

# trafficology

AFFILIATE FOCUS BY GAMBLING INSIDER

APRIL 2019

## INSIDE

- **AFFILIATECON SOFIA 2019 KEEPS GROWING**
- **SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING VIA FOOTBALL CLUBS**
- **A NEW CRM PROBLEM**
- **PLAY HARD: PHIL NAGY, CEO, WINNING POKER NETWORK**

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GOOD BUSINESS WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH



# PROCEED WITH CAUTION

The barriers to success facing new affiliates

# MAJOR RISE IN CHELTENHAM TRAFFIC DURING 2019 FESTIVAL

## WINNERS

Tradedoubler – The digital marketer has announced its new open platform, which will enable automated and transparent relationships between advertisers and publishers

Micro-influencers – A Rakuten Marketing study shows affiliates are now spending more on micro-influencers than celebrities

## EVENES

Google – The tech giant recently published details of how it will fight the spread of disinformation, which can affect affiliate rankings

Uffiliates.ru – Russian affiliate bookmaker-Ratings.ru and Vseprosport.ru have launched an affiliate network using Matching Visions software

Latest Casino Bonuses – The affiliate was reprimanded by New Jersey regulators in March for promoting unlicensed online gaming websites

## LOSERS



Affiliate Better Collective reported a 151% year-on-year rise in traffic on its Bettingexpert platform for the Cheltenham Festival.

The fourth day of the festival was the most popular for Cheltenham traffic, a report shared exclusively with *Trafficology* showed.

There was however, more of an even spread this year; 21.5% of traffic was on the first day, compared to 18.6% last year.

The races that pulled the most attention were the Supreme Novices' Hurdle, the Ballymore Novices' Hurdle, the JLT Novices' Chase and the JCB Triumph Hurdle.

The most popular race overall was the JLT Novices' Chase.

The data shows the UK, Ireland, US, Australia and Spain were the countries that provided the most traffic, while London, Dublin, Bristol, Leeds and Manchester were the top five cities.

More than 70% of the traffic was on mobile, while desktop provided 23% and just 6% used a tablet.

Gambling advertising has faced negative press in the mainstream media, although Cheltenham seems to have avoided this.

Gambling.com's revenue for 2018, an increase of 63% year-on-year (£18.6m)

€16.2M

9

The Affiliate Management Academy took place in Amsterdam on 9 April, hosted by Totally Gaming Academy

The figure expected to be spent on virtual reality in gambling until 2022, opening up a world of new SEO terms and affiliate strategies

\$360M

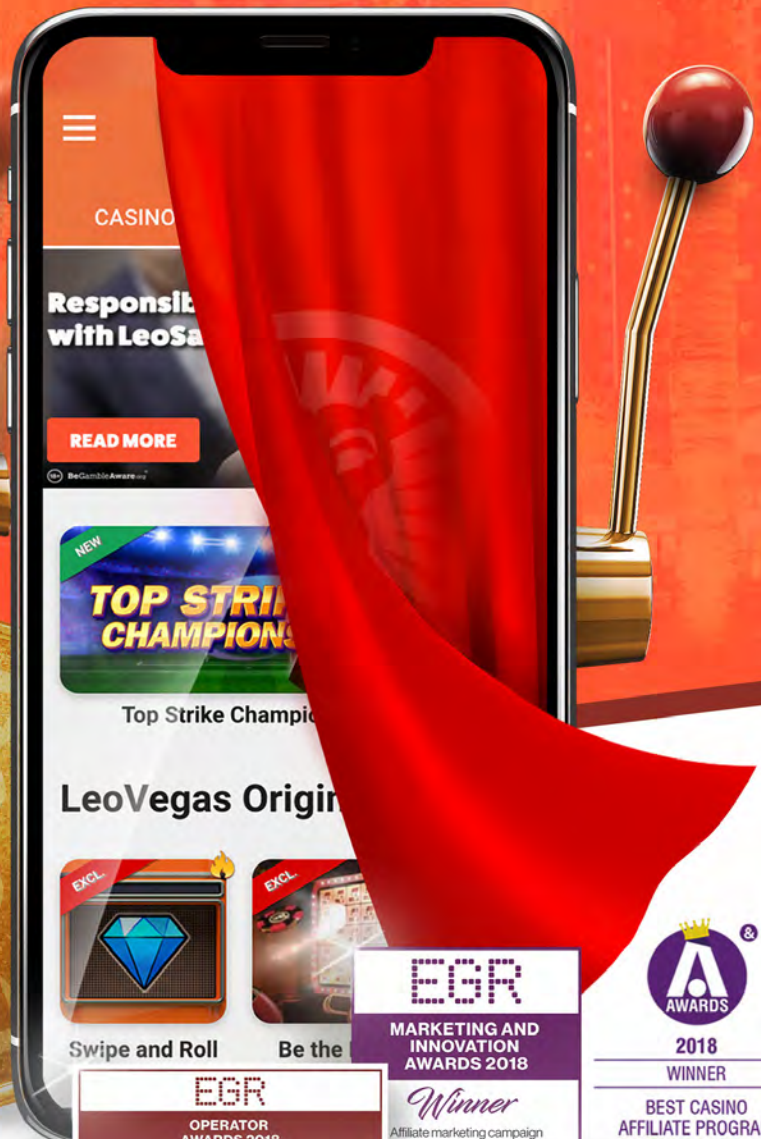
\$117.9M

Revenue decreased 14% year-on-year at XLMedia for 2018, which the digital marketing provider attributes to operational challenges



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2018

WINNER

BEST CASINO  
AFFILIATE PROGRAM



Affiliates  
**LeoVegas**

# PASS NOTES

The Sun launches horseracing affiliate brand



**A NEW DAWN, A NEW DAY AND A NEW AFFILIATE BRAND, THIS ONE ALREADY HAS A PRETTY BIG FOOT IN THE DOOR. WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE SUN HERE?**

Well the app, Sun Racing, has been launched by its parent company, News UK, and execs say it's designed to give mainstream horseracing fans a modern platform.

**HOW CAN A RACE BE MADE MORE MODERN? I HEARD THE QUEEN'S GRANDSON WANTED STREET RACES, IS THAT MODERN ENOUGH?**

I'm not sure what makes street races modern; it seems more like going back in time to me. They're not looking to change the race format with this, but just improve the user experience.

**HOW DO THEY PLAN TO DO THAT?**

They want to breathe the digital life into the industry and give fans of the sport more information in a succinct, easy-to-use format. Punters can place wagers from the app itself, which was online in time for Cheltenham.

**CLICHÉS ASIDE, IT SOUNDS ALRIGHT. ANY ISSUES YET?**

It seems to be working okay. The Sun will just have to hope it turns out to be a more successful story than its now defunct Sun Bets brand it operated between 2016 and 2018.

**WHAT SUN BETS BRAND?**

Exactly.

## MOVERS AND SHAKERS



Catena Media's Head of Sales **Rhi Burns** left the company to join fin-tech operator Zimpler



Oddschecker Global Media has appointed **Nick Wilby**, formerly Head of Sports Publishing at Catena Media, as its new Head of US



XLMedia has appointed **Shaun O'Neill** as Head of Sales, moving from Kindred Group, where he was Head of Affiliate Marketing for iGame and Kindred's new brands

## QUOTE UNQUOTE

"We are very happy to be attending AffiliateCon Sofia this year. There are lots of affiliates in the region we want to work with more."

**Tamara Babits, Parimatch CMO, expresses her delight at confirming the operator as an exhibitor for AffiliateCon Sofia 2019**

"It is very naive to think these issues will go away, or that a country can pick and choose which parts of gambling it likes. This is not how the rest of the world works and by only allowing sports betting, Germany could make it very difficult for operators to comply."

**MuchBetter Co-Founder Jens Bader on the decision to ratify the Third German State Treaty on Gambling, extending the trial phase of Germany's online sports betting market**

"To have successfully cleared our former loan facility is a milestone for Raketech's finance strategy. We now have optimal conditions to carry out additional acquisitions, with lower financial expenses over time."

**Andreas Kovacs, Raketech's CFO, on the company repaying its loan facility**

# TRAFFIC REPORT

Trafficology has partnered with data experts Casino City Press to provide insight into website and traffic trends across the gaming industry. Here are the top 20 casino affiliate sites for 2018, ranked globally and by continent.



## OVERALL

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	3 ▲	NoDepositBonus.cc	nodepositbonus.cc
2	1 ▼	Online Casino Reports	onlinecasinoreports.com
3	-	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
4	2 ▼	VegasSlotsOnline.com	vegasslotsonline.com
5	-	SlotsUp	slotsup.com
6	1 ▲	The Big Free Chip List	thebigfreechiplist.com
7	1 ▼	Penny-Slot-Machines	penny-slot-machines.com
8	3 ▲	NonStopBonus.com	nonstopbonus.com
9	1 ▼	AskGamblers.com	askgamblers.com
10	1 ▼	Online Casino Ground	onlinecasinoground.nl
11	1 ▼	Wizard of Odds	wizardofodds.com
12	-	Casino.org	casino.org
13	-	Gambling Sites.com	gamblingsites.com
14	11 ▲	The Wizard of Vegas	wizardofvegas.com
15	7 ▲	CasinoGamesOnNet.com	casinogamesonnet.com
16	32 ▲	No Deposit Kings	nodepositkings.com
17	30 ▲	Casino Top 10	casinotop10.net
18	2 ▼	Las Vegas Advisor	lasvegasadvisor.com
19	68 ▲	Online Casino Reports - Romania	onlinecasinoreports.ro
20	6 ▼	Casinomeister	casinomeister.com



## AFRICA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	3 ▲	The Big Free Chip List	thebigfreechiplist.com
2	-	VegasSlotsOnline.com	vegasslotsonline.com
3	2 ▲	Penny-Slot-Machines	penny-slot-machines.com
4	1 ▼	PlayCasino.co.za	playcasino.co.za
5	9 ▲	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
6	60 ▲	MamaBonus	mamabonus.com
7	-	AskGamblers.com	askgamblers.com
8	-	SlotsUp	slotsup.com
9	10 ▲	NonStopBonus.com	nonstopbonus.com
10	7 ▲	World Casino Directory	worldcasinodirectory.com
11	28 ▲	Multi-Player Gokkast Online	multiplayergokkastonline.nl
12	102 ▲	Casino Bonuses Codes	casinobonusescodes.com
13	19 ▲	Casino Listings	casinolistings.com
14	4 ▼	Casino.org	casino.org
15	29 ▲	NoDepositBonus.cc	nodepositbonus.cc
16	4 ▼	Gambling Sites.com	gamblingsites.com
17	81 ▲	Slots-777	slots-777.com
18	222 ▲	Ovulkan	ovulkancasino.com
19	1 ▲	Latest Casino Bonuses	lcb.org
20	5 ▼	Wizard of Odds	wizardofodds.com



Rankings are estimated using statistical data and should not be considered absolute ranking values. More than 50 complementary top lists are available on the iGamingDirectory.com website operated by Casino City Press



## ASIA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	-	NoDepositBonus.cc	nodepositbonus.cc
2	1 ▲	Online Casino Reports	onlinecasinoreports.com
3	1 ▼	VegasSlotsOnline.com	vegasslotsonline.com
4	1 ▲	Wizard of Odds	wizardofodds.com
5	23 ▲	Casino+Bonus	casinoplusbonus.com
6	2 ▼	AskGamblers.com	askgamblers.com
7	18 ▲	Sydney Pools Today	sydneypoolstoday.com
8	41 ▲	Slots-777	slots-777.com
9	45 ▲	Multi-Player Gokkast Online	multiplayergokkastonline.nl
10	1 ▲	Penny-Slot-Machines	penny-slot-machines.com
11	1 ▼	World Casino Directory	worldcasinodirectory.com
12	3 ▼	Casino.org	casino.org
13	65 ▲	Forum Judi	forumjudi.com
14	7 ▼	CasinoOnline.jp	casinonline.jp
15	1 ▼	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
16	2 ▲	CasinoGamesOnNet.com	casinogamesonnet.com
17	-	Casino Listings	casinolistings.com
18	5 ▲	Online Casino Hikaku Navi	vegasdocs.com
19	4 ▼	SlotsUp	slotsup.com
20	7 ▲	Gambling Sites.com	gamblingsites.com

## EUROPE

Rank	+/-	Operator	Website
1	-	AskGamblers.com	askgamblers.com
2	-	VegasSlotsOnline.com	vegasslotsonline.com
3	9	NoDepositBonus.cc	nodepositbonus.cc
4	1 ▼	The Big Free Chip List	thebigfreechiplist.com
5	2 ▲	CasinoGamesOnNet.com	casinogamesonnet.com
6	12 ▲	Penny-Slot-Machines	penny-slot-machines.com
7	1 ▲	Online Casino Reports	onlinecasinoreports.com
8	2 ▼	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
9	5 ▼	Online Casino Ground	onlinecasinoground.nl
10	79 ▲	Gamble Joe	gamblejoe.com
11	8 ▲	SlotsUp	slotsup.com
12	42 ▲	Latest Casino Bonuses	latestcasinobonuses.ru
13	10 ▲	Latest Casino Bonuses	lcb.org
14	3 ▼	Kazinoigri	kazinoigri.com
15	5 ▼	Casino.my	casino.my
16	2 ▼	Casinomeister	casinomeister.com
17	8 ▼	Slot Gallina Online	slotgallinaonline.it
18	42 ▲	RouletteForum.cc	rouletteforum.cc
19	28 ▲	Slotu	slotu.com
20	36 ▲	Online Casino Reports - Romania	onlinecasinoreports.ro

## OCEANIA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	1 ▲	The Big Free Chip List	thebigfreechiplist.com
2	1 ▼	VegasSlotsOnline.com	vegasslotsonline.com
3	-	Online Pokies 4 U	onlinepokies4u.com
4	1 ▲	NoDepositBonus.cc	nodepositbonus.cc
5	1 ▲	Penny-Slot-Machines	penny-slot-machines.com
6	6 ▲	NonStopBonus.com	nonstopbonus.com
7	3 ▼	SlotsUp	slotsup.com
8	1 ▼	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
9	2 ▲	AskGamblers.com	askgamblers.com
10	2 ▼	Wizard of Odds	wizardofodds.com

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
11	2 ▲	Online Casino Reports	onlinecasinoreports.com
12	9 ▲	No Deposit Kings	nodepositkings.com
13	51 ▲	Online Slots NZ	online-slots.co.nz
14	58 ▲	MamaBonus	mamabonus.com
15	12 ▲	Blackjack: The Forum	blackjacktheforum.com
16	1 ▼	Casino.org	casino.org
17	170 ▲	Australia Casino	australia-casino.org
18	259 ▲	Aussie-Slots.com	aussie-slots.com
19	79 ▲	Player Bonuses	playerbonuses.co
20	56 ▲	Quickie Boost	quickieboost.com



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## LATIN AMERICA

Rank	+/-	Operator	Website
1	-	Penny-Slot-Machines	penny-slot-machines.com
2	1 ▲	Juegos Casino	juegos-casino.org
3	1 ▲	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
4	1 ▲	VegasSlotsOnline.com	vegasslotsonline.com
5	4 ▲	Slotu	slotu.com
6	-	Casino Games 77	casinogames77.com
7	3 ▲	The Big Free Chip List	thebigfreechiplist.com
8	627 ▲	Casino.Guru	casino.guru
9	4 ▲	Casinomeister	casinomeister.com
10	2 ▲	Slotozilla	slotozilla.com
11	14 ▲	Online Casinos Vegas	onlinecasinosvegas.com
12	10 ▼	Online Casino Reports	onlinecasinoreports.com
13	5 ▼	CodeShare	codeshareonline.com
14	28 ▲	Multi-Player Gokkast Online	multiplayergokkastonline.nl
15	37 ▲	multiplayergokkast online.nl	casinosenlinea.net
16	7 ▲	SlotsUp	slotsup.com
17	1350 ▲	TragamonedasGratis.com	tragamonedasgratis.com
18	3 ▲	Wizard of Odds	wizardofodds.com
19	11 ▲	Casino Listings	casinolistings.com
20	5 ▼	Casino Top 10.com.br	casinotop10.com.br



## NORTH AMERICA

Rank	+/-	Operator	Website
1	1 ▲	FreeSlots.com	freeslots.com
2	1 ▼	VegasSlotsOnline.com	vegasslotsonline.com
3	-	Penny-Slot-Machines	penny-slot-machines.com
4	2 ▲	NoDepositBonus.cc	nodepositbonus.cc
5	1 ▼	Wizard of Odds	wizardofodds.com
6	1 ▼	The Big Free Chip List	thebigfreechiplist.com
7	-	Las Vegas Advisor	lasvegasadvisor.com
8	-	CodeShare	codeshareonline.com
9	2 ▲	SlotsUp	slotsup.com
10	1 ▼	Casino.org	casino.org
11	2 ▲	The Wizard of Vegas	wizardofvegas.com
12	2 ▲	NonStopBonus.com	nonstopbonus.com
13	3 ▲	Online Casino Reports	onlinecasinoreports.com
14	2 ▼	Slotozilla	slotozilla.com
15	5 ▲	Latest Casino Bonuses	lcb.org
16	2 ▲	World Casino Directory	worldcasinodirectory.com
17	-	AskGamblers.com	askgamblers.com
18	12 ▲	Slots-777	slots-777.com
19	3 ▲	BlackjackInfo.com	blackjackinfo.com
20	3 ▲	American Casino Guide	americancasinoguide.com



Rankings are estimated using statistical data and should not be considered absolute ranking values. More than 50 complementary top lists are available on the iGamingDirectory.com website operated by Casino City Press

# AFFILIATECON SOFIA 2019 CONTINUES TO GROW

AffiliateCon Sofia 2019 is set to be even bigger than last year's show, with more major industry names confirming their appearance

Preparation for AffiliateCon Sofia 2019 continues to gather momentum, with more esteemed speakers and exhibitors confirming their participation in this year's event.

AffiliateCon Sofia will offer two full days of educational speeches, intertwined with lively entertainment and an evening party. The show will be held at the Sofia Event Center on Wednesday 15 and Thursday 16 May.

Among the names on the speaker list is Google Industry Manager Yiannis Kranitis. Joining Google in 2009, Kranitis boasts more than seven years' experience in the gaming industry, consulting companies in their acquisition efforts and digital strategies.

Prior to joining the SEO giant, Kranitis worked on the agency side, meaning AffiliateCon Sofia attendees can tap into his multi-layered wealth of industry knowledge.

Topics he will cover include trends and competitive insights from international markets in a must-see presentation for members of the affiliate sector.

AffiliateCon Founder Julian Perry said: "SEO strategies are vital to the survival and success of affiliates and we are delighted to have a search engine specialist like Yiannis at our show this year.

"Yiannis joins an already stellar line-up of AffiliateCon SEO speakers and his time at Google should offer an array of unmissable insights."

Also making an appearance at AffiliateCon Sofia will be James Scicluna, Co-managing Partner at WHPartners. Scicluna is a Malta Advocate and Solicitor of the Senior Court of England and Wales, and regularly advises the gaming, financial services, real estate and hospitality sectors.

The lawyer will offer AffiliateCon attendees considerable insight, specialising in topics such as government relations, gaming regulation, sport sponsorship and brand development.

Scicluna's past roles include Chief of Regulatory and Corporate Affairs with the Betclac Group and General Counsel of Betclac and Expekt; he currently lectures on gaming law at the University of Malta.

Elsewhere, AffiliateCon Sofia will host an SEO Mega Panel on both mornings of the show, where four expert speakers have signed up: Stanislav Dimitrov, Gennadiy Vorobyov, Lyubomir Popov and Nikola Minkov.

Other speakers include Mustard Digital Founder Allan Turner and UltraPlay's Dragomir Ivanov, with the stage set for an even bigger and better event than 2018's unforgettable show.

Meanwhile, Genesis Affiliates, NetoPartners, NWM Marketing and ActiveWins have all joined the list of first-class exhibitors to have signed up for the show.

Genesis Affiliates was recently granted a Swedish license and already boasts a long list of casino brands as its partners.

Founded in 2008, NetoPartners is the leading affiliate programme for online scratch cards, slots and instant win games.



The company is a direct advertiser of five boutique in-house brands and more than 150 exclusive games.

Affiliates should not miss the chance to network with ActiveWins, which works with an extensive list of partners.

Eliot Jacob, Affiliate Team Leader at ActiveWin Media, said: "We are very happy to be returning to AffiliateCon Sofia. The conference was so successful for us last year that we booked ourselves in for 2019 while last year's event was still ongoing.

"This year, the main focus for us is the VIP theme, which allows us to give special attention to affiliates and give them extra care, to boost relationships. We expect to see AffiliateCon Sofia grow in volumes from last year and continue to be a great conference."

NWM will showcase its portfolio of unique, high-performance casino and sportsbook affiliate programmes.

A Malta-based specialist online gaming marketing management company, NWM offers affiliate programmes for popular gaming and betting brands, including EnergyCasino, EnergyBet, 199Games and LV Bet – offering rewarding, high-quality, fully-compliant gambling products across many regulated markets.

Director of NWM Marketing, Norbert Varga, said: "Though this is the first time NWM will be exhibiting at Sofia, I'm no stranger to the event, and I can tell you it is one of my favourites.

"Not only is the venue first class, but Sofia is stunning, and the conference schedule this year is top notch. As a team, we're looking forward to introducing everyone to NWM and showing affiliates the advantages of our excellent casino and sportsbook affiliate programmes."

Perry said: "AffiliateCon Sofia 2019 is set to be an even bigger event than last year's inaugural show, and we are delighted to have so many reputable exhibitors and speakers on board."

In adding their names to the line-up of reputable attendees, the recently-confirmed exhibitors join the likes of Kindred Group and 7StarsPartners, as the AffiliateCon Sofia floor plan takes further shape.

*Click here to book your tickets and network with the best affiliates Europe has to offer this summer.*



# AffiliateCon <sup>SOFIA '19</sup>

15-16 May 2019, Sofia Event Center, Bulgaria

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# CUTTING INTO THE MARKET

**Matthew Enderby** examines the affiliate market's changing barriers to success

Affiliate marketing used to look like a smash-and-grab job. Businesses sprung to life and made the most of unregulated opportunities. The size of the companies was much smaller - almost one-man shows - and they could profitably create one page for every keyword.

The number of requirements to cut into the market has vastly increased, however. A heavily-populated industry, shifting legal landscapes and a growing presence of big players all factor into the alterations. Now, a more considered approach is necessary and companies have to specialise in individual markets.

To begin in any industry, a sizeable investment is essential. Shahar Attias, Founder of online gaming consulting firm Hybrid Interaction, can see this effect in the affiliate world. He says: "To make an impact, or even start making a dent today, there's a requirement for some solid funding that would last you through the first 1-2 years."

Big budgets with financial flexibility are required for success, but while that figure may have risen, this is not a new trend. A healthy budget, or lack thereof, and its management can make or break an affiliate in its early days. It was and always will be a big hurdle to leap.

Another barrier is time. Oren Arzony, Marketing Manager, Affiliate at House Tech Ads, says this is one of the unknown areas in the process of becoming an established affiliate. He explains: "You do not know how long it will take and you are dependent on a great many other things which are out of your control."

In the past, he says, you could set up a new site, base it on SEO and in around six months, it should have caught on. These days, even if everything is done by the book, without a big budget, it could take a year or two to start seeing a return on investment.

**“TO MAKE AN IMPACT, OR EVEN START MAKING A DENT TODAY, THERE’S A REQUIREMENT FOR SOME SOLID FUNDING THAT WOULD LAST YOU THROUGH THE FIRST 1-2 YEARS”  
– SHAHAR ATTIAS**

He says: “This applies not only to new players in the industry, but for veterans as well. Even those who have been in the industry for years can drop out of the race if they do things wrong.”

These trends have been constant since the marketplace took shape. Recently however, further developments have recalculated that path to success.

Regulation is one of those key areas that has gone through alterations. Affiliate marketing used to be much more of a global operation, whereas today, it follows the rules of particular jurisdictions and those looking to profit from the market have to adapt.

Attias explains: “Five years ago, some markets were regulated; today, good luck trying to find those unregulated markets that aren’t in the process of enforcing some form of online gaming rules.

“Why would you care as an affiliate? Because if it’s fully legal, the big high-street boys can advertise on television or through mainstream media agencies, and your added value is diminishing.”

In Great Britain, the onus sits with the operator to ensure the affiliate is in line with the law. It is the operator’s job to educate and inform its partners of shifting legalities and it is the operator’s license that is on the line.

This, along with other ingredients, including admin fees and transparency, cooked up a bubbling pot of debate between operators and affiliates at LAC 2019. At one of the exhibition’s conferences, panellists discussed the attitudes on each side of that relationship. While the nature of the partnership is indeed changing, they concluded it is not broken. Keeping up communications with regard to regulations was referenced as one of the key points to maintaining a healthy relationship, regardless of the changes.

The big players have certainly affected the affiliate industry, if not changed it entirely. Catena Media went on an acquisition mission last year; scrolling through its 2018 press releases shows deal after deal, following the appointment of Per Hellberg as CEO.

In March, it furthered connections in the US, acquiring BonusSeeker.com. It strengthened its financial services vertical in April by purchasing German website BrokerDeal.de. The affiliate entered the French market with its ParisSportifs.com deal, also in April. More partnerships were struck through the summer, including the June acquisition of Asap Italia, bringing Catena into the Italian sports betting market.

Attias believes industry giants are changing the rules. He says: “Catena Media, XL Media, ‘there-goes-your-

CPA media’; these guys are strong enough to set their own rules of engagement, and while no operator would say no to more traffic, your leverage is substantially weaker once they can rely on a constant stream of traffic from the behemoths of the industry.”

How can smaller and newer companies hope to compete when big businesses are essentially buying the market and writing their own rules?

Arzony sees the positives in this competition; he believes big companies have encouraged others to get better, optimise work flows and focus.

He says: “The effect of these big companies is pushing everyone to see how they can lead in their verticals. In the grand scheme of things, this brings the users better options and higher qualities of content and experience, so everyone’s a winner.”

This thirst for M & A may have started to dry out though, as Catena Media has reassessed its strategy moving forward. Hellberg told *Trafficology* in February: “We need to adjust our acquisition strategy to reflect our size and growth plan. We had a strategic meeting two weeks ago, where we said that the strategy going forward is either large acquisitions for cost purposes in existing or new verticals or markets, or smaller, more tactical deals.”

Of course, it’s not just the big players that have changed the game; the market is saturated with every size of affiliate. There are always companies that have been operating in unexpected niches, Attias says, who will have a significant head start.

As regulations tighten around affiliate actions, the journey towards business goals has never been more difficult. Competition is huge, both in the size and numeracy of it, and managing operator relationships is increasing in complexity.

Now it appears as if the odds are stacked against success. But brands will benefit by moving away from the one-size-fits-all approach. They need to hone in on the best service they can provide, whether that be targeted marketing or a more widespread M & A approach.

**“THE EFFECT OF THESE BIG COMPANIES IS PUSHING EVERYONE TO SEE HOW THEY CAN LEAD IN THEIR VERTICALS. IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS, THIS BRINGS THE USERS BETTER OPTIONS AND HIGHER QUALITIES OF CONTENT AND EXPERIENCE, SO EVERYONE’S A WINNER” – OREN ARZONY**



# FOOTBALL, SOCIAL MEDIA AND BETTING: CAN THEY WORK AS ONE?

Social media advertising is not new, but **Nathan Joyes** reports on operators using mass followings of football clubs to promote their brands

Less than a decade ago, football clubs barely existed on social media. Fast forward to 2019 and almost every football club in the world has a social media presence. Across an array of platforms, the majority of top football clubs offer their accounts in multiple languages to attract a larger audience.

The latest news, transfer gossip and betting odds can be accessed on your mobile or tablet within a few seconds, leaving club websites and matchday programmes very much in the past.

Club social media pages are all geared towards engagement, creating a relationship with fans, providing them with an insight into the daily life of the players and a 'behind the scenes' feel to add a more personal touch. Those following the accounts of a football club feel as though they are part of a community and are joining a virtual membership.

Take Facebook as an example. Visual content dominates the platform. Whether this is new signings, full-time scores or team line-ups, they appear to generate the greatest amount of attention among followers. From January to August 2018, 8,883 images were posted on Facebook alone by the 20 Premier League clubs.

The modern era of football is now heavily associated with gambling sponsorships and there appears to be a sizeable place for it within social media.

*Trafficology* reached out to numerous football clubs in the UK, ranging from the Premier League down to the Conference National North, but not a single club was willing to speak about its partnerships with betting companies, nor its promotions plastered on social media.

Kevin Dale, Director at consultancy Gaming Monitor, believes clubs fear negative publicity, as they are now under more scrutiny than ever before from responsible gambling lobbyists.

He tells *Trafficology*: "While betting sponsorship is tolerated, clubs need to weigh up the value of attracting and retaining these sponsors versus the risk of any negative brand association. The safest route is to tread gently when promoting betting sponsors – and this often means avoiding the limelight."

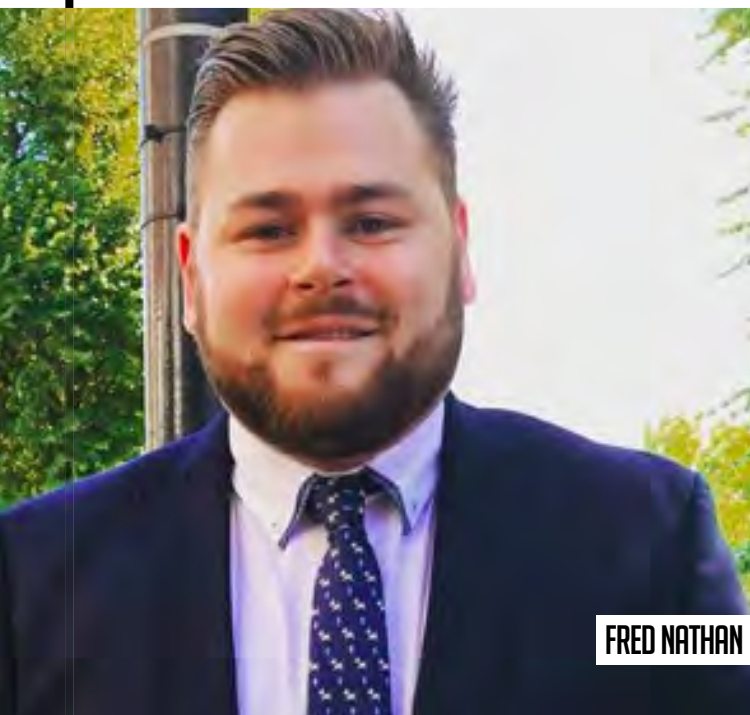


KEVIN DALE

Football clubs have a duty of care, and this applies to their behaviour on social media. With the highest-ranked teams having millions of followers, the clubs have to be cautious with what they publish, especially as a large chunk of their following will likely be a younger audience.

This is why it was a surprise to see Premier League club Tottenham Hotspur, which has a sponsorship deal with William Hill, promote betting odds within its matchday starting line-up. The line-up is arguably the most interacted-with post of the week with fans, who reacted negatively to the betting link inclusion.





FRED NATHAN

Fred Nathan, Media Relations Manager at Alex Donohue PR, has questioned Tottenham's approach. He says: "It surprises me Tottenham persevere with this. My suspicion is it's about commercialism over welfare. They would argue they still are responsible to their fans, but I would be surprised if they are still linking to the match odds in a few years and it hasn't been clamped down on."

"Clubs have a duty of care and compliance obligations for their betting partnerships as they do for deals with alcohol brands. However, the number of official partners for teams of all sizes says everything you need to know about the clout a commercial department holds."

Trafficology reached out to Tottenham, but received no comment.

Manchester United leads the race by some distance when it comes to the biggest following on social media. With 73 million followers on Facebook, 26 million on Instagram and 18 million on Twitter, the club is far superior to any other Premier League team in this area.

Since Huddersfield Town's promotion to the Premier League in 2017, the club has seen a 600% increase in followers on its Instagram account - the power of the Premier League showing in its full glory.

Dale acknowledges the power football clubs can have on individuals on a major scale and that everything which is posted has the potential to reach millions of fans.

He says: "As football clubs often form part of an individual's identity, they are massively influential. Beyond the fanbase itself, international streaming of Premier League fixtures has worldwide appeal too."

It isn't just Premier League clubs which promote gambling partnerships. National League North team Darlington FC has 33.8k followers on Twitter and recently agreed a partnership with FansBet. The club has since tweeted out promotional messages to entice its fans to bet with the operator specifically for the "best value" on Darlington matches. FansBet does invest some of its profits back into the club however, which is a new approach from an operator's perspective.

Trafficology reached out to Darlington FC, but received no comment. Nathan believes other operators should follow FansBet's approach.

He says: "FansBet's unique proposition of re-distributing profit back into football clubs goes a long way to confront the stigma around gambling head on. I am actually surprised more haven't followed FansBet's lead."

Betting advertising is exposed to people of all ages, as operators dominate front-of-shirt sponsorships across the top two English leagues. Nine of 20 clubs in the Premier League and 17 out of 24 in the Championship have shirt sponsorship deals with betting operators.

Dale believes there has to be some kind of limit to the volume of advertising.

He states: "Shirt sponsorships already get their brand across through photo and video imagery, but anything more proactive, such as joint promotions or sponsored links, can either fall foul of ASA guidelines or provoke the anti-gambling lobby."

There appears to be more leeway on social media for football clubs at present when it comes to betting advertising, but if clubs continue to exploit the overuse of promoting betting partners, it may only be a matter of time before harsher rules are put into place.

With a self-imposed ban on pre-watershed in-play betting advertising coming in next season, it may only

**"SHIRT SPONSORSHIPS ALREADY GET THEIR BRAND ACROSS THROUGH PHOTO AND VIDEO IMAGERY, BUT ANYTHING MORE PROACTIVE, SUCH AS JOINT PROMOTIONS OR SPONSORED LINKS, CAN EITHER FALL FOUL OF ASA GUIDELINES OR PROVOKE THE ANTI-GAMBLING LOBBY" – KEVIN DALE**

be a matter of time before attention turns to individual football clubs and the way they choose to promote gambling on social media.

It is worth remembering social media isn't all doom and gloom and football clubs do use the platforms for important messages away from advertising or selling their brand. For example, on the weekend round of games from 30 March to 1 April, Premier League stadia displayed "No Room for Racism" adverts and banners around the pitch. Branded promotional material was also used online by Premier League clubs, reaching millions of online users across all social platforms.

Football and betting go hand in hand, but football clubs need to find the right balance on how to portray this if they are to keep advertising their betting partners online.



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# A NEW PROBLEM FOR CRM

**Shahar Attias**, Founder of consultancy firm Hybrid Interaction, assesses the CRM issues at play when players don't have to sign up



Suppliers have consistently advanced the online gaming industry, but one of the latest developments has been to the detriment of the market. Now, they are looking to destroy retention marketing by offering players the horrible choice of exactly what they want.

Quick recap: Online gaming operators rely on CRM, not on affiliates. Why? Because by retaining players for longer terms and increasing their lifetime value, they can sustain a healthy CPA, knowing their team of data geeks can make an impressive ROI out of the players you have sent them. Operators aren't your friends and they don't enjoy your jokes - they just like your traffic.

Now, operators can segment their databases into numerous groups and offer each one the exact amount of bonuses they need to keep them ticking over. Obviously, it's way more complicated than it sounds, and requires experience, analytical skills and creativity. This is how they manage to grow player values beyond the average

standard and actually maximise profit and extend player engagement. Quick tip; if you are sending traffic to a casino that has a rocking CRM team - take the revenue share deal. You'll thank me after your first jet.

That said, a key component within this activity is being able to communicate directly with the players. Unlike sports betting operators, who lure players based on matches, races and tournaments that happen anyway in the real world, online casinos must artificially inflate the level of interest by creating promotional events and tailoring offers to the above-mentioned segments. Why? So they can differentiate themselves from the rest of the 972,528,577,539 other online casinos who are as unique as rare snowflakes (assuming snowflakes also use the Playtech platform).

Such interaction with the players is done via emails, text messages, chats etc. There are various best practices on which channel fits which scenario, according to the

**"NOW, THEY CAN WITHDRAW 80% OF THE TOTAL DEPOSITS (NEARLY DOUBLE THE STANDARD IN OTHER EUROPEAN MARKETS) AND WAY LESS THAN 20% EVER TICK THE "BE A PAIN IN MY BUTT AND NAG ME ANYTIME YOU RE-THINK OF THE SAME OLD BORING PROMOS" CHECKBOX. NOT SO COOL ANYMORE, EH?"**

progress made through the user journey, but essentially you get the picture - content sent from the operator to the player.

Fast forward to 2019, and the growing number of regulated markets required a higher level of KYC to be enforced, and as such, several payment processors wanted to help process more transactions by offering a neat feature; players that have already been through the KYC process. They had the details of those customers who already worked with them, fully approved, and allowed the online gaming operators to start providing their services to these players without the need for further checks. One of the leading names in this niche is the Swedish-facing online banking solution, Trustly.

Up until that point, the market was different, to say the least. People had no sense of commitment, and would just jump around between the brands, according to what is advertised more on TV, simply shopping around for the better pre-deposit free bonuses. As long as proper CRM could be applied, such absence of loyalty could have been somewhat compensated, due to the high average player values and by offering sophisticated VIP programmes and innovative products.

Not so long ago, someone thought of a genius concept; let's offer players the chance to simply pay through Trustly, and start playing instantly, without even bothering with registration or login of some sort using their email address/phone numbers. What a cool idea.

Oh, quick note before we continue; now you can't do CRM at all, as you have no idea who's playing and you can't try to convince them to return after they leave. Now, they can withdraw 80% of the total deposits (nearly double the standard in other European markets) and way less than 20% ever tick the "be a pain in my butt and nag me anytime you re-think of the same old boring promos" checkbox. Not so cool anymore, eh?

As you can imagine, the impact was quite mesmerising, and most experts now agree that once the Pay N Play option has been floated, there will be no room for non P & P casinos in the Swedish market by 2020. Bartender - I will have what everybody else had, at once.

So what can still be done if you can't send any messages to players, because you don't know who they are and don't have their contact details? I could offer the simple answer, which is "be smarter," but I will break it down for you.

The only thing you know for certain under these terms is that the player who's playing now is currently engaged with your lovely themed slots with the Atari-like graphics. As such, the objective has transformed from "bring them back" to "keep them around." It's still retention, but in the same way cricket is like baseball.

What P & P operators should adopt are systems that would allow conducting the same user journey, but in real-time and with native embedded pop-up capabilities that don't require the players to install an app (hence, no push notifications). Taking the same logic applied in the multi-days cycle (e.g. a player didn't deposit for five days, first send an email, and after three more days send an SMS) and shrink it into sessions that last minutes, demands many adjustments. My advice is picking the most sophisticated and flexible marketing automation system; one which can also allow triggering personalised bonuses based on each player's current gaming behaviour.

Instead of a segment with hundreds of players in it, and cashback offers of "up to 10% of your losses from the weekend," imagine offering each and every player dynamic percentages based on the past three minutes. Fight fire with fire, my friends.



**SHAHAR ATTIAS**

*Shahar Attias is a globally recognised online gaming expert, with decades of experience in senior operational roles, and the founder of Hybrid Interaction Ltd., the premier online gaming consulting firm, with already dozens of successful projects across all verticals and through most jurisdictions. As a CRM professional, Shahar is obsessed with maximising player lifetime values, and he's the world-leading specialist when it comes to trends in retention marketing and VIP Management. Oh, and the number of casinos mentioned in the fourth paragraph? That's actually his mobile number - feel free to spam him.*





# PLAY HARD

Winning Poker Network CEO **Phil Nagy** talks to **Nathan Joyes** about his 'getting naked' philosophy, blasting out Nicky Minaj and his desire to be Donald Trump

### IF YOU COULD SWAP LIVES WITH ANYONE FOR A WEEK, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Donald Trump. I could resign, bow out and make everything better!

I'd only need a day for that, so can I choose someone else for the other six? You know what; I wouldn't mind walking in the shoes of Mark Zuckerberg or those in charge of Google.

### WHAT REALLY GETS ON YOUR NERVES IN YOUR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO VENT ABOUT?

People talking about things they don't know about and people feeling they have to have an opinion on something they know nothing about. Something I preach here at the company to everyone when we get introduced to something new is to not suck. You've got to walk before you can run, right? It happens in day-to-day life and it bothers me a lot.

### IF YOU COULD STEAL CREDIT FOR ANYTHING IN THE WORLD, WHAT WOULD YOU CLAIM?

If I could steal the idea for crypto-currency/bitcoin, that whole thing, that would be pretty big, right? I'd enjoy stealing credit for that. As far as a movie goes, I'd be pretty happy stealing Braveheart or Monty Python and the Holy Grail – both of those with the accents.

### WOULD YOU LET YOUR COLLEAGUES HOOK UP YOUR 'RECENTLY PLAYED' LIST TO THE OFFICE SPEAKERS?

I actually do this regularly and people are incredibly surprised with what I listen to - everything from Nicky Minaj to the soundtrack of Phantom of the Opera. I don't dismiss anything, apart from country music.

### WHAT IS THE ONE THING YOU BELIEVE TO BE TRUE THAT OTHERS MAY NOT?

I believe a heck of a lot more in people than I do in a product. We have an open office and we call it 'getting naked with each other.' I don't have my own office,

I have a completely open office within the WPN office instead, which includes nine desks. One is for my PA, one is for me and the rest are there so I can rotate a team in every month. I can get a feel for them and who they are and they can get a feel for who I am and what I do. So many people didn't believe in it at first and wanted privacy, but it's a great way to learn from everyone.

### IF YOU RAN AWAY AND JOINED THE CIRCUS, WHAT WOULD YOUR ACT BE?

I'd definitely be some kind of entertainer. I could be the circus leader or I could also be one of the clowns. I'm going to be that person that fills in for whatever the circus needs. I don't mind taking a backseat if I'm not the best at it – which leads us back to our second question.

### WHAT ITEM/PRODUCT COULD YOU SECRETLY NOT LIVE WITHOUT?

Shorts! If I had to constantly wear just pants, I'd be so uncomfortable. I live in Costa Rica, so that may make more sense to everyone who's reading this.





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