Bank of America is First in Industry to Launch Virtual Reality Training Program in Nearly 4,300 Financial Centers

709 words
8 October 2021
ENP Newswire
ENPNEW
English

Release date - 07102021

Immersive training technology helps Bank of America teammates further develop the skills needed to grow their careers and meet the diverse needs of clients.

Bank of America is the first financial services firm to launch virtual reality (VR) training in nearly 4,300 financial centers nationwide. This innovative training technology will allow approximately 50,000 employees to practice a range of routine to complex tasks and simulate client interactions through a virtual environment. The VR program is the latest in the company's long-standing investment in the success of its people and dedication to providing a full range of professional development tools.

'At Bank of America, our commitment to being a great place to work for our teammates fuels our focus on innovation,' said John Jordan, Head of The Academy at Bank of America. 'VR is highly effective at helping teammates build and retain new skills and it is one of many ways we are using technology to support internal mobility and provide best-in-class learning opportunities.'

Every financial center in the Bank of America network will use VR headsets for training. Through a series of learning modules slated to roll out by the end of next year, financial center teammates will have the opportunity to use 20 different VR simulations and practice a wide range of skills including: strengthening and deepening relationships with clients, navigating difficult conversations, and listening and responding with empathy.

Through real-time analytics embedded in this technology, managers can also identify skill gaps and provide targeted follow-up coaching and personalized guidance to teammates to further improve performance. Following a successful pilot with 400 employees, 97% of the participants felt more comfortable performing their tasks after going through the simulations.

'Innovation is at the heart of everything we do,' said Hari Gopalkrishnan, Head of Retail, Preferred, Small Business and Wealth Management Technology at Bank of America. 'We are focused on creating and implementing technologies that offer advanced solutions. With VR, we're rolling out a proven learning tool that will empower teammates with the skills they need to better serve clients and help make financial lives better.'

Delivered through The Academy - Bank of America's award-winning onboarding, training and development organization - the VR program is the latest addition to a suite of high-tech and high-touch training and development tools offered by the company. The bank has also invested in AI-powered conversation simulators that enable enhanced role-playing opportunities, and platform simulators that allow teammates to train in a real-world practice environment on the systems, software and technical tools they use in their day-to-day jobs. As a testament to Bank of America's innovative approach to training and talent development, the company was recently recognized with 28 Stevie Awards for Great Employers as well as the Grand Stevie Award for the 2021 Organization of the Year.

Bank of America

Bank of America is one of the world's leading financial institutions, serving individual consumers, small and middle-market businesses and large corporations with a full range of banking, investing, asset management and other financial and risk management products and services. The company provides unmatched convenience in the United States, serving approximately 66 million consumer and small business clients with approximately 4,300 retail financial centers, approximately 17,000 ATMs, and award-winning digital banking with approximately 41 million active users, including approximately 32 million mobile users. Bank of America is a global leader in wealth management, corporate and investment banking and trading across a broad range of asset classes, serving corporations, governments, institutions and individuals around the world. Bank of America offers industry-leading support to approximately 3 million small business households through a suite of innovative, easy-to-use online products and services. The company serves clients through operations across the United States, its territories and approximately 35 countries. Bank of America Corporation stock (NYSE: BAC) is listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

Reporters May Contact:

Andy Aldridge, Bank of America

Phone: 1.980.387.0514

andrew.aldridge@bofa.com

[Editorial queries for this story should be sent to newswire@enpublishing.co.uk]

Document ENPNEW0020211008eha80003m

How Bank of America is investing in virtual reality to train branch employees

Caroline Hudson
498 words
7 October 2021
Charlotte Business Journal
CHAR
English

Bank of America Corp. (NYSE: BAC) is implementing virtual reality to help train its branch employees.

Charlotte-based BofA is planning to have virtual reality headsets in all 4,300 financial centers next year, said John Jordan, head of The Academy at the bank. The headsets are starting with five training modules this year and adding another 15 by the end of 2022, with modules focusing on client interactions.

Those interactions could involve relationship building, tough questions, high-emotion situations or needs they don't see every day, Jordan said. Employees put on the headset, and it looks as if they are in the room with the client. The simulations can help employees to develop empathy skills or coach a colleague. Having the experience incorporate emotions is a way to make the training more memorable, he said.

"It's really cool," Jordan said. "The intent is that we'll be able to use it throughout the employee life cycle, so if someone wants to pick up a new skill or if someone has stubbed their toe a few times in a conversation and they want to practice doing it before they have another one. All of it is intended to make people feel more comfortable in their job."

So far, BofA has distributed about 50 VR headsets to 50 branches, with that number expected to rise to 1,000 next month.

Charlotte branches will receive headsets in early 2022, a BofA spokesperson confirmed. This market already participated in the pilot that included 400 employees. The VR simulations were also filmed here, Jordan noted.

BofA declined to share the name of the vendor with which it is partnering.

This technology could be applicable in all lines of business, Jordan said, with opportunities to practice general presentation skills or eye contact, as examples. It could also be used for group training as others watch another screen to see what the headset user sees. He said BofA had seen VR used in athletics programs.

The bank said it is the first in the financial services industry to launch this type of VR training.

"The Academy organization is really built around specialized learning and development opportunities, and we really try to tailor those to the unique needs of the employees across a lot of different roles," Jordan said.

Jordan said BofA has spent the past few years investing in new ways of training. It has simulators for the bank's technology, call libraries with real-life situations recorded and the artificial intelligence-driven iCoach to practice conversations. The new VR training is expected to eventually reach 50,000 employees.

BofA also declined to share a cost of investment. The bank's annual technology budget is at about $14 billion. That includes approximately $3.4 billion for new development, an increase compared to years past.

Document CHAR000020211007eha70005l

MGM Resorts International at Bank of America Merrill LynchGaming and Lodging Conference (Virtual) - Final

5,811 words
9 September 2021
VIQ FD Disclosure
FNDW
English

Presentation

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY, MD, BOFA SECURITIES, RESEARCH DIVISION: Thank you and good afternoon, everyone. I'm Shaun Kelley, the US gaming and lodging analyst and my co-moderator for this session is going to be James Kayler. Our final conversation today is with MGM Resorts.

(Operator Instructions)

So with that, it's my pleasure to welcome MGM's Chief Financial Officer, Jonathan Halkyard. Jonathan, welcome.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD, CFO & TREASURER, MGM RESORTS INTERNATIONAL: Thanks very much, Shaun. It's good to be with you guys again.

Questions and Answers

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So this is definitely not your first September conference with us. But it is your first with MGM. So congrats on that, and you have been extraordinarily busy in your first 9 months there.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes. When I started speaking with MGM back in November and -- or October, November, they said it would not be boring. And truer words were never spoken, I've certainly been busy. Yes. I'm looking forward to talking about it.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So leaves us a ton to get into. And we'll -- I think we'll just roll through some of the major topics that are out there. So let's just start with, I think, what we -- I typically -- James is going to laugh at this, I typically hold this to the very end. But cash and balance sheet are sort of the utmost -- both in your position as Chief Financial Officer but obviously, given all of the strategic changes that MGM has done and really, I think, it's culminated in this movement to an asset-light and/or sort of operating-driven or operating-focused business. So if we could start here, we follow City Center, the deal with -- between VICI and MGP, you're sitting on over $6.5 billion of liquidity now. I think most math takes that up to close to $11 billion pro forma for the MGP transaction sometime in early 2022.

Help us break down how you're starting to think about allocating and/or prioritizing the uses of a cash balance that's that large.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Okay. Well, first of all, I think it's important to note the way this strategy began, which was really about 5 years ago when MGM established MGP as a vehicle for the monetization of its real estate. And that process continued apace, really culminating in late '19, I guess, early '20 with the sale of the Bellagio actually to, in that case, to Blackstone and MGM Grand and Mandalay to a venture between MGP and Blackstone. And then -- and that strategy was accompanied by fairly aggressive share repurchases and a large, announced share repurchase program. And then, of course, it was truncated by the pandemic. And I think the company was fortunate to be in a position where it had liquidity that was raised as a result of those transactions that didn't require it to do any dilutive equity deals or really stress leverage beyond that, which was kind of stressed by the operating results.

So as the -- as we got into the later innings of the pandemic, at least what we perceive to be that, we kind of began again with that strategy. When I joined MGM, I was unaware or unfamiliar with the specific operating challenges the company needed to deal with. But one thing I was certainly aware of and knew was that the company had far too complex a corporate structure. And we did need to simplify that.

Two main parts of that were the CityCenter JV and the MGP -- our significant holding in MGP. So we've made progress, of course, on both of those fronts, acquiring the other half of CityCenter and simultaneously selling that real estate to Blackstone, and then the transaction with VICI. So to address your question around the liquidity that all of these ultimately will generate, which you're correct, it totals around $11 billion by the middle of next year, we have a few priorities.

Number one is investment in our own businesses, to continue to improve the product that we have, our physical businesses. So that will include some room renovations, technology investments to bring digital tools to the hands of our customers with increasing sophistication. Now these will not be accelerated or really any change, of course, because of the liquidity we've driven, but they are important investments.

The second is funding BetMGM, which is, we think, a fantastic use of capital as that company continues to acquire customers.

And then final is share repurchases. When we announced our earnings in early August, we had since mid-March, so only about 3.5 months' time. We had acquired -- we had spent over $600 million on share repurchases. And at these levels, we think that our shares remain an attractive use of capital, and so we're going to continue that.

I think it's also important to note that the company has still a traditional bank and bond debt structure and that some of those bonds are maturing in 2022 and 2023. And I'm sure we're going to look hard at simply retiring those bonds as they do mature, given the fact that the company has now a fairly substantial lease burden and a capital structure that's different with the transactions we've done, from what it was when we initially did those debt offerings.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: James, do you want to jump in here?

JAMES FORRISTALL KAYLER, MD, BOFA SECURITIES, RESEARCH DIVISION: Well, I guess maybe just to follow on that, Jonathan, we have talked about this, but in that context, how do you think the company will sort of position its leverage target or sort of parameters going forward, I guess on both the -- we've talked about on sort of a traditional basis, but then on that lease-adjusted basis?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes. I will certainly be looking at it and communicating it on a lease-adjusted basis. And I know the convention is to take a lease obligation and apply an 8x multiple to it for the purposes of adjusting leverage for these leases. I think that's probably a fine way to do it. While -- it's just a different capital structure. I also look at it in terms of coverage, of our EBITDAR coverage of our lease obligation. And I think that's, practically speaking, a very important way to look at our leverage with this.

On a lease-adjusted basis, as we look at the numbers and do our planning, we think that 4x to 5x lease-adjusted debt-to-EBITDAR is appropriate for a company of our size and our level of revenue diversification. I think one of the elements that will be, of course, watching closely, and I certainly would expect our shareholders and lenders to watch closely too is the way in which BetMGM, we expect over time, turns from a consumer of capital to a generator of cash. And that will have, we think, over time, very important positive effects on our leverage because it's really not -- it's a business that we think can be a strong cash flow generator.

I'd make 1 other final comment as it relates to uses of capital, and that's our venture in Japan, which we've submitted an RFP and are in that process right now. The magnitude of those investments, along with the timing of those, we really are not reserving any of this amount of capital that we have. Given the timing and the magnitude, I would expect that those investments could be funded out of free cash flow come 2024, 2025 and so on.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So Jonathan, one priority that wasn't mentioned in there was M&A. And obviously, MGM has a history that traces back to sort of the architecture being constructed on M&A 20 years ago, but much more recently it's been about development. And so could you help us think about maybe both those pieces a little bit? Is M&A still a viable strategy for us? I mean, as you've created some expertise here on an operating basis, is there still an angle or an opportunity for you to add to the portfolio on an operating basis going forward? Is there a strategic merit in doing so? Maybe start there and then we'll talk about the development side.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Sure. Adding to the portfolio is certainly a possibility. It's interesting to contrast the MGM portfolio to the one I have been most familiar with in this industry, which was Caesars. We have a more substantial Las Vegas presence and a less substantial regional presence, and I think a great opportunity to increase the company's regional distribution points and build more of a network. This is a strategy that came a little bit later with MGM just over the past few years, and I think has the opportunity to grow.

Now we'll have to do it correctly. I mean, these are premium properties. We have #1 market share and the highest price points in every one of the regional properties in which we operate, perhaps with the exception of Yonkers. So it has to be the right type of property. But I certainly consider that an opportunity for the company if the right opportunity comes along, which is M&A in the regional markets.

As it relates to Las Vegas, I think we're all comfortable with the amount of exposure we have in the Las Vegas market and relative to our revenues elsewhere. In terms of development -- so that's kind of on the bricks and mortar M&A front, that's the way we see it right now.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: For the right opportunity or the right mix, would there be room to flex up Las Vegas? I mean, sort of have to ask given that I think we all believe there's a relatively large opportunity available out there. Could you fit those parameters? Would it be something where you could swap to something you think might fit better to the portfolio? You just want to change exposures elsewhere, perhaps at the lower end of the portfolio differently? Or is it really, no, look, our overall mix is comfortable, we're there across different price points, and we're going to look elsewhere?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Look, we're always looking at how to improve the portfolio and improve what's the variety and the quality of what's on offer. I just think on balance, we're comfortable with the level of exposure that we have here in Las Vegas. We wouldn't be -- and there have been a number of opportunities, both to increase and reduce our exposure in Las Vegas.

We did, let's not forget, we allocated over $2 billion to acquire the other half of CityCenter in a transaction that will close in just a couple of weeks. So we have, in a way we've increased our capital allocation to Las Vegas. But always try to improve the portfolio, probably comfortable with our overall level of exposure, rooms and et cetera, in Las Vegas right now.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Understood. And the other opportunity here would be in digital, right? So obviously, BetMGM is the vehicle that you have today to do this, which makes kind of controlling the M&A side of that or doing too much there right now, a little different, unless you were to look at buying in the whole opportunity. So how do you think about kind of the mix of wanting to probably get as much exposure as you can to the digital opportunity given what's going on in that landscape right now and how exciting it is, but balancing it with the vehicle that you have today? How do you kind of balance those priorities?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: The BetMGM venture, it's our joint venture as most people on the call I'm sure knows, it's our 50-50 JV with Entain. This JV was built to last. I mean it is exclusive. It's long term. It's 50-50 in every sense of the word. Entain generally provides the technology, we provide the brand, the retail, our retail books which were contributed to the venture and so on. The management team is excellent and they're performing exceptionally well in the market, both in the markets they're in right now as well as the new markets that are coming online even as we speak today.

They are our exclusive online sports betting and iGaming venture. So we really don't really give much time at all to the notion of doing anything outside of BetMGM. All of our efforts are with BetMGM. If you were to go out into the casino here at the Bellagio and approach 1 of our employees and shake them and say, "Who owns BetMGM?" They would probably say MGM. We don't try to draw any distinction here. We only own half of it and that kind of thing. We're all about just trying to bring all the resources of our company and our employees to that venture to make it as valuable as possible. And if it's valuable, then our 50% of it will be as valuable as possible. So there's really not much of a balance. I mean, we're all in with that venture. And fortunately, it's performing very well.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: I mean, the performance has been truly exceptional over the last 12 to 18 months. I think we all are really aware of that. So then -- I know this is generally difficult to comment on, but obviously, because it was public that an offer was made 9 months ago, can you at least sort of give us a sense of -- is that something that can be revisited by MGM? Is that a priority at some point to possibly think about? Or how do you kind of balance the opportunity to possibly control 100% of this joint venture with the other priorities that you've already talked about?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: I can claim some deniability around this since when I started in January, that transaction or potential transaction was announced and then ultimately didn't happen just as I got here. So I didn't really have any involvement in it back in 2020 when it was going on. I'll just kind of stay with what I said earlier, which is that really, the extent of our involvement with Entain is as a joint venture partner and working to make that business as successful as possible. And that's kind of where we are.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: You did mention the regional piece possibly being an opportunity. I mean one angle for that is expanding market access. Is that a priority that you can kind of add in your underwriting when you think about becoming most likely an opco partner for somebody in a transaction? But do you start thinking about the footprint? And again, Caesars, you came up through that organization, I mean, I think that idea of a hub-and-spoke model really stemmed -- really kind of, that was a lot of the foundation of Caesars. It's been a little different for MGM, but you've been perfectly situated for the states that have actually legalized. So it's kind of worked out. But moving forward, does that kind of venture into your underwriting?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes, there's no question, it does. I think it has to. And as time passes, we get better and better at forecasting and understanding what that -- what our ability would be to acquire customers online and ultimately monetize them not just through that online channel, but also through our retail channels. It's something that -- it's such an opportunity for MGM to become more effective at driving cross-property play between our regional markets and Las Vegas and within Las Vegas, something when I was at Caesars, we were just maniacal about doing, and there's a huge potential here at MGM.

And I think also as it relates to omnichannel, I think there's going to be a time, maybe not -- in the not-too-distant future, where instead of talking volume indicators like table drop and slot handle in Las Vegas or the regions, we'll be talking about average daily users across multiple channels online and offline across the MGM system. And so I think that that will certainly go into our underwriting, to the extent we have the opportunity to look at some of those new distribution points.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: It's really interesting you say it that way because it's sort of the last big strategy question I wanted to ask you was MGM has been tough to pin down, if we kind of really rewind over the last 10 years. You mentioned the transition that's been 5 years in motion, right? But there was also the 5 years of development to build up to that.

There's just always been a lot going on with this company. And now we're starting to see some elements of clarity and I'd love to kind of like kind of push that forward 5 or 10 years. If we look out 5 or 10 years, how would you describe the vision for the company in that kind of time frame? So today, we've made a lot of progress on kind of I think cleaning up the corporate structure a little bit. But yes, where are we going? Is that right? Are we talking omnichannel, kind of off-line/off-line? Are we talking a much more diversified portfolio as it relates to regional? And then maybe specifically, you mentioned how global fits into that, too.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes. Our vision here is, as Hornbuckle has articulated it, has been premier global gaming. And so what it doesn't say is, in some ways, as important as what it says. So the company I know in the past has flirted with nongaming instances of its brand. And we have, over the past 6 months, Bill and I and some of the members of the management team have been unwinding or shedding some of those investments. They're all small but they take financial resources, management resources, and we're getting out of those.

We talked about how we've been through the CityCenter deal, the MGP deal, kind of less financial engineering and more simplified and clear about what we are, which is an opco. The omnichannel right now is a -- more promise than substance at this point, just given the early days of it, but we feel like we're in a very good position with a leading brand, our brand with BetMGM.

And as I think about what this company needs to be, definitely the best-known brand, most trusted brand, in gaming, casual, high-end and hopefully in as many distribution points and the highest availability in this country, and then with integrated resorts and to the extent where it's regulated, online offerings internationally. I think realistically, the opportunity for integrated resorts is not going to be in a wide number of jurisdictions and the capital cost can be pretty extreme. But in our spots, Macau, Japan, we would expect to be a player there. Best brands, trusted brands, available anywhere, premier and gaming.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So that -- so let's transition into the kind of the core operational performance a little bit. We can start in 2 areas. I actually wanted to ask a couple of questions about online, but I also appreciate that's more that MGM's area than your own. So help me out with your comfort level there. And -- but just in terms of where we're headed, just would love your thoughts on maybe the full competitive landscape, right? Everybody is allocating capital to this vertical, you are as well as it relates to your investment in BetMGM. We're expecting a pretty big land grab for market share. So kind of -- what's your expectation for that marketing landscape? How is BetMGM going to defend some of its newfound strength and turf going into what we think is going to be a really competitive fall season in the digital sphere?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: It's difficult to overstate how critical day 1 performance is in these markets. And it's something I think that I certainly learned and I think our team, they probably knew it, but it was certainly amplified in the experience in Michigan back in January, just how important that day 1 launch is.

So our company, BetMGM, has been hands on-deck for Arizona for weeks now. And I think as a result, is going to get out of the gate very strongly in that state, South Dakota, Wyoming and on and on. So that's kind of the first thing that we do.

The second, and it's -- I think it's underrated, is the product quality itself. The -- how engaging, fun, easy to navigate, availability and so on of the product we believe -- they believe makes a difference. A lot of the moves that we've seen relating to media partnerships, we've looked at a lot of those, the BetMGM teams looked at a lot of those and passed on most of them. We think that they can -- we have more targeted ways to acquire customers than some of the media deals that we've all seen announced. So I think it's going to be product and then getting out of the gate strong are probably going to be the most important.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: And you were set up or certainly were named as one of the official partners for the NFL, I think it should allow you to advertise that through that channel. Is that a priority? Should we expect national media buying? Are you at a scale where that starts to make sense as a sort of another tool in the tool chest?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes, yes. There will be some of that, but I think it will be -- a lot of it will be through our MGM channels or M life channels. And probably a bit -- maybe less than some of the others on those national channels. But this is an area where I think I should defer to the management team at MGM themselves in terms of what they're -- how they're going to allocate their dollars.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Great. And maybe 1 last question. It was just -- it was a really interesting New York Consortium that we saw, right? That's one of those things that we just -- you just get to see. Just any thoughts about that development? And also some of your alignment on, I think, some ballot initiatives. What are you doing to kind of press the industry's ability? And I think that's what we're starting to see, is like the industry is starting to align to open up some major markets. So could you just talk about that? And where you think progress might be underestimated, where you see a really big opportunity in '22 or '23?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Well, I think you're talking about California, and of course the New York Consortium. I mean these are efforts that are meant to speak for the industry. And I'm enthusiastic about them. I think it makes a lot of sense. We have a lot of opportunity before us even without those states for sure, but those are 2 enormous opportunities, we think. And kind of making the bold moves that we've made with other large players, I think it's perfectly appropriate given the size of the market opportunity.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So let's reserve the remaining time here for some, hopefully, easier but also more important questions around the operational performance. So obviously, Las Vegas is in the midst of a dramatic recovery off of COVID. I think we all know the reasons why it was a little bit more delayed beyond the region, the reliance on the convention business, et cetera. But could you just help us, first of all, level set how big sort of a setback is COVID for -- or is the Delta variant kind of as it relates to the Las Vegas recovery broadly? Is this a major concern? Are you seeing cancellations and enough behavior that it could materially push back either a group recovery or the overall Strip's recovery? Or do you think this is a point in time. And yes, it might change by weeks or months, but probably not by much more than that?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: That's the way I see it. We've seen cancellations. I think others have as well. At the same time, we're seeing kind of near-record lead generation as it relates to group business. Now this is for '22 business largely. So the group, some of the midweek business that we had expected would be here in the late third and fourth quarter, has canceled. It's been largely filled by transient and FIT and leisure customers like we saw over the summertime. But none of this gives us any reason to think that '22 is going to be different from what we thought it was a couple of months ago.

I think there's some evidence in some parts of the country that this thing, this fourth wave is now peaking. I wouldn't be surprised if the same is said in Nevada and some of our closer feeder markets soon. But yes, it's caused -- and it's caused some companies to say, "Oh, we're not sure we're going to travel yet," and that's had some impact on the group business. But I wouldn't say it's that dramatic net for what we can backfill it with.

JAMES FORRISTALL KAYLER: Hey, Jonathan, talking about Vegas, I feel pre-COVID as a focus was so often on convention and group bookings. I've been kind of amazed by the gaming results. Each month, the last few months that have come out of the Nevada have been off the charts. I mean a couple of record months. I'm curious, your thoughts on sort of how sustainable that is? How much of it is just pent-up demand? How much of it is how all the operators there are marketing? Yes, just curious because we've seen this long-term trend kind of away from gaming towards nongaming business.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes, it was -- it's been pretty extraordinary, particularly the slot play from younger people over the past few months has been a standard deviation outside the norm. And my own view is that it does not represent a long-term change in behavior. There's a number of reasons that's happened. One is because these are the customers that were getting into the hotel who, in some cases, would have been yielded from the hotels with a stronger group base.

Another reason is there hasn't been, during those periods in late second quarter, as much for sale in other areas, some revenue centers, entertainment and night clubs and the rest were not open. So I'm in the camp that thinks that some of these behaviors will return to more normalized levels over time. But look, it's been -- it has been great for operators. These revenues come with high margins. Customers are coming, having a great time, and they're spending through the gaming offerings as opposed to some of the other offerings. I think that's great.

Our view is, though, as things normalize, earnings will grow because we do not yet have what we consider to be an optimal customer mix for profitability for MGM. And as we get more that kind of wider variety of customer segments midweek and weekend, then we're going to be able to increase earnings even over what we did in the second quarter, which was pretty extraordinary.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So Jonathan, there were some cost-reduction targets that sort of predated both, I think, COVID and your tenure. They seem to be sort of not so relevant in the world that we're at now where your margins are already structurally, I think step function higher than what we did before. So whether it's margins, whether it's kind of a reduction target, whether it's FTE count, whether it's just the margin itself, can you just help us think about what's the right run rate kind of profitability result of this, right? So we're going to have mix shift that may overshoot in the near term to gaming, that's a pretty high-margin profit center. But you still have hotel and group, which we also think is being pretty high margin that should be on the comp. What's the sustainability of the margin profile? You were a little bit more cautious in your guidance there. So just help us think about that?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes. We -- you're right, these actions took place largely before I got here. I've done the forensics and the review and the quality of the work has been -- and it's been fantastic and it's been roughly $400 million to $500 million of sustainable cost reductions, which for a company this size is 300, 450 basis points of margin improvement. And the second quarter, in the regions and in Vegas, we grew margins by about 1,000 basis points versus the same quarter in 2019. So kind of overshooting that goal for the reasons we've already talked about.

I am fully confident that the company can deliver margins 400 or 500 basis points higher than it was delivering back in 2019 based upon those cost reductions and additional learnings that the company has derived over the past 6 or 9 months from the pandemic. I do believe they'll come in a bit from where we posted in the second quarter as the business normalizes but I think earnings -- overall earnings will grow. I mean, in the second quarter, some of our key revenue centers were entertainment, food and beverage. We're still operating 10%, 20%, 30% below 2019 levels. And that will come back, that will hurt margins a bit, but it's going to grow earnings.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Last question, but we'll do lightning round to try and squeeze it in, would be just wanted your quick thoughts on free cash flow conversion, right? There's a lot of moving pieces in the MGM model. But as we boil it down and as we move more towards an OpCo-centric model, I think it's relatively straightforward between cash interest expense, maintenance capital, cash taxes and rent. So could you help us just think about the key buckets going forward? And what some good ranges might be for people once we sort of hit a little bit more steady state and not on the top line, but for those items that we should have better visibility on?

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Yes. The rent in this includes the CityCenter rent, will be $1.6 billion to $1.7 billion annually. Interest expense is about $220 million annually. And as I mentioned, we will likely be retiring some of that debt as it comes due. Capital expenses this year will be about $450 million. I think that's a pretty good number and about 1/3 of that is IT. And that may grow. That's a bit lumpy because so much of it is also due to room renovations and depending upon timing and the rest, can influence that number greatly. Cash taxes will not be a meaningful component or a free cash flow drain for 3 or 4 years due to the NOLs that the company has; and those are the major buckets.

And then funding for BetMGM -- this year, it will be about $450 million between us and our partner. And we don't expect that business to begin generating positive free cash flow until probably 2023. So there -- so that will be an investment for us over the next couple of years.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Fantastic. Thank you for squeezing that in. Great to see you, and really appreciate you kind of targeting the end of the day for us and helping us wrap up a successful conference. So great to see you and look forward to seeing you out in Las Vegas, hopefully soon.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Likewise, Thanks, Shaun. Thanks, James. Good to see you guys.

JAMES FORRISTALL KAYLER: Great see you.

JONATHAN S. HALKYARD: Okay. All right. Bye.

Document FNDW000020210910eh9900dky

DraftKings Inc at Bank of America Merrill LynchGaming and Lodging Conference (Virtual) - Final

5,945 words
9 September 2021
VIQ FD Disclosure
FNDW
English

Presentation

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY, MD, BOFA SECURITIES, RESEARCH DIVISION: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Shaun Kelley, the U.S. gaming and lodging analyst, and welcome to (technical difficulty) (Operator Instructions) We've been talking to people about the NFL league, so happy NFL league, Justin. And -- sorry, Jason, thank you, and thank you for joining us.

Questions and Answers

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So Jason, let's get started (technical difficulty) the acquisition, if we could. We're obviously able to kind of see and analyze this deal a little bit. But I think we can look at it. We'd love to maybe start with your position given all you are up to and everything you're doing. You certainly saw something I'd love to hear kind of in your own words, what made this makes sense, and then we'll take it from there.

JASON D. ROBINS, CO-FOUNDER, CHAIRMAN & CEO, DRAFTKINGS INC.: Yes, absolutely. And thanks again, Shaun, for posting us behind GNOG. It's pretty simple, which is we know that the iGaming TAM has at least 2 broad subsegments of customers call it the sports first, call it the iGaming TAM. And we knew that we were doing really well with that sports first customer, that motion of cross-selling from DFS into OSB and OSB into iGaming in the States where that is available.

And -- but we knew that we could do a lot more with that iGaming-first customer. And you saw that in Q2 of 2020, when we launched our standalone iGaming app and put a little bit of marketing behind some motions around attacking that iGaming-first customer. The traction was pretty good. But we probably came up for air and, call it, Q4 2020 and said, look, there's more to be had in that iGaming first -- the iGaming TAM.

We went through a process of thinking about where are the gaps, we felt very good about our product. And we said, well, look, I think it's really about a brand that resonates with that iGaming-first customer. We thought about -- then thought about building a brand, buying a brand, renting a brand.

And we were sort of looking at all those options in parallel when we thought about sort of doing research on what resonates. Golden Nugget really rose to the top of the list pretty quickly, especially when you marry that list with some type of actionability quotient and bada-bing bada-boom, we're off to the races on hunting that down.

So that really is the thesis, which is to go after that other part of the iGaming TAM. In terms of your question around it's a variety of things. First of all, they've got a great team, they're operators. They have been in market in New Jersey from the beginning, strong market share, so they know how to operate.

I think on a product side, but in differential on that live dealer capability. They figured out some things on live dealer early days, and we're excited about that part of this acquisition. And I think, look, back to that -- so it's team, product, brand and database, which go hand in hand.

Look, I think they've got -- Golden Nugget is an iconic American casino brand. It might not -- like a multitude of databases, the Golden Nugget databases, all of the databases within the broader Landry's, Fertitta complex. So I think all of those things were contributing to their success over the last few years. We're really excited.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Yes. So maybe we can just talk about the actual go-to-market strategy or vision here. Dual brand, and it seems like having that second brand resonance with that core gaming customer makes a lot of sense to keep.

So just walk us through the product road map of how this works. Is it effectively 1 technology and 2 skins that we see out there? What does that integration require and/or kind of -- and how do you market or put marketing dollars or allocate marketing dollars between now carrying 2 brands as opposed to 1?

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes, that's right. I mean -- So today, depending on the state, you've got the core legacy DraftKings, DFS an app, which, again, where applicable you've got to engage the in-app iGaming functionality.

And then you have the stand-alone iGaming, DraftKings casino app. In the future, we will just add a Golden Nugget branded app. And then the -- in terms of the product road map behind that golden nugget app, we will bring that on to -- we will attach our iGaming aggregator into the Golden Nugget front end.

And then in terms of marketing dollars, yes, we'll be deploying marketing spend behind the Golden Nugget brand. I think part of the synergy rationale is the efficacy of those dollars utilizing more of our pattern reconnoiter to make those marketing dollars work harder behind that Golden Nugget brand.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Perfect segue into the kind of cost savings potential here and you threw out or laid out some relatively large numbers as it relates to marketing and overhead. One key piece that we looked at was obviously maybe just the foundation of gaming, which is market access.

So maybe walk us through in terms of market access, how important is that piece of the savings in your kind of overall margin profile? Because I would assume it doesn't just apply obviously to gaming, it's also going to carry over to what you can do on sports.

And then what does that mean for the future? Is there additional opportunity for Golden Nugget to go out now expand in the land-based business and of course, they can contribute that market access to drafting.

JASON D. ROBINS: The retail rev share savings, whatever you want to call it, is an important part of it. No doubt the other parts around marketing and top line are going to be there. The COGS synergies are very real run into our iGaming back end. They're also within COGS is the ability to utilize the DraftKings homegrown games that have no rev share attached to it is very, very important to the economic synergies there.

But for sure, to your point, around the retail rev share, the skin savings, that's very exciting state legalization and to what extent will the -- will that even be required in future states. But for sure, we've had great rates agreed to as part of this -- the commercial agreement with them.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: And obviously, Golden Nugget was a leader in -- on the product side was a leader in live dealer, which has proved to be a bit of a killer app as it relates to the iGaming or online casino business. Evolution is sort of the market leader on the sort of product provider side. Can you just talk about the interplay with -- is Golden Nugget able to do something in a proprietary fashion? Or is it really reliant on their technology with something that GN is doing slightly different on the front end? Could you just break that product portfolio down a little bit and help clarify for people?

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes, absolutely. Well, first off, live dealer is super important statistically. We've proven it over and over again, the incrementality of live dealer and the consumer product within the iGaming product offering is very real.

So we're excited about it. Evo is a fantastic partner of ours today. And I think the best way to think about it is when you break that live dealer capability down, you've got a couple of components, right? You've got the physical studio which, depending on the jurisdiction, may require to be co-located within a [model] around that. You've got some sort of close technology around the table, and then you've got some software functionality.

What this transaction brings to us is some strength across all parts of that, certainly on the front end parts, that ability to have a studio with know-how around staffing with some of that close to the table technology. And I'm just excited that we've got some capabilities across those 4 broad pieces of live dealer that we can begin to build from.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Got it. That's helpful. And we -- the other area where we've had a lot of questions recently is obviously, this gives you a co-brand strategy as it relates to 2 slightly different verticals. But there's been a lot of discussion in the industry about the possibility of ESPN, which has been a big partner of yours and brand partner for somebody in a more cohesive fashion or a much larger fashion going forward, too.

Could you help us think through pros, cons around a larger scope and of an agreement with ESPN? Is that something that is in the cards could be attractive to draft games from here?

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes. I read the Wall Street Journal article just like you did and like everybody else did. What I'd tell you, Shaun, is we're going to in an opportunity like that, like we always do, which is a highly analytic NPV-based methodology, and we're going to look at the incremental LTVs and from the customers layering on any difference in demographics that, that brand might bring, offset by the economics of the transaction and that article has some big numbers in it.

So that's how -- that's what I'd say is we'd evaluate it. If we felt like it was a good NPV deal, then we might pursue it. I think there is an x factor here just on auditing in America. We know what's happening there. So I think that, that would need to be incorporated into the MPV model.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Before we get into a few other subjects, one sort of last one on strategy and M&A, which is kind of how does DraftKings approach sort of future customer brand acquisitions? We've seen sort of a multibrand approach permeate in Europe, and these have been quite successful.

But also you have a lot of market or sort of market-by-market diversification, right? A lot of local preferences to may be different between countries where the back-end technology might be better to leverage right, different languages. A little bit more homogenous than the United States theoretically, but you would know better than us.

So how do you kind of balance your scale with a lot of your marketing dollars where I think we're just starting to get to the tipping point what you can maybe do nationally there behind the DraftKings brand versus maybe more tactical approaches, well, look, you do have this back-end technology engine, you guys can leverage to segment that customer in lots of different ways?

JASON D. ROBINS: So right now, we're really excited about adding this brand to the family and certainly for the iGaming TAM. That's where we're focused right now is getting to close and integrating it beautifully and reaping those synergies that we underwrote. Broadly speaking, I think you're right, multi-brand, especially in iGaming, I should have mentioned this as part of the thesis earlier that iGaming world is a little bit, for lack of a better word, superstitious where people might say, "Oh, I play DraftKings Blackjack on Tuesdays, but I never play DraftKings Blackjack on Wednesday because I always lose. So having another brand gives you a better chance of capturing their Wednesday Blackjack market share, wallet share. But I think it's a big step for us, and we're going to hit and take it from there.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Yes, it's a good point. It's something we've noticed for years in the casino industry. Everybody has got a favorite slot machine somewhere, right? So let's start at the top, total addressable market, I think everybody's favorite subject or at least it was 18 months ago. One thing I've noticed as we've been watching the data really closely is out of Virginia. They're just putting up some pretty exceptional initial productivity levels when we think about I think the chosen metric, which is sort of a win per adult type numbers.

In some cases, these are probably hitting levels that we thought you might not hit for a couple of years, and we're hitting out of the gates levels that are probably already in line with the U.K. And yes, it's not New Jersey, but really, really productive out of the gate. So I would love to get your own sense of how these -- some of these states are debuting relative to DraftKings own expectation. You've obviously raised guidance I think, twice so far this year. So maybe 3x. So much of it is that versus your share, your products, et cetera?

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes. There's a lot in there. And let's stick with the win per adult or GGR per adult or gross revenue per adult. I think that's a fairly normalizing way to look at it. There's a -- there's quite a few things going on. So first off, I think the ramp is just accelerating. So if just the general American awareness of the category has changed dramatically over the last year.

So if -- in 2018, we sort of thought we'd get to this type of participation rate, you're just going to get there a little bit faster. But in addition to that, just the growth from existing units continues to be impressive, which is a combination of additional people joining the category as well as people engaging more frequently across products, across sports.

And so I think you're seeing the behavior people enjoy it, Americans love betting on sports. So I think I ramp point, Shaun, is an important one. I just think that broad awareness of the category is driving some of the more rapid early adoption when the state goes live.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: And let's break down that same state function because I think that's really important. Obviously, this kind of gets into your cohort analysis a little bit, which is pretty critical to, I think, how you're analyzing your own business. But what is that balance a little bit between what you're seeing on the sort of monthly unique players so that just new people entering the system? And let's think same state to same state versus what are you seeing on those people spending more gambling with you more because I'm sure your own algorithms, your own product capabilities are growing. You're able to offer them more options at the right time to bet on and you probably were 3, 6, 9 months ago.

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes. Yes. I think it's certainly both right now. The number of people participating in the category continues to grow, and that's, call it, more of a macro function. But the ARPMUP element, the engagement, the monetization part is much more in our control, where we can, through data science, utilize some techniques that introduce a new sport, an MLB better might be very inclined to start betting on the PGA.

And I could think of an MMA or UFC better who wasn't actually that big of an NFL thing. On the ARPMUP side, I think the ARPMUP, the impact of declining promotional intensity in a more mature state impacts ARPMUP as well. So right now, it's a combination of both for sure. But I think we can control ARPMUP and the levers that we pull. We're excited about the engagement and the monetization elements, the cross-sell -- the cross product offerings and then the cross-sell like sport cross-sell within the OSB and then even within iGaming getting that Blackjack player to place his hands on perhaps Baccarat too.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: And for those investors that are a little newer to the space, we get this question occasionally, but -- Is there any risk that when we see these really elevated levels of marketing spend and you talked about the awareness in the CAS, some of that starts normalize and even possibly pull back on a dollars basis. Just how confident can investors be that you're not sort of overearning because of the amount of promotional dollars that are in there and really talking about on a revenue basis rather than a profitability basis, but just sort of overstimulating the market.

What are you kind of looking at in your own cohort analysis that gives you confidence that, you know what, as we dial these figures back, that customer stays with us. These LTVs are real.

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes. Well, I think it's a few things going on there. I think that it is an inherently sticky product category. It's big picture. It's part of the entertainment budget of American family or an American unit. And I think it's like a very high return source of entertainment spend.

So it is highly sticky. And I think for us, we've disclosed some of those customer and revenue retention rates that have been early proof points that people enjoy staying with DraftKings. And yes, there might be some crazy promotions from other -- our players come home. They come home to DraftKings, which is the product, the app that they love because of real genuine product differentiation.

And that could be, when I say product differentiation, that could be breadth of products, that could be wagering opportunities that could be the data science that I referred to, which is it's very personalized and customized. It could be deposits and withdrawals and overall customer experience, which in our mind is all part of product and tech.

So what we're seeing is that this is something that people enjoy. It's part of their entertainment budget. And because of what we do in product and tech, they stick with us.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So sort of the perfect segue into product and tech. So let's go there. I wanted to ask around, I think if there's one thing that's synonymous with product at the moment, it's all the discussion around Same Game Parlay. So can we talk a little bit about the ability of a single product like that to have a meaningful impact? And maybe you can just give the flash commercial, obviously, DraftKings signed an important agreement with Genius Sports to be able to offer this for the upcoming NFL season? So a, kind of how does that agreement work or what can you kind of help us understand a little bit better about that? And then b, how important can that be? I mean, can that make up a material -- can one product like that make up a material portion of revenue coming into the NFL season?

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes, yes. It's a great question. So maybe what I'll say is, like, first off, completing this vertical integration was such a big milestone for DraftKings in 2021. On the earnings call, I had to use the term substantially complete because we still had one state and were lingering out there, but that is over the goal line. So we are complete now.

And one question I get a lot is, well, if you're vertically integrated why do you need Genius. And the answer is, no, no, we couldn't have even rented if we were not vertically integrated. So being vertically integrated really allows you to bring that -- those innovative products to our customers. And to be clear, Same Game Parlay was a catch up to the other 2 folks who are vertically integrated here.

And so I think the right way to think about it is, okay, we're done with the vertical integration. They're listening to the customers about what the customers want and making a decision on whether to rent or build it, you're looking at e-coms, you're looking at speed to market, we decided to rent it for now.

We'll watch it, and we'll make a decision on build by rent periodically. But now sort of the worlds are (inaudible) on innovation and what we can now bring to customers, things that they tell us that they want and bring to them, things that they get, but we'll bring it to them because we're pretty sure they're going to like it when we get it.

And that really speaks to the test and control sort of mindset at DraftKings, which is we're going to test things that we think customers like constantly. And when we see the pickup in the activity, then we know that it's ready for rollout.

So I'm not sure I answered all your questions on [pros and cons], but what I can tell you is we made a very informed economic decision and speed to market matter. We had to catch up to our competition on Same Game Parlay, but now that we're catching up, we're ready to leapfrog.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Sounds great. And I imagine how quickly -- and let's kind of convert over to the SBTech piece then. How quickly can you be in market launching, testing and iterating? Did you have things already sort of lined up in the funnel that you wanted to do but you needed to have this conversion on first? Or is that something more that's going to be beyond, let's call it, this NFL season to really kind of, let's say, maybe have a hit product or try something really aggressive and new?

JASON D. ROBINS: We've got our product road map, our product management team has got a long list of things that we plan to bring and I think you're right. One approach is to think of product, but there's also a variety of back-end things that matter to the customer a lot in terms of their overall app experience, so we're going to be bringing those live if we haven't already. We are doing -- we're just constantly improving on the products and tech. What was I -- what was the second part of your question?

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: I mean, really just trying to kind of understand the -- but the ability to bring new products to market quickly and like either is that something -- do you think we can see an impact from that on the front end -- maybe on the top line this year? Or is that more of a 2020 kind of, let's call it, post NFL season impact?

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes, I think it's going to start with some of the things that we brought that we -- it's still early since we launched Same Game Parlay. So we got to continue to look at the data and look at the financial impact and how much of that was incremental versus spreading existing play across different products with new product offerings, and we're still evaluating that. But I think the most important thing is we're just set up. We're just set up for a lifetime of staying ahead of competition and giving our customers what they want.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: And obviously, the material gross margin savings here and 3Q is kind of the magic point, I think, for that to actually kick in. So can you remind everyone what kind of incremental savings this can mean for you when you think about the actual dollars that you need to spend effectively it can be for the product and services that now is ...

JASON D. ROBINS: It's so meaningful, if you go to our Investor Day materials from Q1 of 2020 and 2021, where we talk about our long-term EBITDA, we specifically call out an element of the waterfall that's the synergy at maturity. So it really gets to be a big, big number over the years. In the very short term, the way to think about it, I think we've disclosed a third-party rented bet engine is roughly 10% of NGR, net revenue.

I would remind people of 2 things. One, that's only relevant, that savings is only relevant to the OSB portion of our total revenues. So we do have iGaming, we do have DFS. So do not apply that to all the revenues, only apply that to the OSB portion of the gap pretty much immediately in Q4 since we pay [CAM] through Q3, even though we've fully migrated already. And then the other thing I'd remind people is that under -- when you get under the covers, the gross margin rate is not only the sum product of our different product offerings but of every state.

So to the extent that new states are launching, where the gross margin rate is suppressed due to the promotional intensity when a new state launches and certainly exacerbated by an NFL, but the commencement of an NFL season, you got to sort of pick apart all of that, too. But purely clinically, it's, call it, 10% of NGR for OSB is the benefit.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Great. Let's -- so if we kind of hit on product and COGS, let's go a layer deeper on to the marketing and customer. One concern, I think, has had its moment and maybe we've already passed that given sort of the way that the stocks are looking forward to, I think, the start of the sports season here is the coming competition in the vertical, right? We heard from Caesars earlier today. It's a dramatic amount that they're looking to spend. We know Wynn is lined up here to spend substantial amount, Rush Street, Betway, the list is going to go on and on.

And help us think about, first of all, just with maybe a basic timing question because we get this a lot. When you've got these bigger broadcast deals you're starting to reach international or maybe cross regional marketing, when is the actual just dollar numbers go out the door.

So is that all perfectly aligned with when the customer is seeing the commercial? Or are you spending that in advance, i.e., let's say, Q3 is more loaded. Q4 balances are allocated -- actually already spent the dollars in advance for media buys. Just help us understand kind of like the timing. We can talk about like the magnitude.

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes. Well, the spend is going to depend on the channel, whether that's digital, out-of-home broadcast. It's going to be a wide variety Shaun, of stuff that we're booking well in advance for stuff that's not happening until November. Stuff that we're buying on the spot sort of today for some of the more digital things buying today for today. So it really does run the sort of different lead times of what -- of spend that's committed spend that will be expensed in period depending on the type of the ...

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Can you just say the committed spend for like, let's say, a big advertising, a big national media buy. Does that -- is that as expenses incurred? Or is that expensed when you actually like run the commercial?

JASON D. ROBINS: It will be expensed when the expense -- when it's matched with the actual activity that was...

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Okay. So it's not done in event. It does match with the timing of when you're in market with whatever that advertisement might be.

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes. Right.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Okay. Got it. And then the other area here would be helping us kind of get a sense of competitive environment, right? So you, I think, run very disciplined, pretty numerical kind of formulaic approach. You're going to allocate dollars across channels, you're going to test and learn and figure out which channel is the best for allocating that spend. But I guess the question is like if everybody is out competing and presumably, they're using many of the similar acquisition cost.

And if that happens, then how do you adjust your model? How does your spend react to an environment or like, say, everybody is betting on a set of keywords or everybody is trying to hit the gold rush for NFL this fall.

JASON D. ROBINS: Yes. There's a lot in there. And what I'd tell you, I mean, probably the most pertinent thing is our marketing team is not feeling the impact of competitive spend today nor has it over the last few months. I think there could be a few things going on there.

One, which is when you take a big step back and you think about this category of spend as a percentage of the entire universe, it's still pretty small. I think it could be attributed to just the sophistication and the pattern over the decade of targeting this demographic and knowing what works and what doesn't work. And there's a level of pattern recognition and sophistication that I think we have on that front. So we're not feeling it.

And I would remind people that, yes, I mean, I hear the same things you hear. We have a plan. We had a plan, call it, fourth of July, pretty darn our NFL launch and then we heard this. We didn't really change, right?

We -- to your point, we're super quantitative and disciplined. We have a CAC allowance, a ceiling that we're continuing to be able to be at or below that. And so we're not feeling it. And this isn't the first NFL season where we've seen lots of new competition in Q3 2019.

I want to say we went from 6 or 7 online sports betting operators in New Jersey to somewhere in the mid- to high teens. And we gained market share in September, October that year. So it's not new to us, and it doesn't really impact how we think about our ...

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So then kind of the other piece of this is we do seem like we're rapidly approaching with some of the new state legalizations, that 30% threshold for national marketing. So can you help us understand that priority? Are we going to see a meaningful effort there this fall? Or does that really kick in, in '22 and beyond as these states actually kind of because right like I said, we're right on the edge of a problem.

JASON D. ROBINS: You're exactly right. We're right at the edge. We do have a good number of states in that bucket that I call legalized pending launch. And boy, is that hard to know exactly what they were going to go live, Arizona today.

So we're right at the cusp, and that means that you'll begin to see some national advertising this NFL season from DraftKings. But it will not be sort of a full shift. It will be just a mix -- a gradual mix shift as a percentage of the U.S. population increases.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So as aggressive as DFS back in the day where every other commercial was -- DraftKings are we going to paint the town like that or maybe not the same.

JASON D. ROBINS: No, I don't think -- I don't it'll be quite like that. I wasn't here back then.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Very last question for you. Just name a new state, one that either you're going into, you just launched? What's most exciting to you that you think is a market that might be underappreciated by investors out there every month? What are we going to be looking back saying, man, we should have known that?

JASON D. ROBINS: That's a great one, Shaun. Wyoming and Arizona are 2 most recent. We've got a whole bunch in the Hopper, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maryland, Ontario, sure I'm forgetting a few. So I think we're excited about all of them. It's -- we'll spend accordingly. We'll just apply that same playbook of LTV to CAC and adjust the dollar amounts accordingly.

I think to me is the consistency in how we launch in a new state that we have -- we get better. We learn every time we launch a new state, but the core of what we do in the weeks leading up to the day that it goes live in the 24, 48, 72 hours after we go getting reps and getting better and stronger every time we launch a new state. I think that's what's most exciting to me.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: I think it's a perfect way to end it. And on a day where you launched the state this morning and hopefully, you'll be watching the game tonight. So thank you, Jason. Really appreciate this. We know it's a very busy time for DraftKings. I think there's an announcement virtually next ones will be and a great dialogue and hopefully, a very productive season this fall.

JASON D. ROBINS: Well, great to see you, Shaun. Thanks for the good questions.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Thanks, everyone.

Document FNDW000020210910eh9900d1i

Marriott International Inc at Bank of America Merrill LynchGaming and Lodging Conference (Virtual) - Final

6,337 words
9 September 2021
VIQ FD Disclosure
FNDW
English

Presentation

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY, MD, BOFA SECURITIES, RESEARCH DIVISION: Great. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our next session. I'm Shaun Kelley, the U.S. Gaming and Lodging research analyst at Bank of America.

Our next conversation is with Marriott International. (Operator Instructions)

So let's get that off the ground. It's my pleasure to welcome Marriott's Chief Executive Officer, Tony Capuano. Tony, this is your first time doing this event with us. And hopefully, the last time we do it virtually. So we'll hopefully be in first and next time. But you're joining us from beautiful Rome.

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO, CEO & DIRECTOR, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, INC.: I am.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: And so this is the benefit of virtuality is there's no way we could have you if we didn't do it this way. So glad to have you and thanks for joining us.

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Well, thanks for the invitation. Great to see you at least on video, Shaun. And as much as I'd like to be in person, it's great to be back in Europe and talking to you from here where business continues to improve.

Questions and Answers

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Fantastic. So let's just hit it off right there. Obviously, we've -- the big question marks out there relate a lot about the current trajectory of everything going on with the travel recovery. Maybe we can just start with the kind of the big question, I think, in everyone's mind, which is going to be the pattern of sequential RevPAR improvement and possibly the impact of the Delta variant from what we've seen out there. Obviously, it's a little delicate, but we do all have access to kind of the reported RevPAR numbers through the end of the balance of August. So what can you help us kind of understand about travel behavior as we sit here today versus maybe where we were sitting 6 to 8 weeks ago before Delta was as pronounced of a concern out there as it is today?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Let me frame my response maybe with some broad global statistics, and then I'll try to get a little more granular. As you pointed out, you've seen the numbers. Our global RevPAR in July was down about 23% when we compare to 2019, which was a marked improvement over what we saw in June where we were down roughly 38%.

Now as the August numbers come in, we've seen a slight retrenchment. We think the August numbers will land at about 27% down versus 2019, probably a little bit of Delta impact there, but we are seeing some stabilization in the early days of September.

And if I start to move around the world, without question, China saw the biggest impact in August. We had an incredibly strong second quarter in China as Leeny and I shared on the earnings call, but we saw a spike in COVID infections in August. You saw a pretty stringent lockdown put in place really in over 150 markets across China, and that obviously impeded the pace of recovery. We saw a RevPAR decline of about 50% in Mainland China in August when you compare it to August of '19. And remember, that was in comparison to being up about 9% in July versus '19.

Now the good news is, and you've heard me talk about this before, Shaun, one of the great benefits of our business is we can look at these trends in real time. And so now that most of the restrictions have been lifted, we expect to see demand continue to rebound quite quickly across those 150 markets.

In the U.S. and Canada, August RevPAR was down about 21% versus '19, which is a little worse than what we saw in July where we saw about a 17% gap. But again, the trend seem to be stabilizing as we get into the early days of September.

If you move around the rest of the world, you almost have to go market by market. I'm at the end of a 2-week trip through Europe. I was in Germany last week, in Italy this week. And it's interesting, I was with our Italy team earlier this week. You look at July and August here in Italy, we were running between 40% and 50% across our Italian portfolio, which is a strong improvement over what we saw just a few months ago. And rate was actually above where we were in '19 for July and August. So that's quite encouraging. And even in markets like India, which, obviously, had been heavily impacted by the pandemic, as those numbers start to plateau, we're seeing some steady improvement in that market as well.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So Tony, let's go a little higher level then. I think what we're really trying to get to is the broader shape of how this recovery plays out. We kind of sit here at a crossroads, we've got Delta, but we would also have the roll off of leisure and sort of the return-to-office trend. We were hoping it would probably be a little bit more pronounced than it is in September.

So just help us think about sort of level set expectations for us into kind of the back half of the year here. Coming off of these levels, what makes sense for people to expect as we look out for the balance of the year? What can you see in your booking curves? And just what's a reasonable expectation for maybe the exit rate? And is it any worse than probably what you were thinking 6 to 8 weeks ago? Or is it roughly similar?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Well, Sean, I might frustrate you a little bit because we continue -- as we look into that crystal ball, it's probably a little more opaque than any of us might like. I would say, broadly, we're pleased with the momentum we're seeing in the recovery, and our confidence continues to grow about strong long-term return of travel across all segments. But again, as I mentioned earlier, the pace and the shape of that recovery curve vary sometimes significantly from market to market.

And so we continue internally to talk about when, not if, and we ask that question by market. I think we're encouraged by what we saw in China. I think during one of the earnings calls, we shared with you some statistics from April where we saw in China, not only a return to pre-pandemic levels of demand, but a return to pre-pandemic levels of demand across each of the segments. And I think at the time, what I said on the earnings call was, that gave us perhaps a road map about how we might see demand recover in other markets around the world.

Certainly, when you look at the potential impact of the Delta variant, the impact that's had on the timing of a return to the office, it is possible that we may not see business transient demand return as quickly as we might have hoped post-Labor Day. But again, it's early to tell. The booking window for business transient is so short right now that it's really tough to know how much of a bump in the road, a delay of a return to the office might really represent.

On the flip side, the federal government's decision to give full approval to the Pfizer vaccine, we think, is great news for us. More and more school districts across the country returning to in-person schooling, we think, is great news for us. And so we continue to be optimistic, if not a bit frustrated, about having -- not having better visibility into the precise timing of the return.

I can tell you, I've been on the road a ton over the last month, 45 days. As I'm talking to our customers, they are increasingly anxious to get back on the road, I think, particularly in categories that are client service focused. So whether that's law firms, accounting firms, consulting firms. As I talk with their partners, they are anxious to get back out in front of their clients.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So probably the best place to maybe end the kind of current trajectory piece to ask a little bit about that last comment, we continue to see the sort of ping pong ball move between the idea of structural impairment to corporate behavior and going back to normal just as it would have been. And I think some of that optimism that we were seeing maybe early in the summer did meet with a little bit more concerns around these delays on the return-to-office pattern that we've seen, some major corporations pushing back to the end of the year.

And so I guess, as you look at it, is there anything in those conversations that you think is changing that maybe the double dip has further embedded them as it relates to technology or behavior? Do you really think that at least in the major pieces of the business transient landscape, this will come back with the cycle, with the corporate profit activity as the Delta variant sort of fades into the next wave?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: The one comment I might make in response to that, and as we -- as I mentioned to you before, we went live here, in some ways, I'm the perfect illustration of this. While I am very optimistic about the return of business travel, I do think it may look a little different. And there are 2 trends that we've started to see emerge that I actually think will endure well beyond the end of the pandemic, both of which, I think, are good news for our business. And so use my trip to these last 2 weeks as an example.

Number one, I've probably been attending the IHIF Investment Conference in Berlin for the last 15 or 20 years. And my guess is, if I look back over my calendars, I would fly in overnight from D.C. I'd spend 2 days in

Berlin and I'd fly right back. This time, I thought, if I'm making the trip across, if I'm getting my vaccine status notification in place, I'm going to extend that trip. So I'm actually here in Europe for 2 weeks.

The other trend you've heard me talk about in the past is this notion of blending of trip purpose. And again, I did the same thing. I spent a week in Germany. My wife came over. I spent a couple of days of leisure in Italy. She flew home and then I came on to Venice and Rome to pick that business trip back up. And so I continue to believe business travel will come back. It just might be a little more difficult for you and I to sit in the lobby of one of our hotels and know with absolute certainty every guest that walks by. Are they a business traveler? Are they a leisure traveler? Or are they a group meeting attendee? Or more likely some blend of some or all of those trip purposes.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So I'm going to bounce around a little bit on our topics, but I think this is an important one, right? Obviously, near and dear to your heart is development and development ties well into brands and kind of how you really grow the size and the flywheel of what Marriott is today. So how do you lean into this blending of trip concept, right? So I think one area where you've been really ahead of the curve and dynamic is with what you're doing in homes and villas. But what are you doing being on the brand front or on the -- working with owners? What are you starting to flex a little bit to try and, I guess, make the hotel product of yesterday meet the sort of new travel needs of tomorrow? Because I agree with you, I think my own needs, my own desires, they tweaked a little bit and the pressure to maybe rush back is different. You're still going to be present, but you're also going to be trying to balance that out differently than maybe we did previously.

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: It's a great point. And the good news from Marriott's perspective, because these are big physical assets, it's -- you can't, with a snap of your fingers, transform the physical asset necessarily. But what that means is we rely on the resourcefulness and the adaptability of our associates around the world, and that's a bet I'm really comfortable making. As I travel around the world, I see the creativity and the -- again, the adaptability that you're seeing from our team. So whether that is better arming our concierge desks to make sure they understand they may have more leisure guests in a hotel that has historically been heavily weighted towards business travelers, and making sure they're armed to provide the sorts of information that, that leisure traveler demands. Maybe being a bit more creative on the offerings that we have in our food and beverage outlets, in our room service menus, again, to try and tailor a little more.

I was at one of our hotels that had gone out and acquired a bunch of bicycles to make available to leisure travelers that wanted to explore that city. And so I think it will be more on the need anticipation and the service delivery side, which is a place where I'm very comfortable in the ability of our associates around the world to not only meet, but really exceed the expectations of that evolving traveler.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Great. Well, let's stick with the sort of growth and development side a little bit, but get into more traditional metrics that you and I both know. Let's talk about signings and development activity a little bit. What are your latest conversations right now with developers looking like? And how -- and also maybe just your thoughts on the conversion activity out there. Obviously, this time of the cycle tends to lend itself to that activity as there's a lot of volatility. So just maybe start with both of those areas.

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Of course. And maybe if it's okay, I'll go in reverse order. I think on the deal signings and the conversion impact side, as you heard in the second quarter earnings call, we had really strong openings through the first half of the year, and about 1/3 of those openings were conversions, which is a very high percentage for us relative to historical averages. Maybe not a huge surprise, but a really encouraging set of data. We are armed with the best set of conversion brands across multiple price tiers that maybe we've ever had in our history, and those seem to really be resonating with our development partners.

On to your first question, as I said, I was at IHIF, which is the biggest development conference in Europe. I can tell you that in a really positive way, my dance card was full. I had 23 owner meetings during the 2 days that I was in Berlin, owners who are increasingly confident that they have weathered the storm, feeling better about the manner in which they've stabilized their balance sheets, feeling good about the discussions they're having with their lenders, feeling like as demand recovers their liquidity is improving. And they are much more active than even a quarter or 2 ago in terms of the volume of deals that they're talking to us about, both on the new build side and the conversion side.

Now admittedly, as you point out, given some of the continued constriction we see in the debt markets for new construction, maybe the conversations are a little more heavily weighted on the conversion side, but very active discussions. We had about 1,300 attendees at IHIF. And in a very good way, it felt a little more normal, the same sort of pace of discussions that we've enjoyed over the last couple of years.

Now it's obviously incumbent on our teams to take those really encouraging discussions and ensure that they translate into signings and, ultimately, openings. But the tenor of the conversation was quite encouraging to me.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So if the lead pattern is certainly there and obviously you've got the brand portfolio necessary for conversion, let's translate that a little bit into the kind of the ultimate number, which is either gross unit growth or NUG a little bit for those who are into the industry parlance. Just help us think about '22 versus '20 -- versus '21 in terms of how all this crystallizes for Marriott. Obviously, there's a little noise with the SEC portfolio and some of those exits or that transition. But sort of on an apples-to-apples basis, help us understand because you do specialize in some of these larger full service. We know high dollar and high fee type hotels. Does that lag in construction activity weigh on net unit growth into '22? Is there any way you can repeat what you've done in '21? Does that last into '22? How long does that tail before we start to see the next cycle and some of that optimism play through the actual numbers that you're posting?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Yes. And I'm going to give you a little bit different version of my earlier answer. It's -- while we're seeing lots of encouraging signs, the murkiness as we get much beyond the end of the year, makes it a little challenging for us to give you a lot of detailed forecast data into '22. What I can tell you is we are increasingly confident in the -- both gross and net unit growth percentages guidance that we've given you through the end of '21. As you point out, we've got that roughly 100 basis points headwind from the SVC portfolio, which we think is a onetime event. If you exclude that from the calculation, we would have guided to about 4.5% net unit growth here in '21.

And again, what gives us lots of optimism as we peer into '22, I think it's 2 things. Number one, we continue to have a pipeline of nearly 500,000 rooms with well north of 200,000 rooms under construction, which I think is a really terrific and encouraging leading indicator. And I also think that statistic I shared with you earlier about the front half of '21 and the volume of conversion activity we saw. Even if the debt markets continue to open a little more slowly than we might like for new builds, that pace of conversion volume should give us lots of optimism as we look beyond the end of '21.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Great. Let's kind of move on to another tangential to this, which is Marriott, historically, had been actually pretty active on the M&A front, sort of combining new brands -- acquiring new brands that way and obviously rolling them out through your own distribution network. So we started to see, at this point in the cycle, a little bit of activity. We saw a major deal in the all-inclusive and resort space, in particular, which is an area that you also, I believe, had an announcement relatively recently. So can we talk about that type of activity out there? Are you seeing opportunities present themselves? And is this still an area where Marriott would look to grow the portfolio? Or do you want to really focus on the brand family that you have and drive growth through existing brands?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Well, most certainly, right now, we remain pretty focused on deleveraging. As we've said on the earnings call, our priority is really to maintain our investment-grade rating. And as the recovery continues to unfold, we are increasingly confident in our ability to achieve that goal. But make no mistake, if the right opportunity presents itself, we will certainly evaluate that deal based on its merits. I don't think you should expect us to look at those sorts of deals just to get growth for growth's sake. But if you look -- while the Starwood transaction rightly often consumes this conversation. If you look at the 3 or 4 years before the Starwood transaction, we had a fairly steady cadence of smaller M&A deals, and they all tended to share similar attributes.

In some cases, they filled a strategic gap in our geographic distribution. So I think about deals like AC Hotels in Spain, Protea Hotels in Africa. Often, these transactions also gave us a growth platform that we thought had either regional or, in some cases, global growth opportunities. And maybe AC is the best illustration of that when you look at the momentum we have now growing AC on a global basis. So we'll look at those opportunities. We will balance our desire to maintain our investment-grade rating. And we'll use the same rigor and financial discipline that we've used for as long as we've been looking at M&A deals to evaluate those through the lens of geographic imperative and creation of new growth platforms.

But I do think embedded in your question was a comment about the current brand portfolio. And I would tell you, we are thrilled with the breadth of choice that, that portfolio offers. And we're really thrilled with that breadth of choice for 2 equally important constituents. Clearly, breadth of choice helps us drive loyalty with our guests, but it also helps us drive loyalty with our owners and franchisees who really need not look beyond the breadth of our portfolio to continue to expand their development pipeline.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: One other area I want to take this into is your thoughts on something, maybe perhaps a little bit more transformative. We're now 4 or 5 years removed from Starwood. And obviously, it was a major lift. We all know about the integrations necessary to combine 2 large and such well-known brands. But Marriott's not been afraid to take risk over the sort of 2 decades that at least I'm familiar with analyzing company. I know you've been around for many more decades than that. And it's one thing that fascinates me as a business that has that type of history is one that you'll actually take those types of risks.

So maybe a big picture question, but as sort of the new leader and the new CEO of the business, one area that we view Marriott is heading into and sort of controlling right now is obviously distribution for its partners. Is there the option or have you thought about the idea of doing something more transformative on the distribution landscape? And just help us think big picture about the opportunities that could be out there. Should we be thinking more broadly? And I'm not saying now or a year from now, but maybe the next decade, thinking a little differently then, oh, we're just going to do a brand that has these 4-wall boxes because it does feel like people in the travel landscape, particularly some big -- some very, very large companies, some very large market cap are thinking differently about the traditional definition of a stay.

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Maybe the way I'll answer that is to use a phrase that I think I've been using with increasing frequency, and that's this notion of business adjacencies. Certainly, our core lodging band business, excuse me, drives the vast, vast majority of the company's EBITDA is the foundation of everything we do, and we'll continue to do everything in our power to enhance its performance and grow its footprint. With that said, I think about the last 16 to 18 months, and thank goodness we've continued to explore and advance some of these business adjacencies.

So I'll give you a few examples. I'm not sure anyone would have faulted us for hitting the pause button over the last 1.5 years and saying, just stay laser-focused on demand recovery. And while that's been at the top of our priority list, during that period, we launched new branded credit card programs in markets like Mexico and South Korea. Here in the U.S., we launched a new partnership with Bonvoy and Uber. We launched just recently a new travel insurance product that's available to purchase through our websites with our partner.

Interestingly, last year, while enormously challenging for our core lodging business, was one of the most successful years we've ever had with our branded residential business. And so I look at all these adjacencies, and I think it behooves us to continue to evaluate other opportunities to identify adjacencies that we think dovetail well with our core lodging business and that, over time, can evolve into revenue streams for the company. How expansive the mouth of that funnel might be in terms of what we evaluate is certainly to be determined, but I think you should reasonably expect us to continue to explore adjacencies.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Great. Well, let's hit on a couple more things about the core business. I want to switch to operations for a moment, right? A huge topic and one that, as a manager of hotels, is certainly front and center for Marriott is staffing and inflation. So would love to get your thoughts on sort of the current environment for some of the staffing issues that we're hearing out there because, obviously, it's been challenging. I mean, first, operators dealt with the demand headwind, and now they go to reopen and you can't find the housekeepers. You need to drive the occupancy you want or you can't find the experienced staff to really run the hotel to the service standards that you're used to. So obviously, service is kind of quintessential to the Marriott bottle. How are you helping owners deal with these headwinds? And what are you actually seeing kind of on the front line right now as it relates to these concerns?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Particularly in those markets where we've seen the strongest demand recovery, that's perhaps where the staffing challenge is most acute, but we have to address it and we have to solve it because those are the markets where we have the best pricing power. But obviously, we can only satisfy our guests as we execute it with that pricing power if we're delivering the service that they've grown to expect in our brands. We are doing all sorts of things. We're obviously running job fairs. In some markets, we are offering onetime incentives to try and fill key staffing gaps.

The other thing, though, that I think we're doing -- and Shaun, I talked a little bit about this in my remarks in Berlin. This is a Marriott issue. I think it's an industry-wide issue. From Marriott's perspective, depending on which consultant you believe, you've seen a significant portion of the workforce in travel and tourism leave that industry segment perhaps permanently. And so we need to do, as an industry, a better job of spreading the narrative about what a compelling set of industries this is to build careers.

And certainly, at Marriott, that's a story that I'm enthusiastic and proud to tell. We've got a wonderful story to tell about the number of general managers we have across the system who started in hourly positions. And I think you'll see us ramp up our global communications efforts, our employer branding efforts, if you will, our presence on social media channels to make sure we're telling that story and make sure prospective associates understand the really remarkable opportunities they have at Marriott.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So I don't typically think of hotels as being sort of that bottom rung of employment, that first job, if you will. I've always thought of this being a more value-added place, a little bit higher up. But obviously, it's a big brush when you paint the kind of overall service and hospitality industry. And when we see the industry statistics out there on inflation or on open positions, the statistics are pretty daunting. So what level of concern are you hearing from owners back in? Is this like a deafening roar from your owners right now? Or is it a major concern and something that people are worried about, but a manageable risk in the grand scheme of everything, everyone in this industry has been through over the last 18 months?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: Yes. We're engaged -- one of the -- maybe one of the few positive byproducts of the challenges of the last 18 months, I would submit to you that we are more deeply engaged with our owners and franchisees on a regular basis. We've always been deeply engaged, but maybe the cadence of that has accelerated. And that is certainly to our great benefit, I hope, to the great benefit of our partners. They look at the phenomenon you described as 2 sides of the same coin. They are most certainly and appropriately concerned about wage inflation, particularly in those markets where the staffing challenges are most significant. At the same time, they look at the impact of inflation and they see it in the pricing power that we're seeing again in those markets where demand is recovering most quickly.

And I think really, the challenge they give us is you have, through the last 18 months, identified a long list of really compelling operating efficiencies. Help us understand how you can preserve as many of those efficiencies as possible going forward. And that's the dialogue we continue to have. I'll fly home from Europe this weekend and spend 2 full days in Washington with a broad cross-section of our U.S. owners and franchisees. And I think that will be a topic near the top of the agenda.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So a perfect segue and maybe the last 2 areas I'd like to touch on, which is could we elaborate a little bit on some of those brand standard changes and what's really on the table for owners here? One thing we hear about a lot is opt-in housekeeping at certain levels of brands, and it's not universal across the industry. It's probably not universal across any portfolio of brands. But is that something that is on the table for Marriott? And what other things might you be able to flex with or on that maybe previously hadn't been as front of mind in a more, let's call it, revenue-oriented environment?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: All the topics you described, we are in active discussions. We're talking about housekeeping protocols as you might expect. Our point of view is evolving. It is heavily informed by what we hear from both our owner community and our guests, and it varies by market and by quality tier.

Food and beverage, I think, falls into the same category. Are there efficiencies that we have identified? Are there modifications to our operating protocols that are resonating with our consumers that we think have legs even beyond the end of the pandemic? And again, these are the sorts of topics that will go deep with our owner community next week in Washington.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: So it sounds like that one is kind of real time. With the remaining couple of minutes, I'd love to just hit on sort of the last piece of the algorithm. We've talked about top line. We've talked about either the net unit growth and the development side. But sort of the last leg of the stool for Marriott's business model and earnings we always think about is capital return. So obviously, the business in its heyday is highly cash generative by its nature. But help us think about, as we start to return to normal, and I think you've already alluded to the fact that deleveraging is the top priority, but help us think about where do you need to be to get to perhaps back to the kind of classic ID range you'd want to be, whether it's a specific leverage area. Or what do you need to be to actually start to pull again on a capital return lever? And have any of those priorities changed kind of post-pandemic relative to sort of the algorithm we used to see?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: So there's a lot in that question. I'll try and maybe parse my responses.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Sorry.

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: No, no. It's the right question to ask. I think, again, you've got a little bit of this murkiness. I will tell you that we continue to see strong progress in getting back to that kind of historical 3x to 3.5x leverage ratio. I think if we continue to see the sort of progress we've seen to date, I don't think it's unreasonable that we could be back to talking about return of capital sometime later in 2022.

But our philosophy remains the same, Shaun, and I don't think that will surprise you. We'll first invest in the business where we think the returns are going to exceed our cost of capital, and then we'll look to return excess cash to our shareholders. Whether that's through buybacks or dividends, we'll determine at that point in time. But I think the latter half of 2022, if the recovery continues the way we've seen it recently, I don't think that's an unreasonable expectation.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: We have a really broad swath of people on the line here. So just maybe the last kind of component, if I could sneak one in, would be dividends versus buybacks. Is it important to get back to a material dividend, let's call it, a yield above a certain threshold? Yes, I think usually, it's been maybe around 1% or a little bit above that. Is that an important priority for you as an executive or do you think for the right shareholder base going forward? And would the rest or excess possibly being targeted more towards buybacks? Or does that ratio change at all?

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: I don't think it will change materially. But again, until I've got my arms maybe a little more firmly around the pace at which we're going to get back to that leverage ratio, it's a bit hard to say.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Yes. I know it's early. So well, it may be early, and it's early here, but it's getting towards the afternoon there, and I believe you have some priorities for this afternoon. So I don't want to keep you from that any longer. Thank you for joining us, especially internationally. Glad the connection worked out. And again, your backdrop definitely trumps mind. So look forward to doing this again state side, hopefully, in person next year, Tony. Appreciate your time.

ANTHONY G. CAPUANO: I can't wait. And thanks again for the invitation. Great to see you, Shaun.

SHAUN CLISBY KELLEY: Thanks, everyone. Please stay tuned for our next panel. We should be live with Penn National shortly.

Document FNDW000020210910eh99003bh

MGM RESORTS INTERNATIONAL CFO TO SPEAK AT BANK OF AMERICA SECURITIES 2021 GAMING AND LODGING CONFERENCE

404 words
9 September 2021
ENP Newswire
ENPNEW
English

Release date - 08092021

LAS VEGAS, - MGM Resorts International (NYSE: MGM) will participate in the virtual Bank of America Securities 2021 Gaming and Lodging Conference on Thursday, September 9, 2021. MGM Resorts CFO Jonathan Halkyard will also speak at a session scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time. A live webcast of the session will be available under the Events & Presentations section of the MGM Investor Relations website at http://investors.mgmresorts.com.

About MGM Resorts International

MGM Resorts International (NYSE: MGM) is an S&P 500 global entertainment company with national and international locations featuring best-in-class hotels and casinos, state-of-the-art meetings and conference spaces, incredible live and theatrical entertainment experiences, and an extensive array of restaurant, nightlife and retail offerings. MGM Resorts creates immersive, iconic experiences through its suite of Las Vegas-inspired brands. The MGM Resorts portfolio encompasses 31 unique hotel and gaming destinations globally, including some of the most recognizable resort brands in the industry. The Company's 50/50 venture, BetMGM, LLC, offers U.S. sports betting and online gaming through market-leading brands, including BetMGM and partypoker. The Company is currently pursuing targeted expansion in Asia through the integrated resort opportunity in Japan. Through its 'Focused on What Matters: Embracing Humanity and Protecting the Planet' philosophy, MGM Resorts commits to creating a more sustainable future, while striving to make a bigger difference in the lives of its employees, guests, and in the communities where it operates. The global employees of MGM Resorts are proud of their company for being recognized as one of FORTUNE Magazine's World's Most Admired Companies. For more information, please visit us at www.mgmresorts.com. Please also connect with us @MGMResortsIntl on Twitter as well as Facebook and Instagram.

Statements in this release that are not historical facts are 'forward-looking' statements and 'safe harbor statements' under the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 that involve risks and/or uncertainties, including risks and/or uncertainties as described in the Company's public filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

CONTACTS:

Investment Community

News Media

CATHERINE PARK

BRIAN AHERN

Executive Director, Investor Relations

Director, Media Relations

cpark@mgmresorts.com

media@mgmresorts.com

SOURCE MGM Resorts International

[Editorial queries for this story should be sent to newswire@enpublishing.co.uk]

Document ENPNEW0020210909eh99000f0

InterContinental Hotels Group PLC at Bank of America Merrill LynchGaming and Lodging Conference (Virtual) - Final

6,030 words
7 September 2021
VIQ FD Disclosure
FNDW
English

Presentation

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN, DIRECTOR & RESEARCH ANALYST, BOFA SECURITIES, RESEARCH DIVISION: Hi, everyone, and thanks all for joining us today for our Gaming and Lodging Conference. For this session, we are happy to have IHG with us and to be joined by Paul Edgecliffe-Johnson, Group CFO and Group Head of Strategy at IHG. Hi, Paul. Thanks so much for being with us today.

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON, CFO, GROUP HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP PLC: Hi, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: So today is really about better understanding and getting your thoughts on the RevPAR recovery, net system growth and development and also about the brand strategy of the company. So just before to kick off, I just wanted to remind the audience, you will have the opportunity to ask questions. So if you want to, if you have any questions, please e-mail me or send me an IB chat.

Paul, I guess before going into questions, I guess you are going to start with a quick intro. As a reminder, you have reported your first half results early August. So please go ahead. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Thanks, Geoffrey, and thanks, everybody, for joining. So I would imagine that many of you over the last 18 months or so have spent less time in hotels than you used to. And so I'll do a bit of a refresher as to what IHG is. I'm sure you'll be very familiar with our brands, but let me just talk a little bit more about our business.

So we're a leading global hospitality company, nearly 900,000 rooms, 6,000 hotels in more than 100 countries. We've been around for 80 years or so, pipeline of 270,000 rooms, many of which are under construction. We have a portfolio of 16 brands. We have 4 categories that we operate the brands within: suites, essentials, premium and luxury. And we've recently added a new collection brand called Vignette as our 17th brand. And we'll come back to that, I'm sure, in Q&A. Two thirds of our system is in what we call mid-scale and upper mid-scale. We have the market-leading brand Holiday Inn Express. And 1/3 is across the upscale and luxury chain scales.

Our model is pretty much asset-light. And that's split 70-30 in terms of franchise versus managed. So we make a fee rather than owning the property. Less than 1% of our hotels are asset-heavy, whether owned or leased. And that's a very deliberate strategy. We used to own quite a lot of hotels, and we've sold them down over the last 20 years or so. Very geographically diverse, 58% of the current system is in the Americas, 25% is in our EMEA region and 17% in China. For our pipeline, though, it's actually much closer to parity across the 3 regions. China, in particular, is growing very fast. And of those 270,000 rooms that we have across the business, about 40% of them are currently under construction.

Whilst obviously we are in a global industry, it's worth noting that in terms of demand, we are mainly a domestic business. In an ordinary year, around 95% of our U.S. business is domestic. In China, it's about 80%. And in the EMEA region, it's more like 60%, but most of that is intra-regional travel. So for example, in our Gulf business is people shuffling backwards and forwards between the Emirates. So maybe different countries, but it's not very long-haul travel. We're 1 of the 3 majors in the industry. It's still a relatively fragmented industry. So although we are 1 of the top 3, we haven't bought that market share, so a lot still to go for. So we have a high-quality income stream that's based on fees, low utilization of capital to grow and a very resilient business. We generated cash flow last year despite our challenges and we're bouncing back quickly this year.

Just in terms of RevPAR, and I'm sure we'll come on and talk about this more. I'm sure, Geoffrey, you have some questions. Our RevPAR in the first half saw a very strong improvement. Second quarter was 36% down on the 2019 level. The first quarter had been 51% down. So you can see the trajectory of recovery there. And that be basically all of our peers. So as I said, we have a very resilient business. Greater China, second quarter RevPAR was down 16%. So obviously, there's been some COVID flare-up there, which have then impacted demand a bit as things have been shut down somewhat there. In EMEA, the second quarter

RevPAR was down 65%, but a lot of lockdowns are now being released, and we've seen a lot of demand come back into that market.

July, we saw further improvement after that second quarter improvement. And actually, in July, we said 50% of our hotels were actually above the 2019 level of demand. So in terms of how we grow as a business, there's 2 levers of growth really. It's growing our RevPAR and then it's adding new hotels into the system and it's our development activity. And at the first half, our gross system growth was up 5.1% from last year, but we've removed a lot of rooms. We have a program going on at the moment to remove some hotels in 2 large brands, Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza, which those hotels are not in a post-COVID world right or some of them aren't. So we're working with the owners to either see those hotels taken to the right level for a post-COVID world or to leave the system.

So there will be some exits from that, which means that our exit rate will be a little higher this year than it normally is. But what it also means though is in future years, we're going to see a lower level of removals or removals over the last, say, 4 years. And that's one of the things that holds back our total growth rate as you have hotels that open, hotels that leave. The hotels that leave had been about 2.2% of our system over the last 4 years or so pre-COVID. Going forward, we see it being around the 1.5% level. So if we get back to the same level of openings that we saw in 2019 with a 1.5% removal rate, then we'd be achieving industry-leading levels of net system growth, which is our ambition and which we absolutely expect to get back to in a few years' time.

In terms of profit and cash, we generated an EBIT of $188 million in the first half, and that was ahead of expectations. We did last year kick off a cost reduction program of $75 million, and we're well on track for that. So that's being delivered. Free cash flow for the first half was $147 million. This is a very cash-generative business. And that's just the nature of the model, generate a lot of cash, don't have to invest a lot back in to grow. And actually since listing the business as an independent company, we have returned $13.6 billion to shareholders through a combination of ordinary and special dividends.

So recovering fast, a lot of confidence in the future, a lot of growth from both growing RevPAR and adding new units in, got more brands that are coming, and we're very well positioned for the future. With that, Geoffrey, happy to take any questions.

Questions and Answers

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Amazing. Thanks, Paul. Maybe let's start with the cycle recovery and the RevPAR recovery. So as you said, of course, we've seen some improving RevPAR trends through the summer and you said in August, you had about 50% of your hotel achieving RevPAR above 2019 levels in July. But overall, can you give us your view on the trajectory of the RevPAR recovery, please?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: So the Americas, which is, as you know, our largest market, has had a phenomenally strong summer. July for the industry was the strongest July on record. And August has continued to be very, very strong for the industry. Rate recovered remarkably quickly. Demand has been very good. It is predominantly leisure demand. And there's a lot of people who want to travel. They love to travel. So a very strong July, a very strong August for the industry.

The question, of course, is going to be in the more business travel orientated months, the October, November time, and when there's probably a little less leisure demand out there. How much of the business, how much of the corporate and group has come back. Group, of course, is a small part of our demand, but corporate business travel is important to us and encouraging signs. We are seeing a return of bookings. Our bookings are good. And they're pretty much at par with where they were back in 2019 on forward bookings. So a lot of positive indicators, but until guests turn up and stay with you, you don't know that they haven't canceled or something can happen so, but we see a lot of signs that make us confident in the future. Of course, we also remain wary as to what could happen.

In China, since the second quarter results, there has been a flare-up of COVID as we know. That's meant that, say, Beijing has been basically closed off from the rest of the country, so no travel there. But that does seem to be coming to a close. Certainly, over the weekend, there were no new cases in Shanghai, which augurs very well for that market getting opened back up again. And previous flare-up, it was really back to 2019 levels of demand and rate, so a very strong recovery story there.

EMEA actually had a better summer than I thought it would. The markets that opened up have seen really strong demand, so some good stories there. I mean, of course, EMEA is a very large market. So you've also got some of the more challenged markets like Australia, which is going back through its lockdown, although they do seem to be changing the strategy there somewhat from a no COVID model to a live-with-COVID model, which hopefully will help things in the future. So encouraging signs right across the business.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Excellent. That's clear. Maybe a question because, of course, we've got a lot of questions regarding the Delta variant impact. How does Delta and the shifting landscape for return to the office impact this full year view?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Yes. So I think Delta, as you say, has meant that fewer companies have come back to the office than otherwise would have been the case. It certainly does not seem to have impacted leisure demand in any way that we can see. People are still traveling very strongly. Will it have any impact on group business or corporate travel in the fourth quarter? I guess we'll have to see. Let's just say, our bookings are good. And we are seeing conferences coming back. There's been a number of hotel industry conferences, physical conferences which have been held, which has been great, and more inquiries for group business coming through. But we remain watchful, but confident, I guess, we would say on that.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Maybe a quick follow-up on your, I would say, on the business demand and maybe focusing on the MICE demand. What are you seeing for the next coming months? Would you expect to see, I would say, big seminars coming back quite shortly or it's much more a next year story?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Yes. And I mean, group is around 15% of our demand, and that's split across corporate and leisure groups. And that came down to about 10% last year. So it's still a relatively small part of the business. We don't have a lot of hotels that are very big conference houses, where you have 800 guests in-house and then they'll take a big exhibition hall, et cetera, et cetera. So it's less of our business. But those very large meetings, I mean, just logistically, they take a long time to set up. So they typically book a couple of years in advance those blockbusters. What we are seeing more coming back is the small meetings, which actually we are more orientated into, both on a leisure sort of social group bookings and the business bookings as well.

Some of them, they won't happen until next year because the larger meetings do take a lot of preparation. Others, I think, will continue. The smaller ones, I think, will continue. So I think it's unrealistic to think that it's going to be the same level as 2019's level of demand for group, but I think that next year we'll see a strong recovery in group.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Amazing. Very clear. And maybe a much more long-term question, which is also a question we got from investors given the development of the, let's say, virtual meetings, virtual tools. I would say, would you expect that development impacting the long-term trends for the lodging business?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Well, in terms of will physical meetings be replaced by virtual meetings. I think possibly some and I think others will happen more. I think that with fewer offices existing and a lot of companies saying that nobody needs to come to the office, they will still need to get people together because people have a need to socially interact. You need to build the culture. And so I think that we will see more demand coming from that, that otherwise wouldn't have existed. Will there be some international business travel that doesn't happen as a result because people can say, actually, I can do this on a Zoom call? Maybe. Remember, we're mainly a domestic business. So it doesn't really impact us that much apart from the margin in some hotels. So we'll monitor that.

And you can always change your mix of business. I think that's what this last 18 months has shown that you need to work out where the pools of demand are and then how to tap them. And that's what we do with our business and our revenue management and our systems. We agglomerate huge amounts of demand and then we push them through our channels down into our hotels. So that's what we're very skilled at.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Amazing. Thank you. Maybe moving to the, let's say, the next bucket, which is the RevPAR sensitivity to EBIT, which is also something we touch base with investors. So I guess your sensitivity to EBIT was about $15 million last year. You said you've seen some improvement in the first half of the year. How do we need to think about the RevPAR sensitivity for the year and maybe for the next coming years? And maybe the follow-up would be, what would you need to return to the $13 million sensitivity you've seen before COVID-19, please?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Yes. Thanks, Geoffrey. So it's a metric that I think sometimes people think it's a little bit more scientific than it really is, I mean, because our franchise business and most of our business operates in a very linear way. So you think about the fees, a 1% move in RevPAR, it changes what comes in by 1% in a normal world. And so pre-COVID, most of our business being franchise and actually most of our managed business are giving us more of a fee based on revenues than a fee based on profit. Anyway, you had very little operational gearing in the fees that would come through.

What we then saw through the COVID period is that although we only have a really small number of owned and leased hotels and then we had a small, we have a relatively small number of managed hotels, they had a disproportionate impact. So we saw the $13 million go up, as you said, to sort of $15 million. Those managed hotels, we're now starting to see more of them paying incentive fees in the market. And then the owned and leased, the performance there is getting better. They're obviously the most operationally geared hotels. So then that is reducing. In due course, it will come back to normality because with a bigger system with more revenue, it will go up beyond -- if you have a 50% larger business, that is not still going to be $13 million per 1% because it's linear. So there will be a larger impact. But that's not a 2022 change. That's just over time you'll see that. And broadly, it will come back to being linear once we get back to a more normalized environment.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Thank you, Paul. Maybe moving to, I would say, net system growth and development, which is also, of course, a key topic for investors. Well, how do we need to think about net system growth for you? So you touch base a bit at the beginning of the chat, but well, if we look at the last 2 years, including 2021, you were broadly flat in terms of net system growth. So of course, you had the SVC impact, the Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn review, but well, will be good to get your thoughts on net system growth and what are the levers you've got in order to go back to the industry-leading growth you are targeting, please?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Yes. So thanks, Geoffrey. I mean, we talked a few years ago about the fact that the nature of our business, the brands we've got mean that we should be targeting being industry-leading in our net system size growth. We've got some absolute category pillars in our brand portfolio. We have, I think, the best geographical weighting in the industry. We've got a very strong business in China. Some of our competitors have effectively given away their business in China by master franchise agreements they make their money from. We don't. We're operating a very large and fast-growing business in China. So we should be able to grow at a faster rate than the industry with the brands that we've got and all of our advantages.

And back in 2019, we were very close to that. And 2020 without a pandemic would have exceeded that. So we were well on track. Obviously, things have changed with the pandemic, but we see 2022 and 2023 being much more similar to 2018 and 2019 levels of performance. With the additional benefit, of course, as I spoke about earlier, that we're going to have a lower level of removals. That is predicated, of course, on the owners of our hotels getting all of their hotels open and trading. And that's where we spend a lot of time with. It has slowed down in the last few years.

The people who will open a new Holiday Inn Express, they are typically a relatively smaller business enterprise. It's not a real estate investment trust in most cases. And they have a lot of things to focus on, focus on their banking relationships, focus on their people, rather than necessarily focusing on getting their next hotel open. I think that there's definitely been a change there and quite significant change. You can see the rates that hotels are getting and they want to have their next business up and running and operational. So their focus is very much back on that.

Of course, they've got to navigate all the supply chain issues that I think we all hear about in the press every day that it's getting harder to find materials. It's getting harder to find construction crews. It's getting harder to hire people. But that's what they do because they're businesspeople. They're very good at it. It's a real advantage of our model that you have thousands of entrepreneurs out there growing our business with us. So I have every confidence in their ability to continue to do that.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: And maybe just a quick follow-up. So you said you would expect probably to have lower removals going forward compared to the past. So if we're breaking down the net system growth between the gross system growth and removals, what about the gross system growth?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Well, I would expect our gross system, I mean, our system, our gross system growth in 2019 was the highest in the industry. No one really beat us on that. And I don't see why we would not get back to that. And then helped by a lower level of removals that I think will help us get back to being industry-leading. We've got a great track record in getting hotels open. We've got brands that owners love, that make very good returns for them and lenders like to lend against. And they're actually very well positioned in many of these brands because they require a low manning model. And we know people are going to get more and more expensive and clearly harder to find them. So if you open an avid, if you open a Holiday Inn Express, if you open a Candlewood Suites, if you open a Staybridge Suites, they're all very high GOP margin, high cash-generative businesses that require very few people to operate them.

So we're really well orientated or at the top end, we've got the best luxury brands where the customer coming in is less price sensitive and they'll pay you for what it costs to operate the hotel, whether an InterContinental or a Regent or a Six Senses or a Kimpton because you're delivering a real experience there. Where you don't want to be is in that middle part where it's very expensive to operate but you can't charge the rate, and we are well orientated away from that.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Amazing. Very clear. Thank you, Paul. Maybe a follow-up on development and maybe the conversion opportunities, you spoke about that in the last few months. I guess, you said you are seeing increasing opportunities for conversions. Any thoughts you can give us about that, please?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Yes. Conversion has always been quite a significant part of our growth story. So independent hotels that decide that they want to come under one of our brands and have the benefit of the very significant levels of system revenue demand that we can deliver to them from our booking channels, our loyalty program, our very attractive OTA commission rates, et cetera, et cetera. All the things that make their hotels more profitable. And if a hotel has the right physical characteristics, then they'll be able to join. But there are some hotels who are good hotels but didn't have the right physical characteristics because we required some brand specifics that they didn't have and really couldn't retrofit to.

So in recent years we launched voco, which actually allows many more hotels to come into the system because it's a relatively light physical requirement. Although the hotels are going to be really good, but it's not as specific as some of our other higher brands. And that's seen really strong growth, a lot of interest around the world. And then most recently we launched Vignette, which is aimed at really good hotels, so upper-upscale and luxury hotels, but often that have a strong brand identity already. So they don't want to move away from their strong brand identity, but they do want to be part of our system for the benefit they get. And so that's going to be another attractive lever of growth for us. We're already the #2 in the industry in terms of the number of luxury hotels we have. So we're really well recognized for this. And having something else that owners can work with us on has been very well received by the owners and there are a lot of really positive responses and inquiries from owners.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: And maybe a quick follow-up regarding Vignette Collection because you just spoke about that. So you launched the brand, I guess it was last week. So it's a new brand in the luxury and lifestyle segment. Could you talk a bit about the opportunities you are seeing in this part of the market, please?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Yes. I think, Vignette, these hotels have strong brand identity. For example, you've got some hotels that want to build and they want to be the InterContinental Frankfurt, as an example. But there may be a hotel that is very well known in the Frankfurt environment. And actually moving away from that brand name and what they built up over time, both for personal reasons, it may be a brand that was established within a family for some generations or because people know and they cause confusion, doesn't make sense to move away from it. So now you'll be able to keep that brand positioning but still be part of the collection. We certainly we've never had before. And quite a few owners that would talk about their hotels, it was the sticking point, that their grandfather established the brand identity or it's very personal to them, and they don't want to move away from it.

So being able to keep that but still come within the IHG umbrella is attractive for them. And we're seeing demand really all across the world. We've signed up hotels in Australia and Thailand already, a lot of opportunities in the EMEA market, opportunities we see in United States, opportunities in China. So there's many hotels that I think that now have the ability to get all the benefits of being part of the IHG system. And there's a lot of independent hotels at this level in the market. And that's why we launch something. I'm not interested in brands that can't achieve at least $50 million of fee income from. It just doesn't make any sense, too small. So we're very picky as to what we launch because some of these opportunities do have a long lead time to get there, but I've got to be confident that they can get to at least $50 million in due course.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Very clear. Thanks, Paul. As a reminder, if you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me or to send me a Bloomberg message. Just maybe a follow-up on your brand strategy. So you add a few, a couple of brands over the last few years. So you add, well, Six Senses. So you just announced Vignette. Do you think you still need to close gap in your brand portfolio or you think you have now a good number of the brands?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Well, I would never say never. I think that we've probably filled the most attractive gaps for now, but consumer demand and consumer interest does change. So it's something we continue to monitor to see what the opportunity. Maybe in a post-COVID world, as we look at the landscape, we see, actually, there's now an opportunity to do X, Y or Z. Again, with the proviso that, I don't want lots of subscale brands that have a few hotels. It's just a distraction. We've got to be able to get up to this $50 million of fees. It's got to be a brand of scale for us. avid clearly will get up to. It's already with pipeline and open hotels at multi-hundred. And I would expect it will be in due course over 1,000. Holiday Inn Express had more than 3,000 hotels. That's the direction I'd travel. I would expect voco to be in the hundreds. Atwell Suites, again, I think multi, multi-hundred opportunities there. With Regent, I would expect 40 to 50. Six Senses is certainly 50-plus, and they all make a higher income for us, so a lot of opportunity.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Very clear. Thank you, Paul. We just have questions from the audience. So it's basically about the mix between business and leisure. Given the strength we see in leisure demand in the last few months, would you expect to change a bit the mix of your portfolio towards much more leisure brands?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: So when people come and stay with us, they don't tell us for sure, am I here on business or leisure. So we have to extrapolate from the data. And historically, it's been about 60-40 business, leisure. And that actually, even last year, didn't really move, which is quite surprising. But a lot of our business travel is nondiscretionary business travel. It's people whose job involves travel all the time, the road warriors. So it's not people going to the Bank of America Securities Conference. It's people who have to go to site to do work. So that hasn't really changed. So I think that there is a great leisure opportunity with our brand. Absolutely, there is.

And is there more that we can do to make our brand even more attractive to the leisure guests perhaps at the weekend? Absolutely, there is. And that's something that we continue to look at to see, how do we capture the greatest share of leisure demand because it's not going away. The people who love to travel, they have money in their pocket and they want to stay at our hotels. So we're always seeing how we can enhance their stay. I don't think that means that it's going to be a change to that 60-40 over time actually. I think we'll just continue to drive demand from all segments.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Amazing. Thank you, Paul. We just got another one regarding your loyalty scheme. If you can maybe give us an update on the loyalty scheme. And maybe any impact coming from the COVID-19 outbreak and the way you're operating and managing the loyalty scheme?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: So the loyalty scheme is one of the greatest assets that we have, well over 100 million members and an ability to personally target people with marketing. And having a lot of data on them, so we understand their stay behavior and what matters to them. So enormously valuable and something that we've built up over many decades.

In terms of what changed over COVID, it's actually been harder to sign up members physically because passing across a form and passing across a pen and asking people to fill a form, people are less comfortable with that. I think that's a temporary thing. I think that actually we're trying to orientate as many people as possible the use of the app anyway. You never see that in the numbers, but that's sort of, it's an interesting phenomenon that it's harder to interact sometimes with people and get them to sign up to a program with you in this environment. I think it's that personal relationship that the loyalty program allows, allowing personalized offers delivered digitally that is going to be really exciting for us in the future and allow us to drive even better returns out of the hotels for our owners.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Excellent. Thank you, Paul. So we are nearly at time. So maybe we have time enough for very last questions. And I guess another question has come up, which is about China. Given we've seen some weakness in trends in the last few weeks, do you see that as a kind of temporary phenomenon and did you expect to have a kind of a quite quick pickup in terms of trends?

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Yes. I mean, what we saw last year was once restrictions were lifted and people could travel, the business came back incredibly quickly. And we were back basically at full demand. And even last summer in leisure destinations, it was better than 2019 demand. So if you owned a hotel in Sanya, you were doing very, very well. And we've seen that continue through most of the period then from. With localized shutdown, the last shutdown has been a bit broader, as I think we're all familiar with. But they do seem to really be putting the lid back on that. And then I think once that's lifted, we will go back to business, which is travel back to normal life. And I think then we'll see very much a return to what we saw before late July came around.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Amazing. Well, we are now at the end of the session. So well, thank you very much, Paul, for your time today. It was a very informative session. And thanks again for joining us today.

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Thanks, Geoffrey. Thanks, everyone. Hope to see you all in person before too long.

GEOFFREY D'HALLUIN: Thank you very much, and we can now move to the next session. Thank you. Bye-bye.

PAUL RUSSELL EDGECLIFFE-JOHNSON: Thanks.

Document FNDW000020211001eh97000e4

Marriott International CEO to Speak at Bank of America SecuritiesGaming and Lodging Conference September 9

258 words
2 September 2021
ENP Newswire
ENPNEW
English

Release date - 01092021

BETHESDA, MD -Tony Capuano, chief executive officer at Marriott International, Inc. (Nasdaq: MAR), will speak at the 2021 Bank of America Securities Gaming and Lodging Conference, to be held on Thursday, September 9. Mr. Capuano's remarks will be at approximately 9:00 a.m., Eastern Time, and will be webcast live.

To access the webcast, please go to http://www.marriott.com/investor, and then click on the link to the 'BofA Gaming and Lodging Conference' under 'Events and Presentations.'

The webcast will be available until October 9, 2021 at the same site.

About Marriott International

Marriott International, Inc. (NASDAQ: MAR) is based in Bethesda, Maryland, USA, and encompasses a portfolio of roughly 7,800 properties under 30 leading brands spanning 138 countries and territories. Marriott operates and franchises hotels and licenses vacation ownership resorts all around the world. The company offers Marriott Bonvoy, its highly-awarded travel program. For more information, please visit our website at www.marriott.com, and for the latest company news, visit www.marriottnewscenter.com. In addition, connect with us on Facebook and @MarriottIntl on Twitter and Instagram.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Sarah Brown

Corporate Relations

(202) 870-9942

sarah.brown@marriott.com

INVESTOR RELATIONS CONTACTS:

Jackie Burka McConagha

Investor Relations

(301) 380-5126

jackie.burka@marriott.com

Betsy Dahm

Investor Relations

(301) 380-3372

betsy.dahm@marriott.com

IRPR#1

[Editorial queries for this story should be sent to newswire@enpublishing.co.uk]

Document ENPNEW0020210902eh92000ez

InformationWeek

Bank of America Corporation; Patent Issued for Facilitating network security analysis using virtual reality display devices (USPTO 10999313)

2,710 words
15 June 2021
Information Technology Newsweekly
INTEWK
6748
English

2021 JUN 15 (VerticalNews) -- By a News Reporter-Staff News Editor at Information Technology Newsweekly -- According to news reporting originating from Alexandria, Virginia, by VerticalNews journalists, a patent by the inventors Goebel, Darryl C. (Cary, NC, US), Jacobson, William P. (Matthews, NC, US), Ogrinz, Michael (Easton, CT, US), filed on June 7, 2019, was published online on May 4, 2021.

The assignee for this patent, patent number 10999313, is Bank of America Corporation (Charlotte, North Carolina, United States).

Reporters obtained the following quote from the background information supplied by the inventors: "Networks are increasingly susceptible to cyber-attacks. Individuals may exploit network vulnerabilities to employ cyber-attacks by various means to steal, alter, or destroy a target by hacking into a susceptible system. Cyber-attacks may originate at an unsecure network component. For example, a computer hacker may access a network through an unsecure network component to launch a cyber-attack.

"Security measures are employed within network components to prevent cyber-attacks. For example, firewalls, demilitarized zones, antivirus software, software patches, and other types of security measures are used to prevent cyber-attacks. Each component in a network may implement some, none, or all of these security measures.

"Individuals may analyze security measures associated with network components in a computing networking environment to ensure the network is protected against cyber-attacks. Traditional systems provide a summary of security measures for individual network components in the form of a spreadsheet or text-based report. When a person is looking for information related to network security, the person must view individual security features of disparate network components separately. Presenting information in the form of reports or spreadsheets may not allow a person to determine the overall security of an enterprise's network rapidly, and thus may decrease network security. Thus, it is desirable to provide the ability to efficiently request information regarding network components in a way that increases the security network systems."

In addition to obtaining background information on this patent, VerticalNews editors also obtained the inventors' summary information for this patent: "In one embodiment, a virtual reality system includes one or more databases and a virtual reality user device. The one or more databases include network component data and security data for a plurality of network components. The network component data includes the network interconnections and location of each of the plurality of network components. The network component data further includes one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of data network components.

"The security data may include software patch update information that indicates the most recent software patch update for the network component, demilitarized zone information indicating whether the data network component is in a demilitarized zone, firewall information indicating the firewall type and status, and antivirus information indicating the software type and status of antivirus software.

"The virtual reality user device includes a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user. The virtual reality user device further includes one or more processors operably coupled to the display. The virtual reality user device further includes an electronic transfer engine configured to receive operational data and a virtual overlay engine. The virtual overlay engine presents a first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating network connections of the first network component. The virtual overlay engine overlays the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"In another embodiment, a virtual reality user device includes a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user. The virtual reality user device further includes one or more processors operably coupled to the display. The virtual reality user device further includes an electronic transfer engine configured to receive operational and virtual data. This data includes network component data for a plurality of network components and security data for each of the plurality of network components.

"The virtual reality user device further includes a virtual overlay engine. The virtual overlay engine identifies a first network component of a plurality of data network components. The virtual overlay engine presents a first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating network connections of the first network component. The virtual overlay engine further overlays the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"The present embodiment presents several technical advantages. In one embodiment, a virtual reality user device allows a user to view a network topology that includes all or substantially all network components in a network. Displaying network components and interconnections among them allows a user to determine how network components in the network interact. This increases the security of a network by allowing a user to identify network vulnerabilities by viewing network component interconnections.

"In one embodiment, a virtual reality user device allows a user to view information relating to the security of a network system. Allowing a user to visualize all or substantially all of the security information relating to network components in one viewing screen, allows the user to appreciate the breadth and depth of security measures of network systems. This allows a user to identify failures or potential failures in a system's security, thus increasing the network security of the system. This embodiment further allows users to determine network security risks that are pervasive across a plurality of network components.

"Another technical advantage is the virtual reality user device provides a virtual reality environment where information can only be seen by the virtual reality user device user. This provides privacy to the user's information and increases the security of the overall system.

"In one embodiment, a virtual reality user device increases security of communicating network component data and security data for a network. The virtual reality user device allows the user to authenticate themselves, which then allows the user to request and obtain information that is specific to the user. This reduces or eliminates unintended access to the data.

"The virtual reality user device generates user tokens that identify the user, which improves the performance of the virtual reality user device by reducing the amount of information required to identify and authenticate the user. Using user tokens also reduces the amount information used to request information linked with the user. User tokens are encoded or encrypted to obfuscate and mask information being communicated across a network. Masking the information being communicated protects users and their information in the event unauthorized access to the network and/or data occurs.

"Certain embodiments of the present disclosure may include some, all, or none of these advantages. These advantages and other features will be more clearly understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings and claims."

The claims supplied by the inventors are:

"1. A virtual reality system comprising: one or more databases comprising: network component data for a plurality of network components, the network component data comprising: network interconnections of the plurality of network components; a location of each of the plurality of network components; one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of network components; and security data for each of the plurality of network components, the security data comprising: demilitarized zone information indicating whether the network component is in a demilitarized zone; and a virtual reality user device for a user comprising: a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user; one or more processors operably coupled to the display; an electronic transfer engine configured to receive the network component data and the security data; and a virtual overlay engine configured to: identify a first network component of a plurality of network components; present the first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating the network interconnections of the first network component; and overlay the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"2. The system of claim 1, further comprising: a memory configured to store: verification data used to authenticate one or more users; and user tokens uniquely identifying each of the one or more users; wherein the electronic transfer engine further is configured to: receive a user input identifying the user; compare the user input to the verification data to authenticate the user; identify a user token for the user in response to authenticating the user; send the user token to a remote database, wherein the user token requests the network component data and the security data; and receive the network component data and the security data in response to sending the user token.

"3. The system of claim 2, wherein: the user input is a biometric signal; and the virtual reality user device comprises a biometric engine configured to compare the biometric signal to the verification data to authenticate the user.

"4. The system of claim 3, wherein the biometric signal is one of a retinal scan signal and a fingerprint scan signal.

"5. The system of claim 1, wherein: the network component data further comprises data indicating a name and content of a plurality of data files in each of the plurality of network components; and the virtual overlay engine is further configured to present a first data file within the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"6. The system of claim 5, further comprising: the virtual overlay engine further configured to present a virtual trashcan in the virtual reality environment; a gesture recognition engine configured to receive a gesture from the user indicating to place the first data file in the virtual trashcan; and the electronic transfer engine is further configured to communicate a command to delete a digital file associated with the first data file.

"7. The system of claim 1, wherein: the virtual reality user device comprises a voice recognition engine configured to identify voice commands performed by the user; and identifying the first network component identifying a voice command performed by the user to indicate the first network component.

"8. A virtual reality overlaying method comprising: receiving network component data for a plurality of network components, the network component data comprising: network interconnections of the plurality of network components; a location of each of the plurality of network components; and one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of network components; receiving security data for each of the plurality of network components, the security data comprising: demilitarized zone information indicating whether the network component is in a demilitarized zone; identifying a first network component of a plurality of network components; presenting the first network component in a virtual reality environment to a user, the presentation indicating the network interconnections of the first network component; and overlaying the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"9. The method of claim 8, further comprising: receiving a user input identifying the user; comparing the user input to verification data to authenticate the user; identifying a user token for the user in response to authenticating the user; sending the user token to a remote database, wherein the user token requests the network component data and the security data; and receiving the network component data and the security data in response to sending the user token.

"10. The method of claim 9, wherein the user input is a biometric signal and further comprising comparing the biometric signal to the verification data to authenticate the user.

"11. The method of claim 10, wherein the biometric signal is one of a retinal scan signal and a fingerprint scan signal.

"12. The method of claim 8, wherein the network component data further comprises data indicating a name and content of a plurality of data files in each of the plurality of network components and the method further comprising presenting a first data file within the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"13. The method of claim 12, further comprising: presenting a virtual trashcan in the virtual reality environment; receiving a gesture from the user indicating to place the first data file in the virtual trashcan; and communicating a command to delete a digital file associated with the first data file.

"14. The method of claim 8, further comprising: identifying voice commands performed by the user; and identifying the first network component identifying a voice command performed by the user to indicate the first network component.

"15. A virtual reality user device for a user comprising: a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user; one or more processors operably coupled to the display; an electronic transfer engine configured to receive data comprising: network component data for a plurality of network components comprising: network interconnections of each of the plurality of network components; a location of each of the plurality of network components; one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of network components; and security data for each of the plurality of network components comprising: demilitarized zone information indicating whether the network component is in a demilitarized zone; and a virtual overlay engine configured to: identify a first network component of a plurality of network components; present the first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating the network interconnections of the first network component; and overlay the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"16. The virtual reality user device of claim 15, further comprising: a memory configured to store: verification data used to authenticate one or more users; and user tokens uniquely identifying each of the one or more users; and wherein the electronic transfer engine further is configured to: receive a user input identifying the user; compare the user input to the verification data to authenticate the user; identify a user token for the user in response to authenticating the user; send the user token to a remote database, wherein the user token requests the network component data and the security data; receive the network component data and the security data in response to sending the user token.

"17. The virtual reality user device of claim 16, wherein: the user input is a biometric signal; and the virtual reality user device comprises a biometric engine configured to compare the biometric signal to the verification data to authenticate the user.

"18. The virtual reality user device of claim 15, wherein: the network component data further comprises data file data indicating a name and content of a plurality of data files in each of the plurality of network components; and the virtual overlay engine is further configured to present a first data file within the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"19. The virtual reality user device of claim 18, further comprising: the virtual overlay engine further configured to present a virtual trashcan in the virtual reality environment; a gesture recognition engine configured to receive a gesture from the user indicating to place the first data file in the virtual trashcan; and the electronic transfer engine is further configured to communicate a command to delete a digital file associated with the first data file.

"20. The virtual reality user device of claim 15, wherein: the virtual reality user device comprises a voice recognition engine configured to identify voice commands performed by the user; and identifying the first network component identifying a voice command performed by the user to indicate the first network component."

For more information, see this patent: Goebel, Darryl C. Facilitating network security analysis using virtual reality display devices. U.S. Patent Number 10999313, filed June 7, 2019, and published online on May 4, 2021. Patent URL:
http://patft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&d=PALL&p=1&u=%2Fnetahtml%2FPTO%2Fsrchnum.htm&r=1&f=G&l=50&s1=10999313.PN.&OS=PN/10999313RS=PN/10999313

Keywords for this news article include: Business, Software, Legal Issues, Cybersecurity, Network Security, Money Center Banks, Financial Companies, Network Connections, Information Technology, Bank of America Corporation.

Document INTEWK0020210615eh6f000zk

Bank of America Corporation; Patent Issued for Facilitating Network Security Analysis Using Virtual Reality Display Devices (USPTO 10,999,313)

2,728 words
14 May 2021
Investment Weekly News
INVWK
3651
English

2021 MAY 22 (VerticalNews) -- By a News Reporter-Staff News Editor at Investment Weekly News -- According to news reporting originating from Alexandria, Virginia, by VerticalNews journalists, a patent by the inventors Ogrinz, Michael (Easton, CT); Goebel, Darryl C. (Cary, NC); Jacobson, William P. (Matthews, NC), filed on June 7, 2019, was published online on May 17, 2021.

The assignee for this patent, patent number 10,999,313, is Bank of America Corporation (Charlotte, North Carolina, United States).

Reporters obtained the following quote from the background information supplied by the inventors: "Networks are increasingly susceptible to cyber-attacks. Individuals may exploit network vulnerabilities to employ cyber-attacks by various means to steal, alter, or destroy a target by hacking into a susceptible system. Cyber-attacks may originate at an unsecure network component. For example, a computer hacker may access a network through an unsecure network component to launch a cyber-attack.

"Security measures are employed within network components to prevent cyber-attacks. For example, firewalls, demilitarized zones, antivirus software, software patches, and other types of security measures are used to prevent cyber-attacks. Each component in a network may implement some, none, or all of these security measures.

"Individuals may analyze security measures associated with network components in a computing networking environment to ensure the network is protected against cyber-attacks. Traditional systems provide a summary of security measures for individual network components in the form of a spreadsheet or text-based report. When a person is looking for information related to network security, the person must view individual security features of disparate network components separately. Presenting information in the form of reports or spreadsheets may not allow a person to determine the overall security of an enterprise's network rapidly, and thus may decrease network security. Thus, it is desirable to provide the ability to efficiently request information regarding network components in a way that increases the security network systems."

In addition to obtaining background information on this patent, VerticalNews editors also obtained the inventors' summary information for this patent: "In one embodiment, a virtual reality system includes one or more databases and a virtual reality user device. The one or more databases include network component data and security data for a plurality of network components. The network component data includes the network interconnections and location of each of the plurality of network components. The network component data further includes one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of data network components.

"The security data may include software patch update information that indicates the most recent software patch update for the network component, demilitarized zone information indicating whether the data network component is in a demilitarized zone, firewall information indicating the firewall type and status, and antivirus information indicating the software type and status of antivirus software.

"The virtual reality user device includes a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user. The virtual reality user device further includes one or more processors operably coupled to the display. The virtual reality user device further includes an electronic transfer engine configured to receive operational data and a virtual overlay engine. The virtual overlay engine presents a first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating network connections of the first network component. The virtual overlay engine overlays the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"In another embodiment, a virtual reality user device includes a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user. The virtual reality user device further includes one or more processors operably coupled to the display. The virtual reality user device further includes an electronic transfer engine configured to receive operational and virtual data. This data includes network component data for a plurality of network components and security data for each of the plurality of network components.

"The virtual reality user device further includes a virtual overlay engine. The virtual overlay engine identifies a first network component of a plurality of data network components. The virtual overlay engine presents a first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating network connections of the first network component. The virtual overlay engine further overlays the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"The present embodiment presents several technical advantages. In one embodiment, a virtual reality user device allows a user to view a network topology that includes all or substantially all network components in a network. Displaying network components and interconnections among them allows a user to determine how network components in the network interact. This increases the security of a network by allowing a user to identify network vulnerabilities by viewing network component interconnections.

"In one embodiment, a virtual reality user device allows a user to view information relating to the security of a network system. Allowing a user to visualize all or substantially all of the security information relating to network components in one viewing screen, allows the user to appreciate the breadth and depth of security measures of network systems. This allows a user to identify failures or potential failures in a system's security, thus increasing the network security of the system. This embodiment further allows users to determine network security risks that are pervasive across a plurality of network components.

"Another technical advantage is the virtual reality user device provides a virtual reality environment where information can only be seen by the virtual reality user device user. This provides privacy to the user's information and increases the security of the overall system.

"In one embodiment, a virtual reality user device increases security of communicating network component data and security data for a network. The virtual reality user device allows the user to authenticate themselves, which then allows the user to request and obtain information that is specific to the user. This reduces or eliminates unintended access to the data.

"The virtual reality user device generates user tokens that identify the user, which improves the performance of the virtual reality user device by reducing the amount of information required to identify and authenticate the user. Using user tokens also reduces the amount information used to request information linked with the user. User tokens are encoded or encrypted to obfuscate and mask information being communicated across a network. Masking the information being communicated protects users and their information in the event unauthorized access to the network and/or data occurs.

"Certain embodiments of the present disclosure may include some, all, or none of these advantages. These advantages and other features will be more clearly understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings and claims."

The claims supplied by the inventors are:

"The invention claimed is:

"1. A virtual reality system comprising: one or more databases comprising: network component data for a plurality of network components, the network component data comprising: network interconnections of the plurality of network components; a location of each of the plurality of network components; one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of network components; and security data for each of the plurality of network components, the security data comprising: demilitarized zone information indicating whether the network component is in a demilitarized zone; and a virtual reality user device for a user comprising: a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user; one or more processors operably coupled to the display; an electronic transfer engine configured to receive the network component data and the security data; and a virtual overlay engine configured to: identify a first network component of a plurality of network components; present the first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating the network interconnections of the first network component; and overlay the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"2. The system of claim 1, further comprising: a memory configured to store: verification data used to authenticate one or more users; and user tokens uniquely identifying each of the one or more users; wherein the electronic transfer engine further is configured to: receive a user input identifying the user; compare the user input to the verification data to authenticate the user; identify a user token for the user in response to authenticating the user; send the user token to a remote database, wherein the user token requests the network component data and the security data; and receive the network component data and the security data in response to sending the user token.

"3. The system of claim 2, wherein: the user input is a biometric signal; and the virtual reality user device comprises a biometric engine configured to compare the biometric signal to the verification data to authenticate the user.

"4. The system of claim 3, wherein the biometric signal is one of a retinal scan signal and a fingerprint scan signal.

"5. The system of claim 1, wherein: the network component data further comprises data indicating a name and content of a plurality of data files in each of the plurality of network components; and the virtual overlay engine is further configured to present a first data file within the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"6. The system of claim 5, further comprising: the virtual overlay engine further configured to present a virtual trashcan in the virtual reality environment; a gesture recognition engine configured to receive a gesture from the user indicating to place the first data file in the virtual trashcan; and the electronic transfer engine is further configured to communicate a command to delete a digital file associated with the first data file.

"7. The system of claim 1, wherein: the virtual reality user device comprises a voice recognition engine configured to identify voice commands performed by the user; and identifying the first network component identifying a voice command performed by the user to indicate the first network component.

"8. A virtual reality overlaying method comprising: receiving network component data for a plurality of network components, the network component data comprising: network interconnections of the plurality of network components; a location of each of the plurality of network components; and one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of network components; receiving security data for each of the plurality of network components, the security data comprising: demilitarized zone information indicating whether the network component is in a demilitarized zone; identifying a first network component of a plurality of network components; presenting the first network component in a virtual reality environment to a user, the presentation indicating the network interconnections of the first network component; and overlaying the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"9. The method of claim 8, further comprising: receiving a user input identifying the user; comparing the user input to verification data to authenticate the user; identifying a user token for the user in response to authenticating the user; sending the user token to a remote database, wherein the user token requests the network component data and the security data; and receiving the network component data and the security data in response to sending the user token.

"10. The method of claim 9, wherein the user input is a biometric signal and further comprising comparing the biometric signal to the verification data to authenticate the user.

"11. The method of claim 10, wherein the biometric signal is one of a retinal scan signal and a fingerprint scan signal.

"12. The method of claim 8, wherein the network component data further comprises data indicating a name and content of a plurality of data files in each of the plurality of network components and the method further comprising presenting a first data file within the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"13. The method of claim 12, further comprising: presenting a virtual trashcan in the virtual reality environment; receiving a gesture from the user indicating to place the first data file in the virtual trashcan; and communicating a command to delete a digital file associated with the first data file.

"14. The method of claim 8, further comprising: identifying voice commands performed by the user; and identifying the first network component identifying a voice command performed by the user to indicate the first network component.

"15. A virtual reality user device for a user comprising: a display configured to present a virtual reality environment to the user; one or more processors operably coupled to the display; an electronic transfer engine configured to receive data comprising: network component data for a plurality of network components comprising: network interconnections of each of the plurality of network components; a location of each of the plurality of network components; one or more data types associated with each of the plurality of network components; and security data for each of the plurality of network components comprising: demilitarized zone information indicating whether the network component is in a demilitarized zone; and a virtual overlay engine configured to: identify a first network component of a plurality of network components; present the first network component in the virtual reality environment, the presentation indicating the network interconnections of the first network component; and overlay the security data for the first network component onto the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"16. The virtual reality user device of claim 15, further comprising: a memory configured to store: verification data used to authenticate one or more users; and user tokens uniquely identifying each of the one or more users; and wherein the electronic transfer engine further is configured to: receive a user input identifying the user; compare the user input to the verification data to authenticate the user; identify a user token for the user in response to authenticating the user; send the user token to a remote database, wherein the user token requests the network component data and the security data; receive the network component data and the security data in response to sending the user token.

"17. The virtual reality user device of claim 16, wherein: the user input is a biometric signal; and the virtual reality user device comprises a biometric engine configured to compare the biometric signal to the verification data to authenticate the user.

"18. The virtual reality user device of claim 15, wherein: the network component data further comprises data file data indicating a name and content of a plurality of data files in each of the plurality of network components; and the virtual overlay engine is further configured to present a first data file within the first network component in the virtual reality environment.

"19. The virtual reality user device of claim 18, further comprising: the virtual overlay engine further configured to present a virtual trashcan in the virtual reality environment; a gesture recognition engine configured to receive a gesture from the user indicating to place the first data file in the virtual trashcan; and the electronic transfer engine is further configured to communicate a command to delete a digital file associated with the first data file.

"20. The virtual reality user device of claim 15, wherein: the virtual reality user device comprises a voice recognition engine configured to identify voice commands performed by the user; and identifying the first network component identifying a voice command performed by the user to indicate the first network component."

For more information, see this patent: Ogrinz, Michael; Goebel, Darryl C.; Jacobson, William P. Facilitating Network Security Analysis Using Virtual Reality Display Devices. U.S. Patent Number 10,999,313, filed June 7, 2019, and published online on May 17, 2021. Patent URL: http://patft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&d=PALL&p=1&u=%2Fnetahtml%2FPTO%2Fsrchnum.htm&r=1&f=G&l=50&s1=10,999,313.PN.&OS=PN/10,999,313RS=PN/10,999,313

Keywords for this news article include: Business, Software, Legal Issues, Cybersecurity, Network Security, Money Center Banks, Financial Companies, Network Connections, Information Technology, Bank of America Corporation.

Document INVWK00020210514eh5e000jf

Bank of America Corporation; Patent Issued for Network Error Detection Using Virtual Reality Display Devices (USPTO 10,963,277)

3,851 words
12 April 2021
Internet Weekly News
INTWKN
595
English

2021 APR 12 (VerticalNews) -- By a News Reporter-Staff News Editor at Internet Weekly News -- A patent by the inventors Thomas, James M. (Charlotte, NC); Shields, Alan W. (Charlotte, NC), filed on March 19, 2020, was published online on April 12, 2021, according to news reporting originating from Alexandria, Virginia, by VerticalNews correspondents.

Patent number 10,963,277 is assigned to Bank of America Corporation (Charlotte, North Carolina, United States).

The following quote was obtained by the news editors from the background information supplied by the inventors: "Detecting network or hardware errors in computer networks poses a technical challenge due to the large number of interconnected devices. Computer networks are made up of numerous types of devices that each offer different types of functionality. Each of these devices has their own configuration and settings. Conventional systems do not have the ability to detect errors caused by conflicting device configurations and/or settings. For example, conventional systems typically aggregate network information, process the information, and represent the network information using tables or charts. Detecting network and hardware configuration errors using tables and charts alone is not always possible because these types of data structures only provides a static view of a particular aspect of a network's configuration. Conventional systems do not have the ability to dynamically represent the network information in a way that shows how different elements of the network information (e.g. hardware configurations or settings) are related and/or interact with each other. For example, network information may be represented using a table that identifies IP addresses and data traffic, however the table representation does not indicate how this information is related to or affected by other network components.

"Because conventional systems are unable to detect these kinds of errors, the network may suffer from degraded performance (e.g. data throughput or network utilization), weakened security, and other related issues. Thus, it is desirable to provide the ability to detect network errors caused by conflicting device configurations and/or settings."

In addition to the background information obtained for this patent, VerticalNews journalists also obtained the inventors' summary information for this patent: "Computer networks are made up of numerous types of devices that each offer different types of functionality. Each of these devices has their own configuration and settings. One of the problems inherent to computer networks is the potential for conflicting hardware and/or software configurations. This problem is exacerbated by the large number of interconnected devices in a typical computer network. As the number of devices in the computer network increases the likelihood of an issue or error caused by conflicting device configurations also increases. Network errors can be caused both a single device's configuration or the combination of multiple devices interacting with each other. Thus, determining the cause and location of these types of network error poses a significant technical challenge.

"Conventional systems do not have the ability to detect errors caused by conflicting device configurations and/or settings. For example, conventional systems typically aggregate network information, process the information, and represent the network information using tables or charts. Detecting network and hardware configuration errors using tables and charts is not always possible because these types of data structures only provides a static view of a particular aspect of a network's configuration. Conventional systems do not have the ability to dynamically represent the network information in a way that shows how different elements of the network information are related and/or interact with each other. For example, network information may be represented using a table that identifies IP addresses or data traffic, however a table representation does not indicate how this information is related to or affected by other network components.

"In contrast to conventional systems, the network error detection system disclosed herein provides a technical solution to the problems described above by transforming network information into a new data structure represented by virtual objects that can be displayed in a virtual reality environment. This new type of data structure links network information with physical attributes of a virtual object. For example, different network information elements can be grouped together and represented as physical attributes for a virtual object. In other words, the appearance of a virtual object in a virtual reality environment is a visual representation of a combination of network elements. This feature provides a new mechanism for representing the relationships between different network information elements. Virtual objects enable the network error detection system to provide a visual representation to a user where they can quickly identify potential issues based on physical attributes of a virtual object. For example, a virtual object may stand out from other virtual objects based on its size, shape, color, etc., which may indicate to the user that there is an issue associated with the network information that was used to generate the virtual object. In this example, the user can quickly identify an issue and request the network information related to the virtual object for further troubleshooting and diagnosing.

"Another feature provided by the network error detection system is that generated virtual objects are configured to interact with other virtual objects within a virtual reality environment. The network error detection system provides an unconventional solution that allows network and/or hardware configuration errors to be detected based on how the virtual objects interact with each other within the virtual reality environment. For example, the network error detection system may be configured to show data traffic using cars as virtual objects that are traveling across a highway in a virtual reality environment. In this example, the virtual reality environment may have a virtual object shown as wall blocking the highway and preventing the cars from moving across the highway. Here, the wall is a virtual object representing a port or firewall configuration. In this example, a user can quickly identify an issue (e.g. a bottleneck or data traffic blockage) caused by the wall preventing the flow of data traffic. The user can then request the network information associated with the wall to recover the port or firewall settings that are causing an error. This information can be used to resolve the issue and improve the operation of the computer network. Unlike conventional systems, the network error detection system uses virtual objects and the virtual reality environment to provide a wholistic view of a computer network and to dynamically represent network information in a way that shows how different elements of the network information are related and/or interact with each other.

"The present embodiment presents several technical advantages. In one embodiment, the network error detection system improves the operation of the computer network by generating a new data structure using virtual objects where the physical attributes of the virtual objects correspond with different network information elements. A virtual object represents both how different network information elements are related to each other (i.e. the physical attributes of the virtual object) as well as how the network information elements are affected by other network information elements (i.e. other virtual objects). Conventional data structures (e.g. tables or charts) are unable to represent these types of relationships. The network error detection system uses virtual objects to group and present network information to a user in a way that allows the user to intuitively locate and identify potential issues in the computer network based on what they see in the virtual reality environment. The network error detection system enables issues to be detected based on the physical attributes of virtual objects as well as how virtual objects interact with other virtual objects within a virtual reality environment.

"Another technical advantage is provided by the network error detection system's ability to maintain the relationship between network information and virtual objects to provide information about detected network errors. In other words, the network error detection system is configured such that the network information used to create a virtual object can be recovered. This feature allows network information to be recovered for troubleshooting or diagnosis issues in the computer network. For example, the network error detection system may receive user feedback from a user that identifies one or more virtual objects associated with a network error. The network error detection system is able to recover and provide the original network information that was used to generate the one or more virtual objects for troubleshooting an issue. Here, the network error detection system improves the operation of the system by providing the ability to extract information related to a network error that was identified using the virtual objects.

"The features described above provide a technical solution to the problems inherent to locating and detecting errors in a computer network. Using virtual objects in a virtual reality environment, the network error detections system enables the ability to detect errors caused by conflicting device configurations and/or settings. In addition, the network error detection system improves the operation of the computer network by providing a mechanism that not only enables network issues to be located, but also enables any network information related to the issue can also be quickly recovered. The recovered network information can be used to troubleshoot and resolve any identified issues. The ability to efficiently locate and resolve issues further improves the operation of the computer network by removing bottlenecks and/or other issues that degrade the performance of the computer network.

"Certain embodiments of the present disclosure may include some, all, or none of these advantages. These advantages and other features will be more clearly understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings and claims."

The claims supplied by the inventors are:

"The invention claimed is:

"1. A network error detection device, comprising: a network interface configured to receive network information from a plurality of data sources; a memory configured to store: virtualization rules configured to map data fields from a normalized data structure to physical attributes of virtual objects within a virtual reality environment, wherein: the virtual reality environment is a geographical map comprising a landmark; and the virtualization rules map: internal IP addresses to a virtual object type and a starting location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment; external IP addresses to a target location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment; and hardware settings to virtual objects configured to obstruct the movement of other virtual objects within the virtual reality environment; a virtualization engine implemented by one or more processors, configured to generate virtual data defining a virtual object for the virtual reality environment, wherein generating the virtual object comprises: selecting an entry linked with a plurality of data fields in the normalized data structure; identifying an internal IP address associated with the entry; determining a virtual object type based on the identified internal IP address, wherein the virtual object type identifies a physical representation of a physical object; determining a starting location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment based on the identified internal IP address; identifying an external IP address associated with the entry; determining a target location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment based on the identified external IP address; and configuring the virtual object to traverse the landmark within the virtual reality environment from the determined starting location to the target location.

"2. The device of claim 1, wherein: the memory is further configured to store: normalization rules configured to map received network information to data fields in the normalized data structure; and further comprising a normalization engine implemented by the one or more processors, configured to populate data fields in the normalized data structure with received network information in accordance with the normalization rules.

"3. The device of claim 1, wherein: the network interface is further configured to: transmit the virtual data defining the virtual object for display on a user device in response to generating the virtual object; receive user feedback from the user device, wherein the user feedback identifies a selected virtual object. the virtualization engine further configured to: identify physical attributes of the selected virtual object; identify data fields and corresponding data field values in the normalized data structure for the identified physical attributes of the selected virtual object based on the virtualization rules; generate an error report comprising at least a portion of the identified data fields values; and the network interface further configured to send the error report to the user device.

"4. The device of claim 1, further comprising the user device, wherein the user device comprises: a display configured to present virtual objects in the virtual reality environment; a virtual overlay engine implemented by the one or more processors, configured to: receive the virtual data defining the virtual object; render the virtual object in the virtual reality environment on the display; a camera configured to capture gestures performed by a user; and a gesture recognition engine configured to: detect a gesture performed by the user interacting with the virtual object in the virtual reality environment using the camera; and send the user feedback to the virtualization engine identifying the virtual object as the selected virtual object.

"5. The device of claim 4, wherein detecting the gesture performed by the user interacting with the virtual object the virtual environment comprises detecting the user repositioning the virtual object within the virtual reality environment.

"6. The device of claim 1, further comprising the user device, wherein the user device comprises: a display configured to present virtual objects in the virtual reality environment; a virtual overlay engine implemented by the one or more processors, configured to: receive the virtual data defining the virtual object; render the virtual object in the virtual reality environment on the display; a microphone configured to capture audio signals; and a voice recognition engine configured to: detect an audio signal identifying the virtual object in the virtual reality environment using the microphone; and send the user feedback to the virtualization engine identifying the virtual object as the selected virtual object.

"7. The device of claim 1, wherein receiving network information from the plurality of data sources comprises: receiving a first portion of network information from a first data source in a first format; and receiving a second portion of the network information from a second data source in a second format, wherein the second format is different than the first format.

"8. The device of claim 1, wherein the user device is configured to display at least a portion of the error report in the virtual reality environment.

"9. A network error detection method, comprising: receiving, by a network interface, network information from a plurality of data sources; and generating, by a virtualization engine, virtual data defining one or more virtual objects for a virtual reality environment using virtualization rules, wherein: the virtual reality environment is a geographical map comprising a landmark; the virtualization rules are configured to map data fields from a normalized data structure to physical attributes of virtual objects, wherein the virtualization rules map: internal IP addresses to a virtual object type and a starting location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment; external IP addresses to a target location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment;

and hardware settings to virtual objects configured to obstruct the movement of other virtual objects within the virtual reality environment; and generating the virtual object comprises: selecting an entry linked with a plurality of data fields in the normalized data structure; identifying an internal IP address associated with the entry; determining a virtual object type based on the identified internal IP address, wherein the virtual object type identifies a physical representation of a physical object; determining a starting location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment based on the identified internal IP address; identifying an external IP address associated with the entry; determining a target location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment based on the identified external IP address; and configuring the virtual object to traverse the landmark within the virtual reality environment from the determined starting location to the target location.

"10. The method of claim 9, further comprising: populating, by a normalization engine, data fields in a normalized data structure with received network information in accordance with normalization rules, wherein: the normalized data structure comprising a plurality of data fields; and the normalization rules are configured to map received network information to data fields in the normalized data structure.

"11. The method of claim 9, further comprising: transmitting, by the network interface, the virtual data defining the virtual object-for display on a user device in response to generating the virtual object; receiving, by the network interface, user feedback from the user device, wherein the user feedback identifies a selected virtual object; identifying, by the virtualization engine, physical attributes of the selected virtual object; identifying, by the virtualization engine, data fields and corresponding data field values in the normalized data structure for the identified physical attributes of the selected virtual object based on the virtualization rules; generating, by the virtualization engine, an error report comprising at least a portion of the identified data fields values; and sending, by the network interface, the error report to the user device.

"12. The method of claim 9, further comprising: receiving, by a virtual overlay engine, the virtual data defining the virtual object; rendering, by the virtual overlay engine, the virtual object in the virtual reality environment on a display; detecting, by a gesture recognition engine, a gesture performed by the user interacting with the virtual object in the virtual reality environment; and sending, by the virtual overlay engine, the user feedback to the virtualization engine identifying the virtual object as the selected virtual object.

"13. The method of claim 12, wherein detecting the gesture performed by the user interacting with the virtual object in the virtual environment comprises detecting the user repositioning the virtual object within the virtual reality environment.

"14. The method of claim 9, further comprising: receiving, by a virtual overlay engine, the virtual data defining the virtual object; rendering, by the virtual overlay engine, the virtual object in the virtual reality environment on the display; detecting, by a voice recognition engine, an audio signal identifying the virtual object in the virtual reality environment; and sending, by the virtual overlay engine, the user feedback to the virtualization engine identifying the virtual object as the selected virtual object.

"15. The method of claim 9, wherein receiving network information from the plurality of data sources comprises: receiving a first portion of network information from a first data source in a first format; and receiving a second portion of the network information from a second data source in a second format, wherein the second format is different than the first format.

"16. The method of claim 9, further comprising displaying, by the virtual overlay engine, at least a portion of the error report in the virtual reality environment.

"17. A network error detection device, comprising: a network interface configured to receive network information from a plurality of data sources; a memory configured to store: a normalized data structure comprising a plurality of data fields; normalization rules configured to map received network information to data fields in the normalized data structure; and virtualization rules configured to map data fields from the normalized data structure to physical attributes of virtual objects within virtual reality environment, wherein: the virtual reality environment is a geographical map comprising a landmark; the virtualization rules map: internal IP addresses to a virtual object type and a starting location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment; external IP addresses to a target location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment; and hardware settings to virtual objects configured to obstruct the movement of other virtual objects within the virtual reality environment; a normalization engine implemented by one or more processors, configured to populate data fields in the normalized data structure with received network information in accordance with the normalization rules; a virtualization engine implemented by the one or more processors, configured to: generate virtual data defining a virtual object for the virtual reality environment, wherein generating the virtual object comprises: selecting an entry linked with a plurality of data fields in the normalized data structure; identifying an internal IP address associated with the entry; determining a virtual object type based on the identified internal IP address, wherein the virtual object type identifies a physical representation of a physical object; determining a starting location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment based on the identified internal IP address; identifying an external IP address associated with the entry; determining a target location on the landmark within the virtual reality environment based on the identified external IP address; and configuring the virtual object to traverse the landmark within the virtual reality environment from the determined starting location to the target location.

"18. The device of claim 17, further comprising: a camera configured to capture gestures performed by a user; and a gesture recognition engine configured to: detect a gesture performed by the user interacting with the virtual object in the virtual reality environment using the camera; and send the user feedback to the virtualization engine identifying the virtual object as the selected virtual object.

"19. The device of claim 18, wherein detecting the gesture performed by the user interacting with the virtual object in the virtual environment comprises detecting the user repositioning the virtual object within the virtual reality environment.

"20. The device of claim 18, further comprising: a virtual overlay engine implemented by the one or more processors, configured to: receive the virtual data defining the virtual object; render the virtual object in the virtual reality environment on a display; and receive user feedback, wherein the user feedback identifies a selected virtual object from among one or more virtual objects; the virtualization engine further configured to: identify physical attributes of the selected virtual object; identify data fields and corresponding data field values in the normalized data structure for the identified physical attributes of the selected virtual object based on the virtualization rules; generate an error report comprising at least a portion of the identified data fields values; and the virtual overlay engine further configured to display the error report."

URL and more information on this patent, see: Thomas, James M.; Shields, Alan W. Network Error Detection Using Virtual Reality Display Devices. U.S. Patent Number 10,963,277, filed March 19, 2020, and published online on April 12, 2021. Patent URL:
http://patft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&d=PALL&p=1&u=%2Fnetahtml%2FPTO%2Fsrchnum.htm&r=1&f=G&l=50&s1=10,963,277.PN.&OS=PN/10,963,277RS=PN/10,963,277

Keywords for this news article include: Business, Internet, Cybersecurity, Data Elements, Data Structures, Computer Network, Money Center Banks, Financial Companies, Information Technology, Bank of America Corporation, Information and Data Traffic, Information and Data Architecture.

Document INTWKN0020210412eh4c00046

U Wire
COLLEGE PRESS RELEASES & WIRE SERVICE

Central Piedmont, Bank of Americavirtual event seeks to support racial equity in higher education, strengthen local workforce and community

781 words
31 March 2021
U-Wire
UWIR
English

Central Piedmont Community College ; Charlotte, NC - news

By

March 31, 2021

Central Piedmont Community College and Bank of America today hosted a virtual event featuring Dr. Tim Renick, executive director of Georgia State University's National Institute for Student Success, who presented, "Georgia State's Journey to Eliminating the Racial Equity Gap." Attendees included Central Piedmont employees, board members and student leaders; Bank of America executives, and Charlotte city and county government officials. Also participating were local higher education partners and community nonprofit leaders in education, workforce development and college and career readiness.

For more than a decade, Dr. Renick has used Georgia State's data to drive sustainable change and eliminate the racial equity gap at his institution. As a result of his work, Georgia State - which is also home to Perimeter College, a major provider of associate degrees and student transfer opportunities in Georgia - annually graduates more African-American students than any other public or nonprofit higher education institution in the country and ranks ninth in the nation for advancing social mobility. Dr. Renick has emerged as a national expert on how colleges and universities can decrease disparities in their graduation rates and achievements based on race, ethnicity, and income.

"At Georgia State, we're motivated by a desire to make an impact, not only in the lives of our own students, but also in the lives of students across the country," said Dr. Renick. "That's why our team at Georgia State University has made such a conscious and significant commitment to dedicating our time and resources to sharing with others the important lessons we have learned."

Dr. Renick's accomplishments at Georgia State complement the equity, diversity, and inclusion goals established and continuously reviewed and enhanced at both Central Piedmont and Bank of America.

Over the past year, Central Piedmont has accelerated its EDI work, hosting a number of events and training sessions for employees and students to attend that support EDI awareness, drive culture change, and reinforce EDI initiatives at all six of its campuses. In addition, the college has looked closely at its talent acquisition and hiring processes to ensure equity and diversity is embedded across all of its areas and departments.

"All of the EDI work Central Piedmont is doing is supported by the college's shared values and strategic goals," explained Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer, Central Piedmont president. "In 2019, the college adopted a new set of guiding values and strategic goals; the desire to reach a greater level of equity throughout the college is found in both.

"Dr. Renick's presentation and the experience of Georgia State provide a path and a set of best practices Central Piedmont can work to incorporate. We want to do all we can to ensure our students achieve success and our faculty and staff feel valued and appreciated."

Similarly, Bank of America has turned its attention toward advancing EDI initiatives within the communities it serves. Last summer, it announced a $1 billion, four-year commitment of support to address economic and racial inequalities that had been accelerated by the global pandemic. As part of that commitment, it pledged $25 million to support career reskilling programs through partnerships with higher education institutions, including community colleges like Central Piedmont.

"Acquiring an education and jobs skills not only improves an employed individual's quality of life but also contributes to the health of our local economy and community. Access to quality, affordable education and job skills training is key to removing economic barriers facing minority individuals and communities," said Charles

Bowman, Bank of America's Charlotte Market president. "Central Piedmont has a proven track record of offering courses and training for roles in the fields most in demand within our community. Bank of America supports the college's focus on helping students of color complete the education and training necessary for entering the workforce and earning a sustainable living wage."

Following his formal presentation to Central Piedmont, Bank of America, and city and county representatives, Dr. Renick individually met with:

Central Piedmont's leadership team to discuss how the college could best advance racial equality, and

Bank of America's market presidents, located across the country, to discuss what other partnership possibilities may exist to help colleges nationwide create sustainable change on their campuses.

A 45-minute recording of Dr. Renick's "Georgia State's Journey to Eliminating the Racial Equity Gap" presentation, followed by a 30-minute Q&A session with attendees will be made available in this space on April 5, 2021.

((Distributed for UWIRE via M2 Communications www.m2.com))

Document UWIR000020210331eh3v001z0

Press Release: Golden Nugget Online Gaming to Participate at the Bank of America Securities Sports Betting and Online Gaming Field Trip Virtual Conference

254 words
15 March 2021
16:30
Dow Jones Institutional News
DJDN
English

Golden Nugget Online Gaming to Participate at the Bank of America Securities Sports Betting and Online Gaming Field Trip Virtual Conference

PR Newswire

HOUSTON, March 15, 2021

HOUSTON, March 15, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Golden Nugget Online Gaming, Inc. (NASDAQ: GNOG) today announced that it will participate at the Bank of America Securities Sports Betting and Online Gaming Field Trip Virtual Conference on March 16, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time.

Thomas Winter, President, will present on behalf of the Company.

About GNOG

Golden Nugget Online Gaming is a leading online gaming company that is considered a market leader by its peers and was first to bring Live Dealer and Live Casino Floor to the United States online gaming market. GNOG was the recipient of 15 eGaming Review North America Awards, including the coveted "Operator of the Year" award in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

View original
content:
http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/golden-nugget-online-gaming-to-participate-at-the-bank-of-america-securities-sports-betting-and-online-gaming-field-trip-virtual-conference-301246907.html

SOURCE Golden Nugget Online Gaming, Inc.

/CONTACT: Katelyn Roche Gosslee, Katelyn@dpwpr.com; Mary Ann Cuellar, MaryAnn@dpwpr.com; Dancie Perugini Ware Public Relations, 713-224-9115; Michael Harwell michael.harwell@gnoginc.com, 713-386-8374

/Web site: https://www.goldennuggetcasino.com

(END) Dow Jones Newswires

March 15, 2021 07:00 ET (11:00 GMT)

Document DJDN000020210315eh3f0015c

Search Summary

Text	(hd=bank of america) and wc>100 and hd=(virtual real estate or virtual properties or digital real esate or digital real assets or digital properties or metaverse properties or digital plots or virtual plots or virtual land or virtual reality platform or manufacturing simulation or virtual simulation or digital twins or virtual manufacturing or immersive learning or mixed-reality learning or metaverse learning or VR learning or AR learning or VR training or virtual recruitment or 3d training or training metaverse or virtual retail or virtual shopping or virtual clienteling or omnichannel shopping or humanising digital retail or immersive virtual stores or 3d virtual store or metaverse shopping or virtual clothing or virtual goods or gaming or digital avatar or digital character or virtual game or 3D avatars or virtual reality or interoperable VR space or digital financial ecosystems or metaverse wallets or robo advisory or virtual financial data or digital bank branches or digital touchpoint or blockchain wallets or digital wallets or digital

	wedding or virtual wedding or virtual event or virtual concert or virtual theme park or virtual classroom or virtual learning or virtual school or immersive learning)
Date	In the last year
Source	All Sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	English
Results Found	25
Timestamp	21 February 2022 18:13

