

Macau SAR Talent Development Committee

Industry upgrade, data talent has become the core driving force for development - Interview with gaming analysis expert Alidad Tash

Alidad Tash (left) was originally an American Iranian. In 2006, he moved from Las Vegas to Macau. Over the last 13 years, he has become a Macao resident, married a Hong Kong-born wife, and has a pair of lovely children. Working in the marketing analysis of gaming in Macau, he has managed more than 5,000 local employees



over the years and has been actively giving local people the opportunity to develop their potential and cultivate over 100 local gambling analysts. One of the "apprentices" Josephine Un (right) is now a colleague in his company.

Since 2002, the gaming industry has modernized for more than a decade. Macao's leading gaming industry has successfully completed its transformation. It has already surpassed Las Vegas in terms of technology, scale and revenue, and has become a world-famous gaming destination. In the process, Macao has attracted a number of overseas talents. What impact have these talents brought to the local area? Today, I will tell you a story about the development of a foreign talent in Macau. The protagonist of the story was the analyst of the two major gaming groups in Macau, and is currently the employer of the local consulting company, Mr. Alidad Tash.



[From Las Vegas to Macau]

At first sight, Mr. Alidad, the striking blue suit made him look energetic. Asked why he chose to move from Las Vegas to Macau, Alidad recalls: "I worked in the Venetian in Las Vegas in the summer of 2005. I came to Macau for a business trip for two weeks. An American colleague asked me why I didn't move to Macau. I didn't care at first, but the thought seems to be lingering in my subconscious: "I am 40 years old, I am eager for some new challenges and opportunities". So in March of the following year I moved to Macau long-term."

At that time, compared with Las Vegas, Macau's gaming industry did not have strong data analytics, and all the gaming venues were like "crossing the river by feeling the stones". Alidad seized the opportunity in the strategic marketing department of Sands and subsequently created the first department to specialize in gaming telemarketing, responsible for marketing analysis of the three casinos in Sands, Venetian and Four Seasons. The traditional practice at the time was that each department's analysis would be reported directly to the department's leaders. But Alidad's department was independent of all departments. He took over the analysis of different departments and brings them together. This independent analysis architecture was new and few people did it.

"In the gaming establishment, there is a science behind everything. What business hours can attract more customers? How to place a gambling table or a slot machine to achieve maximum profit? What should the right pricing be? How can it be most effective to attract and stay through which marketing methods? Staying with important customers? What customer offers or VIP treatments are required? Every detail requires huge data analysis and multiple trials."



2006, with Sands China's strategic marketing department colleagues

Later, the revenue of many gaming venues grew rapidly, in part because strategic marketing analysis was effective and more efficient. The biggest achievement of his department was introducing no-commission baccarat, which became the most popular game in Macau's large-scale gaming venues. Gradually, Macao's major gaming venues began to emulate, replacing traditional practices with new analytical methods. So far, Macau's gaming analysis has reached the top level in the world, far exceeding Las Vegas. In Macau, Alidad has made a bigger world.

Using big data analysis to promote the leading industry, Macau has successfully played its own advantages. However, if Macao wants to build a "one center, one platform" to promote moderate and pluralistic sustainable development of the economy, it must not only apply data collection and analysis to the gaming industry, but also to all walks of life in Macao, including transportation, logistics, and health care; plus smart cities and other fields. All of this requires expertise and technical knowledge to build, improve and strengthen various data systems, and to keep the local system running and keep updating by teaching to and retaining talent.

[Developing local talents in Macau]

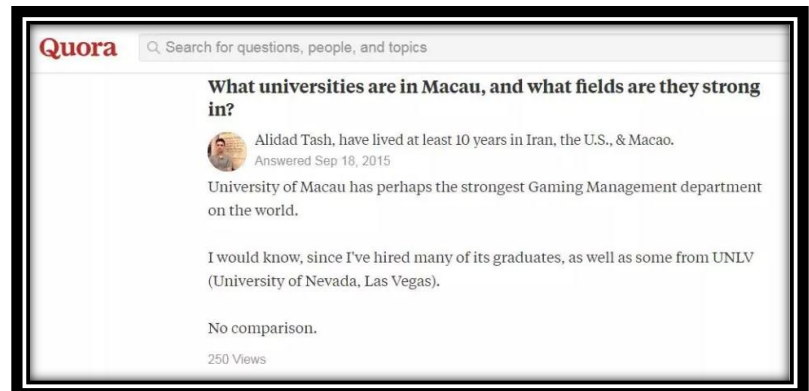
As a pioneer in the field of gaming analysis in Macau, Alidad faced many unknowns and challenges. "When I first joined, the entire department was still in its infancy, with only four analysts. " Because of the lack of sufficient analytical talent, Alidad decided to personally discover, hire and nurture local talent. Under his leadership, the department expanded from four



employees responsible for gambling marketing to 80 employees covering multiple areas: gaming analytics, marketing analytics, hotel revenue management, market research, optimization, telemarketing, gaming tables and slot machine efficiency

optimization. Except for an American and a Japanese, all 200 employees he has employed over the years have been Chinese. Among them, more than 50 full-time employees and 60 part-time employees who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Hotel and Gaming Management run by the University of Macau International Integrated Resorts Management department.

"If I want to recruit from top Ivy League graduates and graduates of the University of Macau's Bachelor of Gaming Management, I must choose the latter. Not only because Macau students are fluent in multiple languages (Cantonese, English and Mandarin), but also



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because they are well versed in Chinese culture and thoughts, as well as the eager and passionate to learn. This is superior to foreign graduates."

Alidad laughed and said: "My department is definitely the number one employer of the University of Macau Gaming Management department!". When the first batch of Gaming Management students from University of Macau Bachelor of Gaming Management graduated 13 years ago, Alidad's department recruited most of them. At that time, it was unclear how competitive local talents were in gaming. "Now think about it is a full-scale experiment." Fortunately, many of the local students he has discovered and nurtured have become the backbone of the team and have been promoted on multiple occasions, becoming the top talents in the industry. Josephine Un is one of them. She was one of the interns recruited by Alidad's department at the time and was his first full-time employee. Today, 13 years later, she still works with him, as the vice president of strategic analysis at Alidad's consulting firm.

Self-confidence and open-mindedness are Alidad's most important qualities. "There is nothing to be afraid of, if you are confident. You can always rise if you fall!" In order to cultivate the self-confidence and resilience of the employees who have just emerged from the society, Alidad actively took them to various senior management to show their skills in front of various C-level management. Gradually, the staff adapted, and remained calm in those situations.



In addition to the careful cultivation and promotion of local employees, he has not forgotten to share his expertise with local people outside the department. He has taught gaming management students' knowledge of gaming marketing, and has created an introductory course in gaming industry for more than 1,000 non-gaming managers to familiarize them with the basic principles of gaming and the positioning and history of Macau.

A good leader will give the team a vision worth paying and inspiring, and some leaders themselves will be a vision. In 2010, Alidad left the Venetian and joined Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd., responsible for two separate and independent departments: the gaming operations department and the marketing analysis department. He eventually left and set up their own consulting company two years ago. At that time, his right hand (Josephine) followed him to the new company. For nurturing talent, it is important to have hands-on guidance and assistance, but it is the best way to lead by example. Alidad's humanized management is undoubtedly the



best example of the talents around him. In the eyes of Alidad, companies need to generously reward excellent employees, provide them with an open, common goal and result-oriented work environment; listen carefully and understand the employees' demands and quickly seek solutions. Sometimes subtle adjustments to the staff shuttle bus timetables, or improving employee meals, or developing mobile applications for shift employees – which are not that expensive for the company – will greatly satisfy the employees.

With strong influence and first-class gambling analysis capabilities, Alidad has led more than 5,300 people – from frontline employees including dealers, slot machine waiters, to gaming table optimization, market analysis and surveys, profit management, mystery customers, etc. The analysis experts have set a new breakthrough in many gaming industry, and they have also led a group of local people to move upwards and keep improving.

[Multiculturalism makes Macau go international]

The “Development Planning Outline of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao Greater Bay Area” recently established the development orientation of Macao. It is necessary to build a world tourism and leisure center, as well as a business cooperation service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and to build a Chinese culture as the mainstream and multiculturalism. Coexisting exchange and cooperation base. Since ancient times, Macao has been serving as a payer of two-way communication between Chinese and Western cultures because of its unique historical background. It has worked and lived in Macao for many years like Alidad, which has brought diverse cultures and values, and also opened up the development of Macau gaming analysis. There are still many foreign talents who have laid a solid foundation for local industry upgrading and talent cultivation. We will continue to delve into different industries and explore more stories of pioneers and enlighteners who promote Macao's local and international integration.