Javier Picola has been CEO of the gaming division of Grup Peralada since 2010. His professional background is extensive, having worked for a variety of companies in different industries and countries throughout his career. In the 90s, he was appointed managing director of the casino division of Cirsa, one of the largest gaming conglomerates in the world, a role which prepared him well for his current position within Grup Peralada.

“I was responsible for pushing the casino division forward from a very small local stance to a much larger international dimension,” Javier says. “I was there for seven years between 1993 and 2000 and then I decided to move on. It was very strenuous having to travel back and forth to South America constantly.

“When I decided to look for new opportunities, something came up that was both interesting and totally different—Indo, the leader in Spain’s ophthalmic lens industry. You might ask what it might have in common with the gaming industry, and the answer is nothing; however, the business was looking for a far-reached international expansion and they saw the potential in me to develop a national company into a worldwide business. As I had achieved that quite successfully during my years at Cirsa, Indo decided to give me the opportunity to replicate that strategy.”

Indo was already the leader in the Spanish market and Javier managed to expand its presence into the US, South America, and other countries in Europe. After seven years, he took a sabbatical to spend more time with his family before later joining Grup Peralada.

Grup Peralada is based in Barcelona and is owned by the well-known Suqué-Mateu family. It was founded in 1904 and has diversified operations in leisure, wine, and industry, besides greatly sponsoring arts and culture. The gaming division is its core business and Javier was asked to lead it following some informal conversations years before his appointment. “I met them years ago because the casino industry in Spain is rather small,” he explains. “We had some friendly talks to see if in the future there would be room for collaboration and that possibility came up in late 2009.”

Javier was attracted to the role for three reasons: he thoroughly enjoyed the gaming industry, he liked to work for family-owned companies, and the Suqué-Mateu family and by extension Grup Peralada had an impeccable reputation as the leading player in Spain’s casino industry.

“The Spanish casino industry was and still is, to some extent, a very closed market. There are some 40 casinos and no new licenses so they have all been around for the past 30 years. Since the late 70s, Grup Peralada had been a well-established company, but had not changed much or increased its business focus over the years. It was doing reasonably

Grup Peralada’s gaming division is on a journey of international expansion, under the guidance of a highly experienced CEO who is leading it to success.

Images courtesy of Grup Peralada
The thing I like most about family-owned companies is how quickly you can go to the sources of strategic direction and decision-making. There is only one step between myself and the board.” - Javier Picola

Offering customers the best products and services

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“Logical Games 46 is proud to be one of the leading suppliers of gaming products of Grupo Peralada. More than a business relationship, it has been a partnership working together on the design and adaptation of the products to the market.” - Javier Sanzalo Nettola, CEO, Logical Games 46

When we work with our slot suppliers they can design or adapt their technology to be later certified by the regulator.

Another relationship that is critically important to Grupo Peralada is the one it has with its own employees. Javier wants to have the best employees in his team and to truly empower them, which in turn will prove beneficial for the company. “In the past, we had many people with a lot of knowledge, who were honest, dedicated, and loyal, and had been engaged with the company for a long time; however, they rarely had the opportunity to make a contribution, to take a risk, or even to make a mistake, as they were buried at the bottom of the company’s organisational ranks.

“Just recently, we also launched a program of innovation within the company. Anyone in any of our operations around the world—2000-plus people—can submit a very innovative idea to an R&D committee. The ideas are evaluated, the promoters get rewarded, and eventually, if the ideas are considered worthwhile, they are implemented. We are even considering giving those innovative employees a share of the profit generated by their initiatives. So we are really making this company change very much in that respect, in terms of people and innovation.”

“Jim if you ask me what the main changes of the company have been in these past years, I would say that it hasn’t been the international expansion, the change in business model, or the greater operating efficiencies. The all-important main change is that now we have the best people in the company making key decisions, no matter who they are, what their age is, or how long they have been on board.

Empowered employees, satisfied clients, and innovative ideas, that is what the company is all about now.”

Javier is committed to continue leading Grupo Peralada’s gaming division to future success by strengthening its international expansion, nurturing its key operational relationships, cherishing its clients, empowering its people, and promoting innovation.