

# ICE Heating Up for Summer

*It's Full Steam Ahead for the Manufacturer in 2021*

**T**welve long months ago, ICE was returning from New York's nine-week state-imposed company shutdown due to Covid-19. ICE said for those nine weeks, none of their 143 employees could enter the building.

While production was shut down, the leadership team, accounting team, human resource department and the creative team stayed busy from home working on keeping the company alive and viable. They also brainstormed any possible new product developments that could help them survive during the pandemic.

ICE President Joe Coppola said those early months of the pandemic were "filled with uncertainty and instability." It became even more unstable when states like his reopened only to be closed again weeks later.

"But the story we have lived to tell



**The real story** of getting through the pandemic at ICE is about its people, who were all-in, according to company President Joe Coppola. Now that more of the industry's locations have reopened, they are setting out to re-educate customers on the merits of their newest games, *Monopoly Roll 'N' Go*, *All In*, *Hoop It Up* and *Snowball Toss*.

families and have fun again outside the confines of their homes."

It's been no cakewalk getting

today is one of hope and optimism," Coppola said, citing business slowly returning to normal and in-person trade shows back on across the country. Still, he notes that entertainment has been one of the hardest hit industries during the pandemic, saying that FECs, bars, restaurants and movie theaters in almost all cases have been the last to open.

"Entering summer this year, ICE's game back orders are very close to the types of back orders we saw in 2017, 2018 and 2019, all of which were some fantastic years, pre-pandemic," Coppola reported. "We believe through the hard work and resilience of many, our industry will get back to the optimism and amazing vibe we saw prior to this horrible virus outbreak. The roll-out of the vaccine worldwide is making a difference and it's once again giving people everywhere the confidence and security to go back into FECs with their





**Elie Harfouche**

Production Manager



**Mark Conlon**

Production Manager



**Voicu Nicorici**

Technical Production  
Manager



**Jonathan Inglesby**

Critical Assembly Manager

back to this point. Coppola detailed the many trials and tribulations his company faced this past year-plus. “We’re a production facility here – we never had the option of



**Jeremy Hall**

Woodshop Manager

‘working remote.’ We need people on site to build games and ship spare parts. In preparation for reopening the factory, a team of very loyal ICE employees worked diligently on doing everything possible to create the safest and healthiest work environment possible.”

He said the business set up very detailed protocols that every employee needed to follow. There were plastic shields, hand sanitizer stations throughout the building and a constant supply of approved face masks.

Coppola pointed out that the ICE workforce has never shown so much adaptability and flexibility. “You name it and people stepped up,” he said. “No task was too big or too small anywhere in the company for anyone.”

At the same time, ICE was preparing to launch what they believe to be one of their best redemption games in the past 10 years – *Monopoly Roll ‘N Go*.

“It was very much a Catch-22 situation,” Coppola explained. “We didn’t want to release such an awesome title in the middle of the worst pandemic in 100 years and with business at such a



**Dave Bartel**

Technical Service Manager

low point, but we also knew we needed it for survival and to keep our people working and busy while so few orders were coming in.

“We were also fortunate that *Monopoly* gained a reputation in the market quickly and if operators were going to buy one new redemption game at that time, it was going to be this one. *Monopoly* orders along with *Super Chexx* games for the home market and spare parts basically helped ICE sustain through the remainder of 2020.”

He added that *Monopoly* not only met the high expectations ICE had for it but exceeded them. Orders are now coming in for the game domestically and worldwide as the product hit the markets in Europe, Australia, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America as countries have slowly opened up.

“*Monopoly* has such an incredible physical presence and unique LED-lit dice play mechanism,” Coppola said. “Not only does the game make fortunes on location, but it screams to players and customers: ‘We are back open!’



**Francois Mevs**

Technical Service

Good times are coming back. It’s the type of game that captivates the players and quickly reminds them this is why we go out to be entertained. You can’t replicate the

*Monopoly* experience on a home console or iPad.”

Additionally, ICE is also once again aggressively selling other new titles such as *All In*, *Hoop it Up* and *Snowball Toss*. Coppola mentioned that all the games debuted in 2019 but have had very little time in the market due to the shutdowns of 2020.

“Each of these titles showed great promise in the first quarter of 2020 only to be slowed by the lockdown,” he assessed. “ICE’s game portfolio is as strong if not stronger now than ever and it’s just a matter of re-educating the customers on what each of these new products deliver in terms of the play experience and appeal.”

## Collaborating With Sting

Another move ICE made right before the pandemic that brings some excitement to their sales team is the addition of the popular Sting product line. “We’ve worked with Mark Sprenger for many years and consider



**Richard Bramson**Parts and Customer  
Service Manager**Jen Draves**Parts Customer Service  
Representative**Shawna Bancroft**Parts Customer Service  
Representative**Rebecca Hirsch**Sales and Production  
Coordinator

him to be one of the most creative designers in coin-op,” Coppola said. “Some of our past collaborations like *Spacey Racers*, *Rock’n Moon Rally* and *Hammerhead* were very successful titles over many years. We’re honored to work with Mark again on both his motion-based rides as well as some other merchandisers and skill redemption games.”

Some of the current rides ICE will be selling and servicing include *KC Cobra*, *Alien Boogey Patrol* and *Bug Blaster*. ICE and Sprenger are also teaming up on some new developments and designs that they hope to have ready for IAAPA 2021 and for sales in 2022. ICE plans an aggressive sales and marketing promotion of the products for the summer and fall.

“Mark’s talent is a great complement to our team and his unique and quality-designed games add to our diversified lineup,” Coppola said. “His motion rides are some of the highest earners in that category of product and we’re excited to now carry them and be actively selling products that have such a great reputation in the market already. Between the existing products and new developments, this area of our lineup will be significant as the world opens up.”

## Home Game Market

While *Monopoly* kept the commercial business afloat, *Super Chexx* bolstered ICE’s home sales. Coppola reported that in the midst of the more

**Chantel Czaja-Drabik**

Parts Shipping Coordinator

**Bruce Storch**

Parts Shipping Coordinator

grueling months of the pandemic when Covid was at its peak, there was an interesting upward trend in the sales of the iconic bubble hockey game. “We know founder Ralph Coppola is surely smiling down on this one,” he said.

The original game that started the

company back in 1982 mainly goes to the home market today... to the tune of about 95% of sales. *Super Chexx* is most often placed in finished basements, “man caves” and home game rooms all over.

“It was clear to the company that while people were going into lockdown and working remote from their homes, they were also spending lots more on their homes on everything from

outdoor deck updates to upgrading their in-house family entertainment,” Coppola said. “The creative forces at ICE recognized an opportunity.”

In June 2020, with the *Super Chexx* trend in full swing, company COO Drew Krouse gathered his creative



**Matt Schupe**, the factory’s *Monopoly* lead man, puts the finishing touches on a game before it goes to quality control.



ICE's new [homearcadegames.com](http://homearcadegames.com) showroom.

development team together and made the move to put nearly all of the company's development resources into creating a new line of Arcade Pro home games.

The idea from the outset was to create the same high quality, high performance games ICE brings to arcades, but now give the consumers access to these games for their homes while they were confined during the pandemic.

Coppola said Krause and the team "worked literally around the clock" to deliver two brand-new concepts – *Gametime Pro* and *Iceball Pro*, which came to market in December 2020. The machines were home recreations of their basketball and alley roller arcade games.

"We're happy to report that home game sales have increased each month since and the momentum has been strong," Coppola touted. "ICE has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the buyers. One post on social media said, 'Thank you ICE for delivering two new games to my home that gives me a few minutes of feeling like I'm down at D&B again.'"

In conjunction with this new development, ICE worked closely with its website development partner, Matt Hasselback at Clevermethod and his team, to create a new online website and overall business plan and strategy at [www.homearcadegames.com](http://www.homearcadegames.com). Unlike ICE's business model over the past 40

years, this was a true business-to-consumer sale. The website went live last November.

"Coppola was quick to point out, "this was yet another example during this crazy pandemic of the power of people coming together and collaborating creatively under very stressful and challenging circumstances," Coppola remarked. "While I am largely anxious to forget much of 2020, situations like this and what our creative team, led by Marcio Vieira and Matt's team, accomplished last year. It was nothing short of spectacular and not only kept the creative juices flowing, it gave the people at both companies hope and brought positive energy to everyone at ICE and Clevermethod."

He noted that Josh Krouse was brought on to head up the home game sales division. "Josh approached us with his ideas and concepts of how to expand this business largely through digital and social media marketing," Coppola said. "Clearly it's a very different world to coin-op and our normal business-to-business model. Josh brings an energy and passion to the company, but also a different competence than what we had before, and the ability to focus solely on this consumer market, which we will always handle very separate from the coin-operated amusement business."

Josh Krouse added: "On top of these

great new games going to the home market, we are also seeing an interest at the corporate level where companies looking to bring employees back to work are trying to create new 'fun spaces' as part of reorganizing their office space. Companies are contacting us and looking for us to help them build out these spaces with a whole array of consumer arcade games."

## Parts & Service, Woodshop and Production

It's not unusual when challenging times hit for certain individuals and teams to step up and respond at another level – even above and beyond their prior high performance. Coppola says that's a very accurate description of his Parts & Service, Woodshop and Production departments.

"These teams have always prided themselves on performing at high levels and are always some of the busiest and most effective at ICE, but the pandemic brought out an even higher level of focus and achievement," Coppola boasted. "From Day 1, Richard Bramson and Dave Bartel, our Parts & Service managers, and their teams showed an incredible dedication and focus to keeping customers up and running and delivered top-quality service even while our company was effectively in lockdown.

"They went above and beyond responding to customers' requests at all times and keeping this side of the business active, especially in 2020 when we were clearly in a very compromised position."

He added: "We also had some opportunities presented to us to keep our CNC's and lasers in the woodshop working at a time we didn't need them for games. My brother Daniel, with the assistance of COO Drew Krouse and CFO Craig Erhard, worked with some companies locally to quote and bid on some plastic shield work. They coordinated with Jeremy Hall, our Woodshop manager and his incredible team to bring in some very important sales, again at a time we desperately needed





**Carl Andrews**, critical assembly tech, builds a “Mega Marquee” for *Monopoly*.



**Don Anderson**, CNC operator, works on secondary operations for *Monopoly*.

any revenue possible. It was not easy to switch gears like this and to do so at a time when many other factories were also looking to try to do the same. Major kudos to so many here at ICE that worked diligently day and night to bring in this business and then deliver the product in a timely manner.”

Coppola noted that for each of the key personnel mentioned in this article,

there are three others just as important and playing just as key of a role at ICE. He reiterated what has been a theme in *RePlay* coverage of the company in the past 40 years: “It’s the people at ICE who make us who we are and make our culture so special. Without our people, it wouldn’t matter if we had *Cyclone*, *Deal or No Deal*, *Wheel of Fortune*, *Iceball*, *Down the Clown*, *Super Chexx*

or the many other titles. It takes the full team and full commitment of everyone here to deliver these games and then support them.”

## Let the Good Times Roll Again

As the summer of 2021 kicks off, ICE is hopeful the pandemic is in the rearview mirror. “We feel confident we survived and in some crazy ways thrived at times in the past year,” Coppola said. “It was a grueling year by all accounts...not anything I’d ever want to experience again in any way. However, we have our full ICE team intact and we are feeling as optimistic as ever. Our sales team can’t wait to get out in front of customers face to face again, and our development team has four new product designs in the pipeline covering a wide range of different types of games and keeping the ICE game portfolio diversified.

“Our idea now is to be as aggressive, if not more aggressive, than we’ve ever been. We see huge opportunities in many markets and with many customers. We’re energized and expect good times ahead.”

Learn more by visiting [www.icegame.com](http://www.icegame.com).



**Production Manager** Elie Harfouche is certainly a busy man as a day’s output at the ICE factory finds 25 different and active production lines running.