

## Revel's smoking plan / Smart business

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*"If you want to succeed, you must strike out on new paths, rather than travel the worn out paths of accepted success."*

- Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller

In Atlantic City's casinos, the worn out, and downright tired, path to success has often involved catering to the smoking crowd.

The city's casino industry successfully fought to be exempt from the 2007 New Jersey Smoke-Free Air Act, which banned smoking in most public places, even though a survey that year found 70 percent of the state's voters supported smoke-free casinos. The industry again pushed back when Atlantic City sought a total smoking ban in 2008.

And today, with smoking limited to 25 percent of the casino floor, the industry does little to enforce the limits, turning its eyes and its noses away from the clouds of smoke still prevalent on many casino floors, while arguing that any limits to smoking cut into the bottom line.

But Revel, the massive casino still nearly a year away from opening, is looking at a new path to achieve success in Atlantic City's struggling casino industry.

Kevin DeSanctis, the company's chief executive officer, said recently that his casino may pursue a different crowd. He said it's likely his casino will be smoke-free.

"The market we're targeting is fundamentally a nonsmoking market," DeSanctis said.

What's heartening about this is that it is a hard-nosed business decision. Revel's analysis is that being a nonsmoking casino may boost its bottom line.

DeSanctis said his company is still studying the question, and he acknowledged that a no-smoking policy scares him. That's the thing about going where others fear to tread.

Smoking and gambling (and drinking) have often gone hand in hand, no one can deny that.

Gaming analyst Cory H. Morowitz told The Press of Atlantic City that smoking sections "pretty much dominate" in casinos that have both smoking and non-smoking areas.

But the effects of smoking on smokers and the folks around them is also hard to deny.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the country. Each year cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke cause 443,000 deaths. That's one in five deaths in our country.

Secondhand smoke, in particular, is a concern in casinos and other enclosed spaces where employees have no choice but to endure the smoke around them in order to receive a paycheck.

The Surgeon General has found that smoke-free workplace policies are "the only effective way to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace. Separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure."

A nonsmoking casino would not only make for a healthier workplace, but a happier one, no doubt.

Revel's motivations aren't altruistic - after all, a casino is in business to make money - but this is encouraging just the same.

And it sounds like a smart business decision. A smoke-free casino in a state where 85 percent of the population does not smoke simply makes sense.