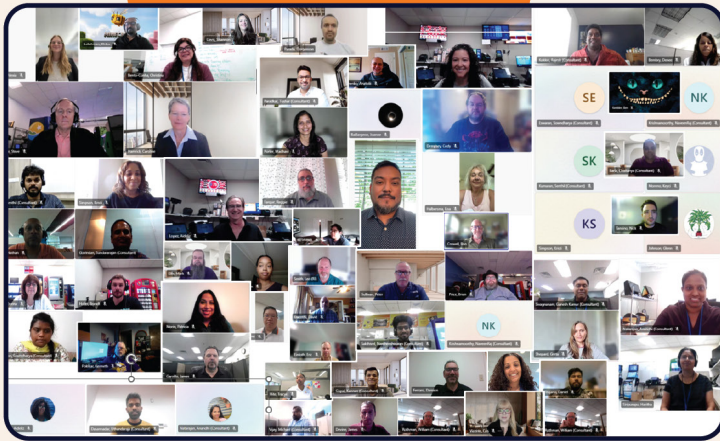# Running the Wave

IGT Lottery – now known as BRIGHTSTAR – helped 26 lotteries cross the finish line for the launch of the recent Mega Millions™ game change. **Victoria Catt, Brightstar Vice President Solutions Delivery,** reflects on her team's coordinated approach.

IGT lottery is now BRIGHTSTAR™

Pictured: Some members of Brightstar's 200+ strong customer delivery team for the Mega Millions game change.

Delivery teams are central to the success of any system implementation. But handling one for multiple customers ahead of a multijurisdictional game change must be another order of complexity. How did your team approach it?

Victoria Catt: Given that we were coordinating efforts among 26 customer delivery teams, the analogy that comes to mind is "The Wave" – that incredible crowd phenomenon where stadiums or arenas erupt with fans standing and raising their arms in a ripple-like motion. It creates a visual effect that travels through the crowd, symbolizing unity and togetherness. We have our own version of The Wave. For us, it's about working and communicating in unison and overcoming barriers to achieve a shared goal – in this case, a major national game change.

Many lotteries and vendor partners were involved in different aspects of the Mega Millions™ launch, and as they can probably attest from their own experiences, this wasn't just any project.

For us, the project involved the contributions of hundreds of people based on the many facets of the project scope. It also required a high level of precision, communication, and expertise. One of the things I'm most proud of is how we demonstrated our approach to collaboration. From the beginning, it was about more

Victoria Catt
Brightstar Vice President
Solutions Delivery

than delivering software and meeting deadlines. It was about ensuring that every milestone was executed as promised on behalf of our customers.

Can you elaborate further on the scope and complexity?

To give just a few examples: Our scope included host systems, retailer applications, self-service, hardware, play slips, digital media, mobile apps, iLottery and more. Our business analysts created the detailed software specifications documenting the system and game changes. Software developers designed and developed code in support of the changes, followed by stringent testing to ensure readiness for implementation. Our Integration engineers supported installations across the U.S. And members of our Project Management teams ensured meticulous attention to project planning.

Can you break down the timeline of how the work unfolded prior to the launch on April 5th?

Victoria Catt: The delivery program officially kicked off in November 2023, when we issued our letter of commitment to customers. At that stage, we defined strict milestones, keeping a tight focus on what was needed to support customers' success. Our goal was to lay the groundwork through collaboration, trust-building, and clear communication.

May of 2024 was a critical moment when the final game rules were approved by the Mega Millions group. We created a foundational team of our most experienced people, who considered the various system versions and customer rules, and built the plans for each customer project kick off.

This baseline team developed the initial game specification and how we would manage every detail of the delivery. For example: How will we handle multi-draw? What does the new ticket look like with a multiplier now included? How does the reporting need to change? And other questions that were critical to outline for consistency across 26 states. These experts have a combined tenure with the company that adds up to centuries of experience. They have worked on most – if not all – of the lottery systems and fully understand not just the software but the industry as a whole.

We also needed to update systems for the new game in the iLottery channel for four of the jurisdictions. This work encompassed five iLottery wagering apps, six convenience apps, and coordination with more than a dozen third parties.

Establishing the baseline team optimized the use of our experts across the 26 delivery teams and, going into the customer acceptance testing phase, we had a defined commitment to high-quality software deliveries that exceeded the lotteries' and players' expectations.

Execution mode began in September 2024, with each delivery team fully staffed and moving forward with precision under the formal structure we'd established. Customer engagement and change management were priorities. We had representatives participating in key customer committees such as Technology and In-Lane to offer guidance and support, and to share questions and answers across the delivery teams. Change control was also paramount, with every code or requirement change sent through the baseline team to be vetted, designed, and distributed.

March 2025 marked the customer acceptance testing phase (or CAT), when the software was installed for customers' final checks and verifications in a controlled, production-like environment. It was our ultimate dress rehearsal for the launch, during which cross-functional teams held daily triage meetings, tracked any defects, changes, or questions, and ensured they were acted upon quickly.

How did you prepare for the go-live phase?

Victoria Catt: The go-live planning began in parallel with the CAT to ensure that war rooms and support plans were established to accomplish a final check of certifications and other obligations. We designed the war rooms to facilitate rapid decision-making, problem-solving and communication, and reduce risk for this challenging implementation.

Over several days during the week before go-live, we completed terminal updates for all 26 customers, downloading the software to more than 400,000 devices across the U.S. We tracked each jurisdiction closely, adjusting the download rates for

Preparing for The Wave

Mega Millions™ Systems Change Timeline

November 2023
Kick-off

May 2024
Plans built for each of the 26 customers

September 2024
Customer engagement and change management

March 2025
Customer acceptance testing

Late March 2025
Terminal updates in preparation for go-live

seamless network performance without disrupting customers' ongoing operations. In the final days, we ran triple checks and verifications of the changes and discussed all aspects among the teams to make sure nothing was overlooked.

Then it was showtime?

Go Live

April 4-5

→ **April 4 morning ET** showtime

→ **April 4, 7 p.m.** roll-out begins

→ **April 4, 11 p.m.** final draw old game

→ **April 5, 1:20 a.m** installations underway across the U.S.

→ **April 5, 1:58 a.m.** first site goes live

→ **April 5, 5:00 a.m.** 7 jurisdictions live

→ **April 5, 8:00 a.m.** 22 jurisdictions live

→ **April 5, 10:00 a.m.** All 26 systems across the U.S. were fully operational, delivering the new Mega Millions gaming experience to players

Yes! April 4 started as a normal day for many of us, perhaps a little earlier than usual from the mix of excitement and nervous energy, knowing it would be a long night ahead.

By 7 p.m., when the rollout began, each of our 26 customer delivery teams – representing over 200 people – was connected through chat communications and a central mega-bridge to log key milestones and status updates, and to collect and document everything into our overall tracking.

First up was the final draw on the old software. Until this point, players could purchase tickets only for this last draw on the old game. After that, we disabled wagering for the game so that our nightly processing and installations could begin.

By 1:20 a.m., installations were underway across customer systems, ushered along by our delivery teams working seamlessly to accommodate each of our customers' unique maintenance start times, when sales are disabled according to local rules.

Over the next 10 hours, the wave of work took place across the U.S. as systems were remotely updated with the new software and sales were reenabled. Our first site went live at 1:58 a.m., kicking off a ripple of excitement across the teams. By sunrise, we had crossed major milestones, celebrating small victories in real time.

By 8 a.m. on April 5, we had 22 jurisdictions up and running with live sales. By 10 a.m., we marked an incredible achieve-ment as all 26 systems across the U.S. were fully operational, delivering a powerful new gaming experience to players.

For some of us, the morning even included very early trips to stores to wait for a player

to come in and purchase the new Mega Millions game, to verify that all the other functionality at retail was performing as designed.

While we were all very tired, we were also incredibly proud of what we had accomplished together. We finished our night shifts and hoped to get a few hours' sleep, with a last check that our phones would ring loud enough to wake us, just in case we needed to bounce back into action.

What lessons can be learned from such a project?

Victoria Catt: The Mega Millions game change wasn't just a technical milestone. It was really a testament to the power of coordinated teamwork, strategic foresight, and rigorous quality control. Success came from everyone, across teams and hierarchies, aligning in that "Wave" to achieve a shared goal.

Structured processes and strict change controls ensured consistency and minimized errors in this large-scale project. Another lesson has to do with adaptability. Circumstances and customer requirements can shift rapidly. Staying agile while remaining disciplined was key.

And finally, celebrating the wins as each go-live was accomplished helped us keep the momentum strong and the teams motivated.

Any closing thoughts?

Victoria Catt: Projects like these reaffirm why Brightstar is a trusted global lottery solutions leader. While the work itself was challenging, it was also exhilarating and meaningful for us.

Standing back and witnessing the "Wave" we created within our teams was unforgettable. It reinforced my belief in the power of togetherness and innovation to keep moving the lottery industry forward. ■

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