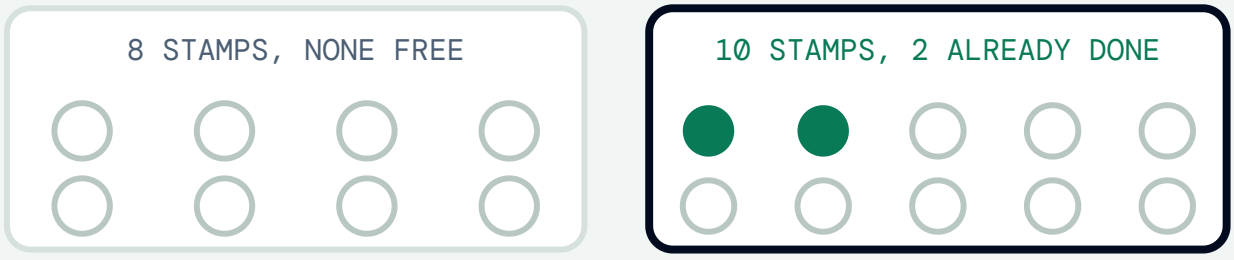
Make every real win loud. Never dress up a loss as one.

05 · THE NEAR MISS

ALMOST WINNING MAKES PEOPLE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN.

In brain scans, near misses on a slot machine lit up the same reward areas as real wins. Players said near misses felt worse than a clear loss, and yet they made people want to keep playing.





The honest twin, from a car wash: both cards need 8 more washes. The one with a 2-stamp head start got finished more often, and faster. Nunes & Drèze (2006).

The honest version

Show real progress. A loyalty card with a head start, "2 of 3 steps done", "one more visit for a free coffee". Close feels good when it's true.

Over the line

Fake progress, or a "you're nearly there" that never ends.

THE RULE

Show people how close they are, and give them a real head start.

THINK LIKE THE HOUSE, HONESTLY:

PHOTOGRAPH THIS PAGE. CHECK IT BEFORE YOU CHANGE YOUR SHOP, MENU OR SITE.

01 · Slow the room down

Calm music, somewhere to sit, no rush. Let them leave whenever they want.

02 · Plan the path

What they came for at the end, one good extra on the way.

03 · Make paying one decision

Packs, plans and bundles. The real price always in view.

04 · Make real wins loud

Confirmations, progress and results get a celebration. Losses never do.

05 · Show real progress

A head start and a clear finish line, both true.

THE LINE

Casinos use these moves to keep people playing a game built to beat them. Use them to make a good choice easier to see and easier to enjoy. If a move only works because your customer is confused, tired or rushed, leave it out.

CHECK IT YOURSELF

Every study in this playbook is published. Where a figure comes from a review of the paper or is our own rule of thumb, the page says so.

01 THE ROOM

Milliman, R. E. (1982). Using Background Music to Affect the Behavior of Supermarket Shoppers. *Journal of Marketing* 46(3). The 38% is as reported in reviews of the paper.

02 THE PATH

Friedman, B. (2000). *Designing Casinos to Dominate the Competition.* Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, University of Nevada, Reno. "One good extra" is our rule of thumb.

03 THE CHIPS

Prelec, D. & Simester, D. (2001). Always Leave Home Without It. *Marketing Letters* 12(1). Raghubir, P. & Srivastava, J. (2008). Monopoly Money. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied* 14(3).

04 LIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Dixon, M. J., Harrigan, K. A., Santesso, D. L., Graydon, C., Fugelsang, J. A. & Collins, K. The Impact of Sound in Modern Multiline Video Slot Machine Play. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, online 2013.

05 THE NEAR MISS

Clark, L., Lawrence, A. J., Astley-Jones, F. & Gray, N. (2009). Gambling Near-Misses Enhance Motivation to Gamble and Recruit Win-Related Brain Circuitry. *Neuron* 61(3). Nunes, J. C. & Drèze, X. (2006). The Endowed Progress Effect. *Journal of Consumer Research* 32(4).

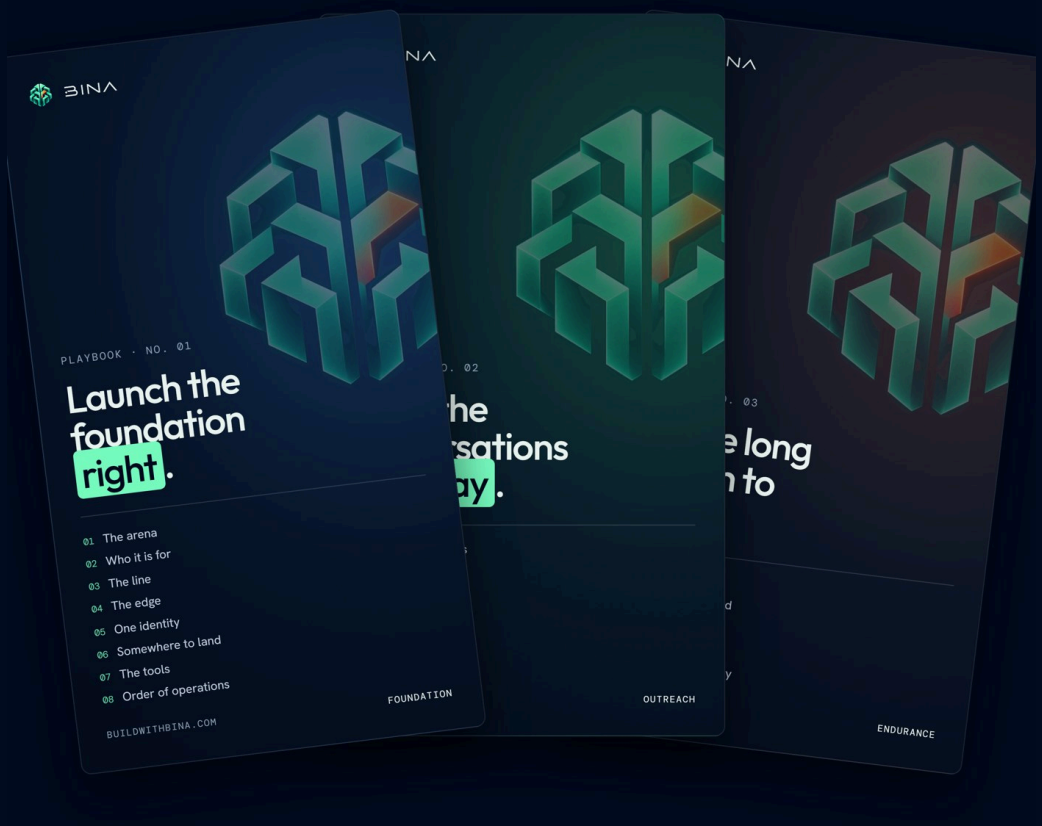
IF GAMBLING IS HURTING YOU

This playbook is about running a business, not about playing. If gambling is a problem for you or someone close to you, free and confidential help is available in the US at 1-800-GAMBLER.

THIS WAS ONE PLAYBOOK. HERE'S THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

THE DAY ONE SYSTEM

Three playbooks that take a business from idea to its first real customers: how to set the foundation right, how to start the conversations that pay, and how to keep going long enough to win.



Get the Day One System →

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Five steps, three playbooks, the films and five bonus books.