

Tourist Attractions & Parks

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Sacoa Keeps
the Focus on Family and
Quality As It Celebrates
60 Years in the Industry
and 25 Years as a
Management System
Supplier

The Focus is Still Family and Quality for Sacoa, Inc.

By Susan Mease

Family and quality are the touchstones of Sacoa Entertainment, just as they have been since Mauricio Mochkovsky happened into the arcade business in the late 1950s in Argentina. From those early days of route sales, Mauricio and his three sons moved into their first family entertainment center in Mar del Plata which is, according to Mauricio's grandson Sebastian (CEO of Sacoa USA), "the number one tourist city in the country and a great place for an indoor family entertainment center as it rains a lot." Not surprisingly, they were a huge hit.

As the FEC business grew, it became clear that owners and operators needed a better way to monitor the business, control costs, and block theft. In the early 1990s, Mauricio's son Jorge opened a related company under the Sacoa banner to develop their own entertainment card system. As Sebastian says, "It was called the Sacoa System because it was OUR system, for our parks." People heard about

"Anybody can sell a debit card system. It's what's behind the system that counts. ...We add employees but we don't lose key people."

- Sebastian Mochkovsky,
Sacoa

it, however, and they started to sell the system worldwide, the first one in Brazil in 1994. Dave & Buster's was the first U.S. FEC to install the system in what



Sebastian, Jorge and Pol Mochkovsky at the Dubai Show.

was to be a six-month trial at one location. After only three weeks, they wanted it installed in all locations. There are now over 1,500 installations in more than 60 countries. It was the PlayCard in the beginning and now is the Sacoa Debit Card System as the capabilities evolved from a game and card manager to an integrated solution that can be used universally throughout a location for all its services.

These days, Jorge and his two sons (the second son is Leopoldo, Director of the International company who works in both Sacoa Playcard and Sacoa Entertainment) focus on the Debit Card System while Jorge's two brothers and their families run the 20-plus FECs in Argentina. In 2009 Sebastian moved his family to the United States "to give my kids a better life. I can live and work anywhere." They opened a branch of Sacoa in the U.S. and make the cards and kiosks

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The Focus is Still Family (From page 20)

here and have warehousing in the U.S. The swiper is made in Taiwan because they believe the product is better quality than what is made in China. No parts of the system are built any longer in Argentina.

Sebastian points out, "Anybody can sell a debit card system. It's what's behind the system that counts." The key people in the company all have 45-50 years in the company. "We add employees but we don't lose key people," according to Sebastian. They have long relationships with clients who will often call asking for the person who put in their system 10 years ago. He may have moved up the ladder and doesn't do that anymore but, if it gives the client a sense of security, he'll continue to provide the necessary service. Sacoa prides itself on their outstanding relationship with and among employees: "they like to go to work." The company continues to provide the best support and customer service in the business. Sacoa is now the leading worldwide supplier of revenue management systems for the amusement, entertainment and leisure industries with more than 1,500 installations in more than 60 countries. It offers customized applications to manage and control all aspects of an entertainment facility.

Sebastian said they are always innovating; "everything that's standard in the industry now, we introduced." Sacoa brought out the first etickets in 1993 or 1994 although, as Sebastian ruefully notes, "nobody understood it then; they wanted paper tickets." They did the first fully wireless game network system. They are introducing a new 3-in-1 case of heavy duty plastic that is unique in the industry. Just by changing a small part in the back of the case, you can switch between insert option, swipe or tap (RFID).

Sacoa has recently put in systems in Pinstack in



A view of Vulcano Park.

Texas, the MGM hotels in Las Vegas, and all the America's Incredible Pizza locations. The cards can be magnetic or RFID. Sacoa believes cards are the better system over wristbands. As Sebastian points out, "If you cut the wristband to get it off, you've broken the link and it's no good. The card can fit in your wallet. We want the customer to come back frequently and use what's on that card." In addition, "Every kid understands etechnology. They don't want to hold a bunch of tickets while they try to play basketball; they were born to swipe." From the owners' perspective, they can program the cards to offer promotions to bring in clients during less busy times. Of course, this doesn't even touch on the operations management features of the system.

"Sooner rather than later," according to Sebastian, guests will be able to use their smartphones to recharge the card, book parties, invite friends through Facebook with everything tied into the system. In the future, kids will be able to put their card on the phone much as you can load your Bank of America card today. Not all end users have the tech yet but it is coming.

There is an old saw that says, "The first generation starts a business, the second generation runs the business, and the third generation ruins it." The Mochkovskys are well aware of this maxim and want to be the exception to the rule. They had the foresight 20 years ago to bring in an expert in family businesses to make sure they didn't make the mistakes family businesses often do. That counsel seems to be working and Sebastian says his two young children love helping at trade shows so there is a fourth generation in the wings.

Sebastian laughed when he was asked what Sacoa meant, "If I tell you it loses the magic." He did reveal that it is actually an acronym that goes back to the days when the family business was construction. Tourist Attractions & Parks, however, is not going to kill the magic. ☘



An indoor FEC in Argentina has a modern look.