

Michael Edmonds

Director of the Wisconsin Lottery; President of the Multi-State Lottery Association (MUSL)

The Multi-State Lottery Association (MUSL) is a U.S.-based, non-profit, government-benefit association owned and operated by its member lotteries. Each MUSL member offers one or more of the games administered by MUSL. All profits are retained by the individual lotteries and are used to fund projects approved by the legislature authorizing each lottery. Formed in 1987, MUSL's first multi-state game was "Lotto America". That game ran four years before being replaced by "Powerball" in 1992. MUSL now offers six multi-state games and provides a variety of support services to its 33 member lotteries. Most recently, MUSL and the Mega Millions Group collaborated to enable members of each group to sell both super-jackpot games (Powerball and Mega Millions). Michael Edmonds, the current president of MUSL, clarifies the mission and some of the agendas of MUSL.

Paul Jason, Public Gaming: *What are the most important objectives on your agenda for MUSL?*

Michael Edmonds: The most important thing is to continue to offer games that maximize the profits of its member lotteries. This year we will continue to develop a premium game that will be offered by MUSL member states as well as the Mega Millions bloc states. In addition, we are looking at enhancements to the Powerball game.

How can MUSL be used as an agent for positive change and progress?

M. Edmonds: I view MUSL as a means to generate greater profits, not as a means for positive change and progress. The profits from MUSL games may further the mission of a particular lottery, which may result in positive change and progress, whatever that is. However, it is not up to MUSL to promote change.

What do MUSL members expect from their association, from MUSL?

M. Edmonds: Greater revenues. That's always been the expectation. In addition, MUSL staff provides expertise in game design, security, IT and law.

How have the expectations and needs of MUSL members changed over the past 3 years; and how do you expect them to change over the next 3 years?

M. Edmonds: I don't think the expectations will change in the next three years, although the types of games MUSL offers might change. We started with lotto and have branched into slots. Internet and wireless games are next, if lotteries hope to continue to be profitable.

What is MUSL's role in the development of the next multi-state super-jackpot game (the

"Premium" game)?

M. Edmonds: The Premium game is being developed by all of the state lotteries. And it's too early to say whether it will be a "super-jackpot game" or even if it will be one game. We are using the research, design and technical expertise of MUSL staff to assist in the development of the games.

Why couldn't MUSL be used to coordinate an initiative for states to pool resources to implement a national approach to branding? Why couldn't the cost for creating a national Powerball campaign just be built into the membership fees? I know there are obstacles, like the fact that different states have different rules about advertising etc. But the benefits would be huge for everyone, wouldn't they? At the very least, shouldn't the branding of Powerball have a more unified, consistent, national approach instead of each individual state reinventing the wheel and ending up with mixed messaging?

M. Edmonds: I dreamt about this, once upon a time. Seriously, you're right: we should have unified and consistent advertising. But I don't think it will happen. My favorite lottery ad' is a commercial featuring lottery winners shopping in a warehouse store. But instead of ordering lumber or flat screen TV's, the winners are ordering sports cars, private jets, and yachts. That ad' could not run in Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, we can't show money, we can't show what a jackpot can buy and we can't have a call to action. Add in the restrictions from all of the other states and what do you get? Boring ads. And if I'm not restricted in my advertising, why would I want to run a boring ad'?

Will the branding and messaging of the future "Premium" game have a more unified approach? If so, what will MUSL's involvement be?

M. Edmonds: I'm a little more hopeful here. I think we can have a unified campaign to launch the brand that will satisfy almost all of the states, at least their lawyers. Then it's a simple matter to agree on the creative, right?

Simple indeed! Couldn't MUSL take a more proactive role as a national public relations agent for all its member lotteries, finding the angle to turn local winner stories into nationally celebrated events? Too, lotteries need someone to address the need of the general media for positive story angles to counter the negative spin pushed by our adversaries. Why couldn't MUSL be the agent for that?

M. Edmonds: I think this is best left to the state lotteries who know their media best. MUSL is not representative of all of the U.S. lotteries. Furthermore, a negative issue in one state may not be an issue in another.

What can MUSL do to engender more awareness and a positive image for lotteries at the federal level? The U.S. DOJ and Congress are making decisions that directly affect the benefits that accrue to states and Good Causes from their lotteries. It doesn't have to be a "lobbyist" or anything like that. Just someone whose job it is to make sure shapers of public policy in Washington DC have all the information and facts about the situations they are deciding on. In other words, keeping it really basic and focused so that states don't feel that MUSL is overstepping its charter with the federal government.

M. Edmonds: I think this is a good idea, but for NASPL not MUSL. Not all lotteries are members of MUSL. And while there are more MUSL states than non, the MUSL states account for only 43% of all the votes in the House of Representatives. The non-MUSL state lotteries account for 53% of the votes in the House. ♦