

New technology predicts when you'll stop playing a slot machine

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New technology is headed to a casino near you that can give you a lift when you're down on your slot machine luck or celebrate with you when you win big.

Acres Technology will begin field-testing its new "ticket in-bonus out"—TIBO—system in the weeks ahead in Elko, Nevada. It's an update to the "ticket in-ticket out"—TITO—system that most slot players are familiar with.

But not everybody is enamored with what TIBO would do.

For decades, slot players would drop coins into machines and become overjoyed with the sound of nickels, quarters and dollar coins clattering as they dropped into a metal bin at the base of the machine whenever a jackpot was hit.

Then in the early 1990s, slot machine manufacturers found a new way to generate revenue with the introduction of penny slots. While most players didn't play for pennies, they got satisfaction knowing they'd be able to play more because that low denomination meant a gambling budget could last longer.

Penny slot popularity

That's when TITO came to be because players inserting pennies into slots would have resulted in an overwhelming abundance of copper coins.

So instead, the bill validator was invented and players could acquire 100 credits valued at 1 cent apiece on their machines every time they put a \$1 bill in. No pennies required.

A small company, Five Star Solutions, is credited with inventing TITO. The concept was acquired by the old MGM Corp., and slot machine giant IGT negotiated the patents from MGM to perfect the modern slot machine-player transaction.

Under TITO, once play is completed, a button can be pushed to "cash out"—some with sound effects of coins hitting the coin hopper. When a player cashes out, the slot machine prints a bar coded slip of thermal paper showing how much money was won.

That slip of paper could be taken to a kiosk or a cashier to convert winnings to cash.

But one of the brilliant aspects of printed slips in the later versions of TITO is that slot machines have a reader that enables printed tickets to be replayed on other machines.

If your luck sours on one machine, cash out and play at a different one by inserting the ticket produced by the first machine.

Field test pending

Flash forward to today. Sometime later this year, TIBO is scheduled to make its debut if Acres Technology's [field test](#) is successful. Several casino companies say they're interested in the concept once it's been proved. A field test will be underway at Gold Country Inn & Casino in Elko.

What TIBO will do is produce the same types of payment slips to players as TITO—but they may appear randomly, even before you cash out, and for different reasons.

John and Noah Acres of Acres Technology say the goal is to deliver growth in slot machine play through new incentives for the player.

What kinds of rewards can be given and when would they be delivered? The possibilities are limitless.

Let's say you're playing a machine with TIBO, but you don't have the casino company's loyalty card. One of the tickets you may receive could tell you how many bonus points you could have just earned had you been playing with the card—and that a QR code on the ticket could direct you to a sign-up page and could be used to collect those points if you sign up right away.

That's certainly something casino companies would like—more loyalty card members to which they can market their events.

Let's say you're in the midst of an unlucky streak in your slot play. Through millions of slot plays over the years, casino companies have collected data suggesting at what point a player is most likely to stop playing. TIBO can gauge when a player is reaching that quitting point and print out a ticket that offers the player some free bonus spins to encourage continued action.

And that's where problem gambling issues could come into play.

"My gut reaction was to be mostly appalled by the idea that you would develop individual algorithms around people to try to engage them, especially at that point when it's been determined they're likely to take a break," said Ted Hartwell, the community engagement liaison for the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling, who describes himself as a recovering gambling addict who made his last bet on Sept. 14, 2007.

"One of the things we do know about people who have a gambling problem or may be transitioning into a gambling problem is that those breaks in play are critical to those individuals who may be transitioning into a problem to have a moment of self-reflection and disconnection from the machine," he said. "That may be the moment that they have a little epiphany and may seek out help."

There are other ways TIBO can encourage more play.

Let's say you luckily hit a big payoff. TIBO can help celebrate the moment with a special bonus of free spins or maybe something even grander—how about a free or discounted dinner at one of the casino's restaurants or a show?

Personalized rewards

If someone is playing with a loyalty card, the bonuses can be even more personalized.

Having a birthday or an anniversary celebration? If it's on your player profile, TIBO can deliver something special for you to celebrate those days.

Are you a big fan of the Vegas Golden Knights and you're playing TIBO-enhanced slots during a game, how about a bonus whenever the Knights score a goal? Bonuses like that could be distributed to all players, regardless of whether they're enrolled in a loyalty program.

Or if you're a Dodgers fan and Freddie Freeman hits a home run? Bonus. Or if you're a Raiders fan and Davante Adams scores a touchdown? Bonus. Noah Acres said it's almost like introducing a form of Fantasy Football to a slot machine.

What's in it for casino employees? Plenty. TIBO machines could be programmed to remind players that it may be appropriate to tip the people who serve them drinks or assist them while they play. Noah Acres noted that many people in casinos have no concept of casino tipping protocol and how much they should give.

TIBO will be able to offer a suggestion and even print out a tip ticket

that could be given to any server to cash in.

But Hartwell is hopeful that the [artificial intelligence](#) offered by TIBO might also be able to help compulsive gamblers with messages dispatched to players that encourage them to seek help with their addictions instead of playing more.

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