



Rebecca HARGROVE

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Paul Jason, PGRI: *Some of us feel like the political challenges could not possibly have been as difficult thirty years ago as they are today. Or twenty or even ten years ago.*

Rebecca Hargrove: Believe it or not, I actually think it's better now. When I started at the Illinois Lottery in 1985, there were almost as many states that did not even have a state lottery as had one. The political dialogue then wasn't about whether state lotteries should be allowed to sell online. It was about whether a state should even have a lottery. Or whether a lottery should be allowed to advertise at all. At that time, Lotteries were quite new, and the games-of-chance environment did not include hundreds of casinos spread across almost every state in the country. So the very idea of Lottery as a means of channeling economic benefit to Good Causes was not as well understood then as it is now.

Then as now, liaising with our political constituents and engendering support from the media and general public has always been a vital part of the Lottery director's job.

Similarly, some of us feel an extreme sense of urgency to address challenges that appear to threaten the position of Lottery in the market-place. Did you feel that same sense of urgency and crisis twenty five years ago?

R. Hargrove: Of course. There has always been a similar sense of urgency and pressing concern that we need to accelerate the pace of change and innovation to keep up with the consumer market-place. It's human nature to think that the challenges we face now are more difficult than they have been in the past. And

frankly, that's not a bad thing. It motivates us to work hard and take bold action to improve our businesses and ensure that they will continue to be positioned to support Good Causes.

For example we've known for decades that multi-state corporate accounts need us to simplify retail application and accounting processes to make it easier for them to do business with Lottery. It was back in the mid 90's that I chaired the Retail Relations Group to address this issue and put Tom Shaheen (who was my chief-of-staff at the Georgia Lottery at the time) on the task force because he was always so keen on overcoming the obstacles to developing corporate accounts. Now, Terry Presta, Gary Grief, Tom Delacenserie, Connie Laverty O'Connor, and many others deserve a lot of credit for creating those procedures that will make doing business with lotteries so much more efficient for these multi-state retailers. But the recognition of the problem has always been there, and thankfully solutions are coming to fruition.

In that sense, one might observe that Lottery has grown and over the past three decades. Can we be confident that one way or another, problems do get solved and things always work out?

R. Hargrove: Absolutely not! I don't think you can ever assume that just because problems have been solved in the past, they'll be solved in the future. In fact, the opposite is true. We can assume that if we don't solve the problem, then nobody will. It's up to each and every one of us to own it, to take responsibility for making sure our industry continues to prosper and fulfill its mission to serve Good Causes. Let's not ever

take solace and say 'well, we solved it before so I'm sure we'll solve it again.' Nothing will ever happen if we think that way!

What thrills you the most about this industry and about your lifetime of service to this industry?

R. Hargrove: It's all about the Good Causes supported by Lottery. It's hard to describe how rewarding it is to confront that reality in a deeply personal way. I have often been stopped on the street by a mother who thanks us for enabling her child to go to college. Nothing changes someone's life as much as education does and to see and feel that first-hand is profoundly moving experience. I've been asked how many kids have benefited from education programs funded in the four states with lotteries that I have been privileged to serve over the past thirty years. It's somewhere between 12 and 15 million students. That's what thrills me most.

I also take great pleasure in seeing people succeed and build productive careers and lives. Serving Lottery for thirty years has given me the opportunity to help and nurture the growth of many people in this industry. Eight people who have worked for me have gone on to direct a state lottery themselves. And many others went on to build successful careers with the vendor community as well as state lotteries. Mentoring others is very personally rewarding for me. I think about people like Dave Bausch and Guy Simonis and others who mentored me over the many years. I am so thankful for their help and support, and take great pleasure in trying to give back to an industry that has done so much for so many people. ■