

Featured “40 Under 40” Winner: International Expertise

by Christopher Irwin

Michael Zhu

The Innovation Group

Vice President, Operations Planning & Analysis

Michael Zhu’s passion for the hospitality industry sparked during his undergraduate education as a student ambassador for Peking University’s Joint International study and exchange programs. Being an ambassador presented opportunities for him to meet and interact with a varied set of stakeholders and leaders within the ivy league schools and other prestigious universities worldwide. The ambassadorship lent itself to the hospitality industry, furthering his interest in that industry, an interest which has continued to this day. Powered by China’s achievements as well as by his career development goals in a global landscape, Michael attended the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University where he earned his MBA degree in Hospitality Management. With a China-based cultural background, and a strong philosophical understanding of the leisure industry gained from his undergraduate studies, Michael considered gaming to be a sector so exceptional that he has since focused on it with enthusiasm.

Las Vegas Sands Corp (LVS) marked the start of his journey in the gaming industry, where he applied his ample analytical

and critical thinking skills toward strategic planning, business analysis, financial modeling, and operational optimization. Several newly opened integrated resorts (IRs) in the Asia-Pacific region - including numerous Sands China Cotai IR properties in Macau and Marina Bay Sands in Singapore – reflected his philosophical approach to gaming analysis.

Michael's professional experience and critical thinking proficiencies had served him well when he accepted the position of Vice President of Operations Planning & Analysis at The Innovation Group's Denver office in early 2014. At The Innovation Group, he continues to prove an invaluable member of the team, utilizing his 15+ years of professional experience in related sectors. Considering his unique perspective, understanding, and experience in the Asia-Pacific markets, Michael has focused mainly on large-scale IR development and operations in the region, an outstanding growth sector for The Innovation Group. Contributing his operational and financial expertise, he has taken a leadership role at The Innovation Group, guiding it toward more diverse services to its clients.

Says Michael to his fellow gaming industry colleagues, "Interest makes you enjoy what you do, but passion enables you to make things better." He has been particularly passionate about Asia's competitive IR atmosphere, and about the IRs with unique cultural elements and ethnic backgrounds. The philosophical pursuit of gaming development and operations empowers him to expand his

knowledge and expertise in the international markets for The Innovation Group.