



## PGRI INTERVIEWS

# Forward-Thinking Global Leadership: IGT Lottery transitions to BRIGHTSTAR

**Renato Ascoli, Chief Executive Officer Global Lottery**

**PGRI INTRODUCTION:** Newly reborn in anticipation of the separation from IGT's Gaming and Digital Business, the company now known as Brightstar Lottery has a legacy of innovation, leadership, and a steadfast commitment to the lottery industry.

From its origins as GTECH and Lottomatica to its position today as a pure play global lottery leader, the company is known for its depth of experience, expertise, and commitment to elevating the lottery sector. With a presence in more than 100 jurisdictions across six continents, an impressive track record as a lottery operator in diverse regions around the world, and as the primary technology provider to seven of the world's top 10 lotteries, Brightstar has positioned itself as a trusted partner in the evolving gaming landscape.

At the heart of Brightstar's success lies a drive to evolve lotteries and revolutionize how the industry engages players. This focus has yielded groundbreaking games, connected digital experiences to evolve the retail channel, and innovative purchase and play solutions. These offerings not only prioritize player engagement but also deliver the data and insights to empower lotteries to expand their businesses in unprecedented ways. Brightstar's impact is evident in its reputation as a go-to resource for lotteries seeking to adapt and thrive in a changing market. In an exclusive interview, Renato Ascoli, Brightstar CEO Global Lottery, shares the company's vision, leveraging its rich heritage and forward-thinking mindset to empower customers and lottery dreams around the world.

**Paul Jason:** With the seamless transition from IGT Lottery to Brightstar, customers are retaining a trusted partner yet also getting a chance to “meet you again for the first time.”

**Renato Ascoli:** It’s true, and this separation has distilled our own vision of what we want to mean to customers and to the industry going forward. We retain some familiar “traits,” you could say, such as prioritizing reliability and trust, and reemphasizing our commitment to a Customer First mindset. This includes ensuring that our leadership works closely and directly with customers, that we are listening to their feedback and acting on it. With the current momentum around industry evolution, as various change-agents continue to emerge and impact the lottery business, we want to offer a clear vision, ideas, and leading-edge solutions to help customers navigate the path in line with their particular goals.

This relates to an aspect of the company that is new, which is our scope: With

● With a nearly 50-year history of reliability, innovation, and leadership in lottery, Brightstar brings a future-forward mindset to help lottery customers around the world succeed in an environment of digital adoption, shifting player expectations, and a profusion of gaming choices.

a highly experienced management team and a streamlined business now laser-focused on lottery, we can be even more agile in helping our lottery partners see and act on opportunities to achieve more for the good causes they support. Our operator role in Italy and in diverse regions around the world, along with our extensive global footprint, provide us a unique perspective that can help our customers grow and evolve their business. We also aim to further increase our speed to market in delivering exceptional products, ideas, and technology across the lottery value chain.

Ultimately, Brightstar reflects this single-mindedness and an ambition to reach higher. I have heard these sentiments echoed in discussion groups with our employees, who say they are excited to be even more nimble, to further focus our investments and take our lottery customers to another level in their evolution. We’re energized about sharing our products, solutions, and operational experience to help customers fulfill their vision for the future.

#### **How will you approach the goal of advancing possibilities for customers?**

**Renato Ascoli:** With a renewed commitment to putting customers first in all that we do, we are focusing and strategically investing across four interconnected areas of the lottery business to consistently deliver value to customers, starting with enabling play anywhere. Here we have a strong foundation in our longstanding market leadership in retail point of sale technology and innovation. Consider our new terminals that ensure a smaller counter footprint with top efficiencies; our advances in lottery vending and cutting-edge optimization analytics and services; and established relationships with top retailers. We have also introduced solutions such as LotteryLink, a plug-and-play device to expand access to lottery in-lane, and capabilities like our Connected Play solution to bridge the retail and digital channels, giving players a more seamless purchase and play experience.

The second area of focus is game innovation to engage players with more fun and winning experiences. For example, we have given players more strategic ways to play with Cash Pop™, a draw game that is attracting new groups of players in 16 jurisdictions and growing organically into a national game. Our advanced Infinity Instants™ printing platform has opened the door to entirely new game mechanics. Our digital game studios have developed a diverse and engaging game Portfolio, with more than 200 instant games across categories—including bespoke licensed-branded options and record-breaking progressive jackpots. They are now developing around three dozen new instant games annually bolstered by AI-driven creative and testing. And we retain our standout licensed properties, which offer recognizable titles that resonate with players across instant and instant formats.

Third is helping to build stronger connections with players. This includes the ability to leverage AI-driven tools and predictive analytics through CRM systems and our Player Marketing Services, to help lotteries enhance player engagement, optimize campaign targeting and delivery, and drive sales growth through iLottery and Connected Play.

This pillar also includes unique on-site tools such as our new Digital Menu Board solution, which enhances the visibility of instant games at the retail point of sale and is integrated with the lottery terminal application, making it easy for retailers to update their digital menu displays to reflect their inventory in real time. And our Retail Market Insights tool, the industry’s only national lottery sales database, provides lottery and retail partners with actionable data to shape promotional strategies and identify high-opportunity areas.

#### **What I’m hearing is that you want to offer customers the most advanced thinking and capabilities, and each lottery can adapt whatever tools or services they need to suit their vision of growth?**

**Renato Ascoli:** Yes, and to know that in doing so, they are collaborating with a partner that hasn’t focused their

# Brightstar at a Glance

The primary technology provider to

## 26/46

lottery jurisdictions in the U.S.

Primary technology provider to

## 7/10

world's largest lotteries

Serves nearly

## 90

lottery customers worldwide

Trusted to operate Italy's Lotto concession, the world's largest, for

## 30+ years,

through constant innovation and the introduction of cutting-edge technology

vision on just one area in isolation. When, at the start of the separation process, we asked ourselves, what do we carry forward and offer to enable our customers' business strategies and fuel industry growth, we recognized a point of difference: We maintain a holistic vision that considers each aspect of lottery's potential evolution, enabling us

to offer products and solutions across the entire lottery value chain. We grow lotteries ourselves using compelling solutions that we have trialed and proven in the field. This perspective equips us to be a bold partner in the range of practical solutions we can apply and in the level of collaboration we offer our lottery partners to implement solutions that serve their strategic goals.

### What is the fourth pillar of focus?

**Renato Ascoli:** It is centered on reshaping the lottery landscape with efficiency and scalability, continuing to push the boundaries of what is possible to deliver smarter, faster, and more efficient solutions.

Migrating customers' systems to the cloud, for example, is a game-changer for scalability, adaptability, and deployment speed. Through AI and machine learning integration, our cloud solutions are already enabling faster time-to-market, more seamless feature updates, and enhanced performance tailored to customers' needs. Upgrading the iLottery platform to our seamless, scalable cloud solution has brought up to a 20% revenue increase to our customers.

Also part of this pillar is our ability to offer cross-jurisdictional insights, a data-centric approach that enables lotteries to make better informed decisions and create tangible operational improvements. And we will continue working to expand the availability of cashless payment options across retail and vending, aligning with evolving player preferences and market trends.

### Lotteries play a role in delivering important benefits to local communities. Does this come into play with the new company, when you think about engaging the next generation of players?

**Renato Ascoli:** The way lotteries contribute to society through good-causes funding is an important part of the industry's identity. Emerging generations are likely to resonate with this connection, perhaps much more so than in the past. We support lotteries in this goal, and we do not lose sight of the rest of the picture, which includes not

only promoting the responsible nature of the industry and advocating for that, but also prioritizing player health, enabling people to play responsibly and thoughtfully. Positive play is embedded in our culture and the solutions we offer to lotteries. So, too, are our efforts to apply innovative thinking to industry sustainability and competitiveness.

We are ambitious in each of these areas, which are all part of this long-established form of play. The industry's connection to community and efforts to embed sustainability can speak loudly – more loudly than in the past – about what differentiates lottery and makes it an appealing form of entertainment.

### Finally, what makes you optimistic these days?

**Renato Ascoli:** It's the potential for lotteries. More is possible today than the industry has known in its long history. The paradigm shift in how our customers engage with and serve players is well underway, and it continues to propel our people to apply new ideas and achieve more for customers and players.

Knowing that our customers can leverage the expertise of world-class people to deliver on those opportunities is also cause for optimism. Because the lottery category itself does face a fundamental challenge – it is increasingly in competition with many other entertainment options. Yet, it is also the one gaming option that is structured with a commitment to responsibility and good causes, as we were just discussing. It's in this larger context that we are defining our role and working to sustain and elevate the category.

We know that to stay ahead we must keep changing too, and this, in itself, is an optimistic stance. The new brand represents a commitment, what we aspire to live up to. We are known for quality, for trustworthiness and technological innovation. We can keep the best of our identity and continue to be a catalyst for what's next. ■

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# Q & A with Secretary John Davis and the Florida Lottery Team

**Paul Jason:** Do you try to preserve a product mix that drives growth in draw-based games? Or does the product mix not matter that much as long as net funds to good causes continues to increase every year?

Absolutely: Maintaining a healthy product mix—with targeted strategies for Draw game growth—is key to sustainable growth. While our overarching goal is to maximize funding for education, we know that a balanced, engaging portfolio helps drive consistent participation across a broad player base. This approach helps stabilize revenue during non-jackpot periods and mitigates the impact of payout variance.

That's why Florida has made strategic, sustained investment in strengthening our Draw game lineup. Over the past decade—particularly since the first billion-dollar jackpot—we've taken deliberate steps to reduce jackpot dependency and build long-term resilience in this category. That includes:

- Rebranding and optimizing in-state games
- Launching new offerings such as **PICK 2**, **PICK 5**, **CASH POP**, and **CASH4LIFE**
- Introducing add-on features to increase play flexibility
- Adjusting draw times to expand access
- Adding midday and additional weekly draws
- Running targeted promotions to drive engagement

This approach has helped us maintain momentum in the Draw category, even during periods of low jackpots, ensuring stable revenues and continued contributions to Florida's students.

**Do players want a range of price points in the draw games like they do in the Scratch-Off games?**

We've seen that price sensitivity varies significantly between product categories. Regarding draw games, while there was reluctant acceptance from casual players following previous price increases from \$1

to \$2, the jump to \$5 has alienated a larger group of players, including core players, resulting in a 40% drop in transactions.

That's why we remain committed to preserving a full range of price points in both Draw and Scratch-Off games. In Scratch, for example, we've observed a more natural migration to higher price points. Players are often drawn to the stronger value proposition: better odds, bigger prizes, and a more immersive experience. This shift happens organically, not because we've removed lower-priced options, but because players see the benefit.

Ultimately, choice matters. Providing options across the pricing spectrum helps keep the Lottery accessible while encouraging gradual engagement with higher-tier products.

**Are Lottery Vending Machines the wave of the future or are we seeing retailers develop new ways to serve the consumer?**

Self-service is absolutely growing, and Lottery Vending Machines are a big part of that trend—generating over 13.5% of total sales last year. They also play a strategic role by extending our footprint across Florida's busy retail landscape, increasing both visibility and accessibility, especially in high-traffic locations.

But convenience should never come at the cost of the customer experience. Take for example, a recent visit I made to a store that had completely eliminated staffed checkouts. Trying to navigate a self-checkout system with a cart full of construction materials wasn't only inefficient but also frustrating. It reminded me that technology should enhance service, not replace it entirely.

Lottery is no different. Our market research consistently shows that while some players enjoy the speed of self-service, many still prefer the personal connection and assistance that come with traditional counter sales. In fact, retailers that offer both tend to outperform those that go all-in on automation.

Self-service is here to stay, but our strategy is to integrate it thoughtfully, enhancing the customer journey without removing the

human element that drives long-term loyalty and trust.

**How effective is your Lottery Sales Performance Incentive Plan? Describe it, how you got approval to implement it, and how well it is working?**

Our sales incentive plan has been a tremendous success. From the start, we designed it to be a shared success story—for our sales reps, our retailers, and ultimately for Florida students, families and communities. It rewards performance, encourages innovation, and aligns everyone's efforts toward a common goal: increasing revenue to fund education in Florida. In that sense, the program truly pays for itself.

When I joined the Lottery in 2020, launching a performance-based incentive program was one of my top priorities. As someone with a background in sales, I've always believed in the principle that you have to invest in growth to achieve it. It required close collaboration with the Governor's Office, our state legislators, and their staff to bring the program to life—and their support was instrumental in getting it across the finish line.

Since implementation, we've seen measurable and meaningful results:

- Scratch-Off sales are exceeding early projections
- New game activation rates are strong from day one
- Float percentages remain low
- Retailer recruitment is reaching record highs statewide

The beauty of this model is that it doesn't just generate more revenue—it creates momentum. It motivates teams, fosters accountability, and builds a culture of continuous improvement. We're committed to building on this momentum by refining and expanding the incentive plan in the years ahead. As always, our focus is on delivering a positive return on investment and making data-driven decisions that support our mission to fund education in Florida. ■