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FEBRUARY 2020

## INSIDE

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CEO EXCLUSIVE**
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AND INTEGRITY**
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TRISTON SMOOK,  
BETSSON GROUP  
AFFILIATES**

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## ON THE WAY UP

Fighting tips for smaller affiliates



# PLAY ATTACK



**SLOT V**  
ONLINE CASINO



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[mrbit.bet](http://mrbit.bet)



[slotv.com](http://slotv.com)



[frankcasino.com](http://frankcasino.com)



[driftcasino.com](http://driftcasino.com)



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# TRAFFIC REPORT

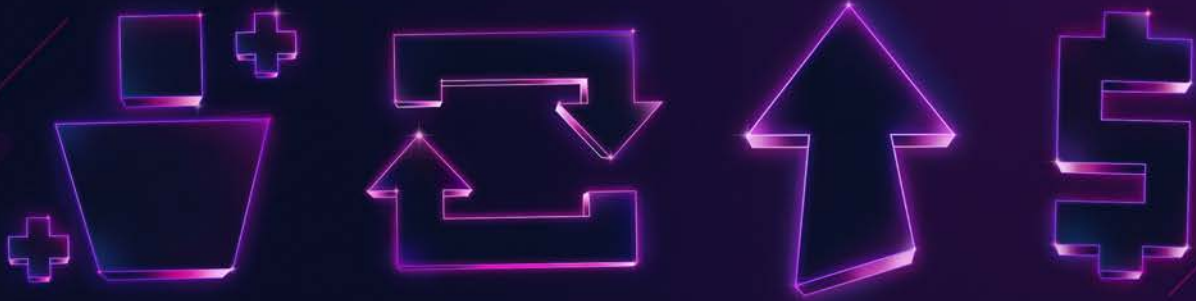
Trafficology has partnered with data experts Casino City Press to provide insight into website and traffic trends across the gaming industry. Here, we rank the top 20 affiliate programs overall and by geographic region for 2019, with positions comparing with 2018.

## OVERALL

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	1 ▲	Betting Gods Affiliates	bettinggods.com/affiliates
2	1 ▼	Bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
3	-	NetHive Affiliate Program	nethive.com
4	3 ▲	Bet9ja Affiliates	affiliates.bet9ja.com
5	1 ▼	Yahoo Fantasy Sports Affiliates	sports.yahoo.com/dailyfantasy/affiliates
6	1 ▲	IQ Option Affiliate	affiliate.iqoption.com
7	1 ▼	Betfair Partnerships	affiliates.betfair.com
8	3 ▲	Kindred Affiliates	kindredaffiliates.com
9	1 ▼	Parimatch Affiliates	affiliates.parimatch.com
10	4 ▲	William Hill Affiliates	affiliates.williamhill.com
11	1 ▼	Affiliate Hub	affiliatehub.skybet.com
12	3 ▼	1xBet Partners	1xpartners.com
13	1 ▼	Best Partners	bestpartners.com
14	1 ▼	Stoiximan.gr Affiliates	affiliates.stoiximan.gr
15	5 ▲	Uffiliates	uffiliates.com
16	30 ▲	Betway Partners Africa	betwaypartnersafrica.com
17	2 ▼	Tipico Affiliate Program	tipico.com/en/affiliate-program
18	1 ▼	FDJ Affiliate Program	fdj.fr
19	4 ▲	Favorit Affiliates	affiliates.favorit.com.ua
20	2 ▼	Fortuna Affiliates	fortuna-affiliates.com







# PLAY ΔTTACK

<http://www.playattack.com>



[aplaycasino.com](http://aplaycasino.com)



[mrbit.bet](http://mrbit.bet)



[slotv.com](http://slotv.com)



[frankcasino.com](http://frankcasino.com)



[driftcasino.com](http://driftcasino.com)



[casinosolumbus.com](http://casinosolumbus.com)



## AFRICA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	3▲	Betting Gods Affiliates	bettinggods.com/affiliates
2	-	Bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
3	2▼	Bet9ja Affiliates	affiliates.bet9ja.com
4	1▲	Betway Partners Africa	betwaypartnersafrica.com
5	2▼	IQ Option Affiliate	affiliate.iqoption.com
6	3▲	XM Partners	partners.xm.com
7	1▼	1xBet Partners	1xpartners.com
8	3▲	Binary.com Affiliate Program	affiliates.binary.com
9	1▼	EToro Partners	etoropartners.com
10	3▼	NairaBet Affiliates	nairabetaffiliates.com
11	25▲	Supapartners	supapartners.com
12	2▼	Zeturf Affiliates	affiliationen.zeturf.com
13	46▲	ZanziBet Affiliates	zanzibet.com/en/affiliates
14	-	FXTM Partners	fxtmpartners.com
15	3▼	HotForex Partners	hfaffiliates.com
16	5▲	Sportingbet	sbaffiliates.com
17	10▲	Sunbet Partners	sunbetpartners.co.za
18	2▼	KingFin	kingfin.com
19	4▼	PMU.fr Partners	partners.pmu.fr
20	18▲	Surebet247 Affiliates	surebet247.com/affiliates



## ASIA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	-	Bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
2	11▲	Betting Gods Affiliates	bettinggods.com/affiliates
3	15▲	Income88	income88.com
4	2▼	IQ Option Affiliate	affiliate.iqoption.com
5	2▼	Vivarobet Affiliates	affiliates.vivarobet.am
6	2▲	1xBet Partners	1xpartners.com
7	2▲	XM Partners	partners.xm.com
8	3▲	EToro Partners	etoropartners.com
9	3▲	Yahoo Fantasy Sports Affiliates	sports.yahoo.com/dailyfantasy/affiliates
10	5▼	BinPartner	binpartner.com
11	4▲	TotoGaming Affiliates	totogamingaffiliates.com
12	6▼	Marathonbet Affiliate	affiliates.marathonbet.com
13	1▲	KingFin	kingfin.com
14	4▼	Asianconnect88	asianconnect88.com
15	8▼	Binary.com Affiliate Program	affiliates.binary.com
16	27▲	JPJ Group Affiliates	jpgroupaffiliates.com
17	2▲	IG Markets Partners	ig.com/uk/marketing-partnership
18	1▼	SBOBet Affiliate Program	affiliates.sbobet.com
19	3▲	IC Markets Affiliate Program	icmarkets.com/partnerships/affiliate-program
20	3▲	Exness Partner	exness.com/partnership



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## EUROPE

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	3 ▲	Betting Gods Affiliates	bettinggods.com/affiliates
2	1 ▼	Bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
3	1 ▼	Marathonbet Affiliates	affiliates.marathonbet.com
4	1 ▼	Parimatch Affiliates	affiliates.parimatch.com
5	1 ▲	Betfair Partnerships	affiliates.betfair.com
6	1 ▼	Kindred Affiliates	kindredaffiliates.com
7	-	Stoiximan.gr Affiliates	affiliates.stoiximan.gr
8	-	EToro Partners	etoropartners.com
9	3 ▲	Tipsport Partners	tipsport.cz/partner
10	4 ▲	PMU.fr Partners	partners.pmu.fr
11	4 ▲	FDJ Affiliate Program	fdj.fr
12	1 ▼	William Hill Affiliates	affiliates.williamhill.com
13	4 ▼	Fortuna Affiliates	fortuna-affiliates.com
14	3 ▲	Affiliate Hub	affiliatehub.skybet.com
15	2 ▼	GVC Affiliates	gvcffiliates.com
16	6 ▼	Favorit Affiliates	affiliates.favorit.com.ua
17	1 ▼	1xBet Partners	1xpartners.com
18	14 ▲	KeyAffiliates	keyaffiliates.com
19	1 ▼	Tipico Affiliate Program	tipico.com/en/affiliate-program
20	5 ▲	Sisal.it Affiliate Program	affiliazioni.sisal.it



## LATIN AMERICA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	2 ▲	Betting Gods Affiliates	bettinggods.com/affiliates
2	1 ▼	Bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
3	5 ▲	AfiliadosW	afiliadosw.co
4	2 ▼	NetHive Affiliate Program	nethive.com
5	1 ▼	IQ Option Affiliate	affiliate.iqoption.com
6		Betfair Partnerships	affiliates.betfair.com
7	2 ▼	Sportingbet	sbaffiliates.com
8	5 ▲	VBinary.com Affiliate Program	affiliates.binary.com
9	-	EToro Partners	etoropartners.com
10	-	1xBet Partners	1xpartners.com
11	38 ▲	Rush Affiliates	rush-affiliates.com
12	2 ▲	Betsson Group Affiliates	betssongroupaffiliates.com
13	2 ▼	Yahoo Fantasy Sports Affiliates	kindredaffiliates.com
14	3 ▲	XM Partners	partners.xm.com
15	3 ▼	Stars Affiliate Club	starsaffiliateclub.com
16	3 ▲	Juega en Linea Afiliados	juegaenlinea.com/afiliados
17	1 ▲	Best Partners	bestpartners.com
18	3 ▼	Inkabet Affiliates	afiliados.inkabet.pe
19	3 ▼	KingFin	kingfin.com
20	19 ▲	BinPartner	binpartner.com



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## NORTH AMERICA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	-	Yahoo Fantasy Sports Affiliates	sports.yahoo.com/dailyfantasy/affiliates
2	-	Best Partners	bestpartners.com
3	-	DraftKings Affiliates	draftkings.com/affiliates
4	1 ▲	FanDuel Partners	fanduel.com/partners
5	7 ▲	GSN Partnership Program	gsn.com/partner
6	2 ▲	Betting Gods Affiliates	bettinggods.com/affiliates
7	3 ▼	Bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
8	1 ▲	CommissionKings	commissionkings.ag
9	15 ▲	WPN Affiliates	wpnaffiliates.com
10	-	5Dimes Affiliate Program	affiliates.5dimes.eu
11	4 ▼	Twinspires Affiliates	twinspiresaffiliates.com
12	6 ▼	SIA	sportsinteraction.com/affiliate
13	-	Michigan Lottery Affiliates	playonline.michiganlottery.com/affiliate
14	3 ▼	Nitrogen Affiliate Program	nitrogensports.eu/affiliates
15	17 ▲	Buffalo Partners	buffalopartners.com
16	13 ▲	Web Partners	webpartners.co
17	4 ▲	Marathonbet Affiliate	affiliates.marathonbet.com
18	2 ▲	Betway Partners	betwaypartners.com
19	536 ▲	Rush Affiliates	rush-affiliates.com
20	5 ▼	Nadex Affiliate	nadex.com/affiliates



## OCEANIA

Rank	+/-	Name	Website
1	-	TAB Affiliates	tabaffiliates.com
2	-	Sportsbet.com.au	sportsbetaffiliates.com.au
3	-	LadbrokesAffiliates.com.au	ladbrokesaffiliates.com.au
4	4 ▲	BetEasy Affiliates	beteasyaffiliates.com.au
5	-	Betfair Partnerships	affiliates.betfair.com
6	2 ▼	MyLotto	mylotto.com
7	13 ▲	Betting Gods Affiliates	bettinggods.com/affiliates
8	1 ▼	Lottery Affiliates	lotteryaffiliates.com
9	4 ▲	Neds Affiliates	nedsaffiliates.com.au
10	4 ▼	Bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
11	32 ▲	CPA Kitchen	cpakitchen.com
12	28 ▲	PlayAmo Partners	playamopartners.com
13	4 ▼	IG Markets Partners	ig.com/uk/marketing-partnership
14	3 ▼	Yahoo Fantasy Sports Affiliates	sports.yahoo.com/dailyfantasy/affiliates
15	3 ▲	Buffalo Partners	buffalopartners.com
16	2 ▼	Kindred Affiliates	kindredaffiliates.com
17	2 ▼	The Plus500 Affiliate Program	500affiliates.com
18	3 ▲	PointsBet Affiliates	pointsbet.com/affiliates-legal
19	7 ▼	EToro Partners	etoropartners.com
20	1 ▼	Deckmedia Affiliates	deckmedia.im



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## RISING TO THE TOP



# RISING TO THE TOP

**Owain Flanders** assesses how smaller affiliates with limited resources can make an impact in a highly-competitive market

When Lionel Messi first pulled on a pair of football boots, I'm certain he stumbled over the football once or twice before he mastered dribbling. Similarly, Jimi Hendrix probably hit a few bum notes before he learned his first guitar chord, and I'm sure Neil Armstrong didn't take immediately to zero gravity. Everyone has to start somewhere before they begin the long climb to the top, and it is no different in business.

In a 2017 blog post, Virgin Founder and CEO Richard Branson said: "Every successful entrepreneur has learned from failure. Nobody gets everything right the first time. Business is like a

giant game of chess – you have to learn quickly from your mistakes." As evidence of this, before Bill Gates eventually founded what was to become one of the world's biggest high-tech companies in Microsoft, he co-founded a failed business called Traf-O-Data. It goes to show that even the biggest names in business have had their flops.

In the UK, the affiliate market is a highly-competitive one, which can be daunting for any fresh-faced entrepreneur hoping to make an impact. The market is home to affiliates with years of experience, an expansive budget, a large workforce and constant

access to expert advice; so how can new affiliates ensure their business isn't just another Traf-O-Data – an enterprise doomed to stumble out of the blocks and hit an insurmountable hurdle?

## QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Gambling.com has more than 100 staff working in its main office in Dublin, and all of them are focused on the UK market, which represents around 70% of the affiliate's operations. Since 2011, the company has built itself into one of the biggest brands in the affiliate space, and speaking on an IGB Live panel last year, Gavin Walters, Director of Business Development for Gambling.com Group, had some advice for those just entering the game. He said: "Do one thing. If you've got two or three people on your books, I think you'll struggle to really do something well if you're going to do more than one [project]. I'd just target a clear niche and be awesome at it. I think that's the only way you will beat the bigger guys."

If you are lacking in staff and resources, it could be a matter of quality over quantity. Focusing on a niche area might be the secret to gaining cut-through in the market, and Walters believes there is a substantial profit to be made for those who follow his advice. He said: "It could be a form of betting within sports betting. I've known affiliates in the past that had one slot site about one particular slot and informed me they were making more than £10,000 (\$12,120) a month."

Like Walters, Claire Wellard, CEO and Founder of iGamingXL, is a strong proponent of a focus on niche markets. She believes smaller affiliates can take the fight to the market by offering something completely unique. Speaking with *Trafficology*, Wellard urges affiliates to "find their niche." She asks: "What would you want to read about? If you wouldn't read your own site, why are you making it? There are areas of growth within the crypto space, esports and within emerging markets."

"Do you speak a language? Do you play games online, where esports would be something you could become an authority on? Do you follow a particular football club or sport in general? Bigger affiliates got there from being a one-man band in their living room and you can too. Make your content relevant, make it interesting and keep it fresh to keep viewers coming back for more."

Regardless of whether an affiliate can provide for a niche market, if it is unable to generate enough traffic to satisfy potential partners, then it could be a tough journey to the top. With this in mind, Wellard offers some advice on how to form a relationship between the content of an offering and its growth. She says: "You could design your growth to compliment the offering. For example, if you are starting with a football-related site, why not build a complimentary site with live scores, or an odds-related site? You can link between the two sites, adding relevant content to both and building the SEO that way. Consider adding a newsletter as a way of building loyalty and offering something unique. Perhaps you will send them weekly 'top picks' of offers, odds or casino game previews which they will get into their inbox before anyone else."

Oren Arzony, Marketing Manager at House Tech Ads, agrees with Wellard on the value of a niche offering, but tells *Trafficology* he believes some balance is needed between quality and traffic volume. He says: "We believe dispersion doesn't pay in the long run – you have to know your focus. Quantity cannot be put aside completely – numbers and volumes do matter if you want to grow, but quality is always a first priority."

But how are new affiliates able to achieve such high-quality offerings with less experience and resources? Arzony believes the key is in user feedback. He describes how, when launching GamblersPick.com in 2017, he built the company up gradually and with as much focus on user experience as possible. Arzony explains: "We did it slowly and by the book. Producing high-quality content



CLAIRE WELLARD

caters to the needs of players in today's online gaming world. We put an emphasis on user experience, through user reviews and feedback which allows users to get the most accurate picture before making their choice."

For smaller affiliates with a limited budget, it certainly makes sense to utilise customer feedback to increase the quality of your offering. This, combined with a little hard work, could help give a company the edge it needs to survive in a competitive space.

## COMPLIANCE

Speaking on the same panel as Walters, Eyal Moskovitz, then Performance Marketing Director at Ladbrokes Coral, outlined the main concern for operators looking to work with smaller affiliates. He said: "I think the biggest problem is trouble from some of the affiliates. Smaller affiliates try to increase their margin by doing things which are against regulations. That's the biggest concern we have right now. How do you control everything they do?"

**"IF YOU ARE STARTING WITH A FOOTBALL-RELATED SITE, WHY NOT BUILD A COMPLIMENTARY SITE WITH LIVE SCORES, OR AN ODDS-RELATED SITE?"**  
- CLAIRE WELLARD



**OREN ARZONY**

As evidence of the importance of this factor, in 2017, Ladbrokes Coral reduced its number of partnered affiliates by 97%, due to issues of trust. Explaining the operators' reasoning for the reduction, Moskowitz said: "It was due to a lack of ability to control what's going on and a lack of ability to know where our ads are being displayed. We would prefer to lose the traffic, lose the revenue and protect the brand."

Last year saw regulation tighten in Great Britain, with the Gambling Commission ensuring the penalisation of any affiliate or operator that failed to comply. Whether further regulation is on its way is as yet unclear, and it is up to affiliates to ensure they abide by the rules.

While there is no excuse for an affiliate which aims to intentionally break regulation, larger affiliates have access to a number of compliance experts, along with a greater pool of experience and knowledge. Meanwhile, entrepreneurs looking to start out in the space might have minimal experience and a lack of funds to access paid advice. So if we were to go by Ladbrokes Coral's metrics, how can these affiliates ensure they are in that 3% of trustworthy partners?

Arzony feels when it comes to regulation, there is no substitute for good, in-depth research and hard work. He says: "New affiliates must take the new regulatory situation as an important, decisive consideration before setting up shop. This is why it is recommended to choose one or a few markets tops in which the new affiliate can specialise, so they can operate with ease once they have a close knowledge of the market; then when you have good control in a market, you can start expanding further."

Forums such as the Gambling Portal Webmasters Association (GPWA) are another helpful tool available to affiliates lacking in knowledge. With more than 15,000 members, the website is dedicated to helping affiliates succeed in the online gaming industry. Founded in 2001, the forum connects affiliate members from all over the world, allowing them the opportunity to collaborate with others within the industry.

Arzony explains how forums such as this can be a big help, as long as affiliates remain committed to the learning process: "Affiliates can use the so-called 'hive mind' of affiliates who are knowledgeable within the different regulated markets through helpful forums and communities like GPWA and others. But ultimately, they must be willing to learn, work hard and also spend and invest in becoming 100% compliant on their own."

### **BUILDING TRUST AND INTEGRITY**

Trust and integrity are important aspects in the relationship between affiliate and operator, mainly due to the uniqueness of the business partnership. Operators hold the key to affiliate earnings, whereas affiliates could land their partner in hot water if they don't abide by regulation. Moskowitz argues transparency is the secret to success in such a fragile relationship. Describing the attributes Ladbrokes Coral looks for in a business partner, he said: "Affiliates who are actually transparent about how they work, how they will deliver traffic, what type of company they are, whether they stand by regulation, rather than being a bit tricky, or a bit misleading."

With that in mind, if an operator is given the choice between a larger affiliate lacking in transparency and a smaller affiliate that is honest, open and compliant with regulation, the latter would be the preferred choice – as far as Ladbrokes Coral is concerned anyway. As a smaller affiliate, the maintenance of good operator relationships is therefore invaluable, although Wellard believes the operator also has a part to play. She says: "I believe in the partnership between affiliates and operators – it's not a one-way street. For the industry to stay strong, we all need to work together."

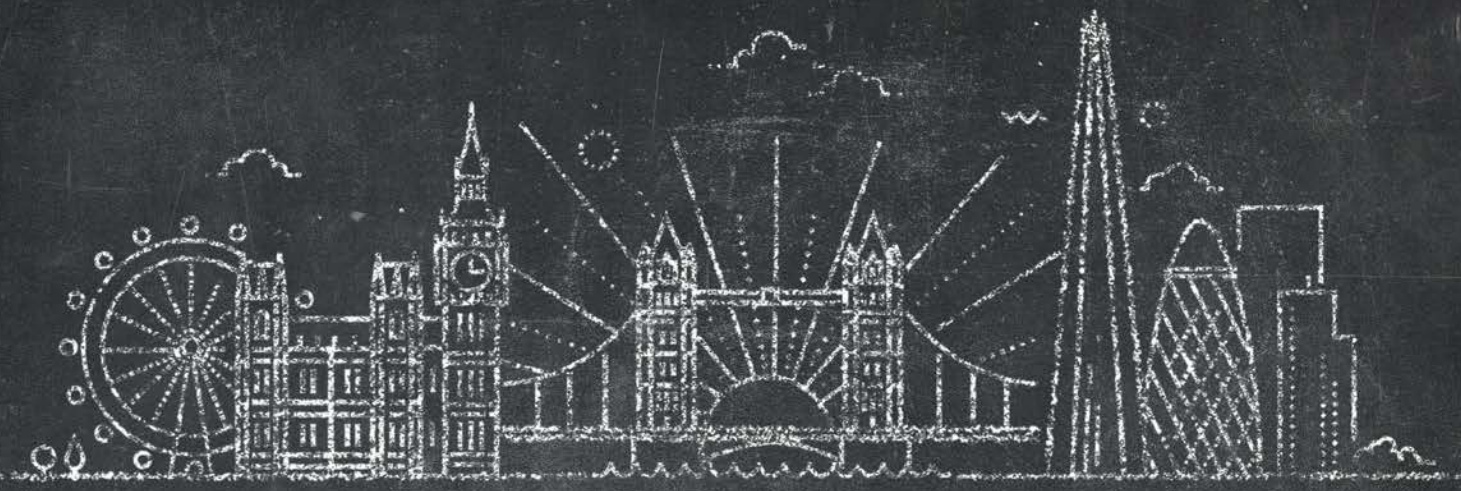
"Of course the larger affiliates have their own compliance teams, they have much more to manage and a lot more to lose. There is a lot of help out there if you just ask for it. Even to get your account approved by most of the UK operators now, you have to prove your site is compliant before they will even accept you to start to work with them."

"I would say that if you aren't offered help but you need it, just ask. The operators will help you, the forums will help you or just do your own research. There is an abundance of information out there. Just don't suffer in silence."

Asked for one final piece of advice for budding entrepreneurs with an eye on the affiliate market, Wellard says: "Attend one of the many conferences we have each year. Read one of the many publications, such as this one, for advice on new opportunities, take advice from your peers and watch out for dodgy operators. There is still money to be made and there are still a lot of opportunities out there if you are willing to work hard and own the work you do."

**"AFFILIATES CAN USE THE SO-CALLED  
'HIVE MIND' OF AFFILIATES WHO ARE  
KNOWLEDGEABLE WITHIN THE DIFFERENT  
REGULATED MARKETS THROUGH HELPFUL  
FORUMS AND COMMUNITIES, BUT THEY  
MUST BE WILLING TO LEARN"  
– OREN ARZONY**



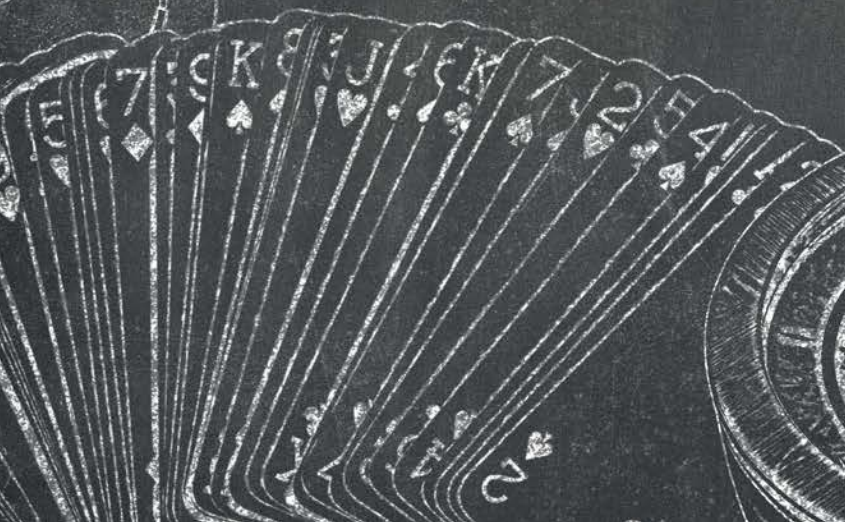


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# GETTING IT RIGHT IN SWEDEN

ComeOn CEO **Lahcene Merzoug** talks to **Tim Poole** about succeeding in Sweden, where it has very much bucked the trend, while also addressing affiliate compliance in 2020



**Looking at your personal background, it's quite marketing heavy. What have you brought to the CEO role from the perspective of a former CMO?**

ComeOn has always been quite good at marketing but, for the small start-ups that grow into quite big operators, you need to establish more procedures, more routine. Quite early on when I started, we started building our own internal media agency, taking a lot of the media buying in-house, buying in bulk. Sometimes it's the same network across countries, so it makes more sense that separate country managers buy their marketing on their own. We work a lot in marketing, but I would say that's only a small part of it.

**How do you plan to stand out at IGB Affiliate London? Last year, you had former Arsenal footballer Ray Parlour at your stand. Have you got any similar plans for 2020?**

We have some surprises I can't really tell you about yet; but as usual ComeOn Connect is always exhibiting at the same stand. We're always at G20 at the bottom of the stairs, near the bar with the big ComeOn Connect sign at the top. I believe the whole ComeOn Connect team is actually going to IGB Affiliate London this year. We will spend a lot of effort and time, because we believe it is a very important conference for us.

**Away from the fundamentals of meeting with clients, is there anything you're looking to get out of the show, conference wise?**

I personally go to both IGB Affiliate London and ICE London and it is important. I think our industry is in need of more collaboration between companies, to see each other not only as competitors but also colleagues; talking about different regulations, different regulators and other operators. We have new, important regulation coming up in Germany. We have an uncertain situation in Norway and issues in Sweden. It's a perfect meeting ground to discuss all these things.

**Bearing in mind the markets you just mentioned, has ComeOn got any specific targets or goals to achieve in 2020?**

We do. Just to back up, I think 2019 was a really eventful year both for ComeOn and the entire industry. Sweden was regulated and of course that meant much time has gone into adapting to new market conditions. For us it really turned out well in Sweden, since we are now the biggest international operator and biggest casino operator overall in Sweden. In 2020, I think we will continue to further strengthen our compliance focus while equally looking into product innovation. During 2020, we will launch several exciting initiatives both on the front end and the marketing side.

**It's been more than a year-and-a-half since you took over as ComeOn CEO. Do you feel you've made your mark on the company in that time?**

It's been a very intense and exciting time to take over as CEO. When I started in mid-2018, I was in full preparation mode for the regulation in Sweden, which is obviously a very important market for us. Not too long after that - the autumn of 2018 - the due diligence properly started from what was to later become our new owners, European Entertainment Intressenter. In December, they made their public offering to buy all the shares of Cherry AB. Then the bid got accepted and our then mother company Cherry AB was de-listed from Nasdaq in early 2019, so now we're actually 100% privately-owned.

They bought the whole group, not just ComeOn. ComeOn is by far the biggest company, but we also have a game provider - Highlight Games - and Swedish offline casino operator Cherry Spelglädje; basically all parts of the value chain of our industry. But in 2019, it was all about adapting to the new landscape with more compliance and exploring new opportunities to grow.

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We want to expand our business. Some markets are not growing as fast anymore. It's natural that when we seek growth in new markets, ComeOn has a really big team working on new growth opportunities in new markets and with new brands, but also product innovation. Last year, we launched two new brands in Japan and Finland and the year before that we launched four new brands in Finland, Sweden, Germany and Poland. ComeOn is never really standing still and then, of course, in 2020 we have the European Championship in football, so it's going to be an exciting summer.

**It's interesting to hear about ComeOn's success in Sweden. A number of operators – as you'll know – have talked about their struggles in Sweden and their friction with the Swedish Gambling Authority (SGA). What's gone right for ComeOn?**

It's been a hard time with the regulator for some. I think the communication with authorities and the industry hasn't been great, but I don't think it's necessarily one party's fault. The SGA's workload is huge at the moment. As an industry, I don't think we've been really good at speaking with one voice and getting the facts out there, either to the regulator or to the general public. But for ComeOn, I would say it's our multi-brand strategy that has really been the key for us. It's a very entrepreneurial approach where our brands compete openly with each other.

It actually allows us to move quicker. In an industry where the products we're selling are quite similar, we believe the brand itself plays a major role. We have eight licenses in Sweden and we have brands that target many different audiences. We have the brands working quite independently, allowing a focus on compliance, legal, AML and responsible gaming. It also allows those teams to get a good overview of players who could need help, so we can quickly act to protect them. I think that's a really good edge, because compliance is an absolute key to survive in a regulated market as well.

**With the number of brands and licenses you have, how have you found dealing with the SGA? Has it communicated with you enough, explaining exactly what you need to do to be compliant?**

As I understand, they don't communicate or give advice to any operator out there as far as I've heard. They have general meetings where they inform and update but, other than that, you just have to follow the different fines and court cases that are pending. If you have a hard time seeing where to draw the line, you can always look at what they fine operators for and adapt to that.

**Is it perhaps then a case of being more cautious and steering clear of something which might be frowned upon by the regulator?**

Yes. But, in the beginning, especially in the first six months, you saw that interpretation from the operators spread widely. The further along it goes, the more it gets streamlined. But there are a lot of court cases pending, so we will see if the SGA's interpretations or the different operators' interpretations will stand in court. That obviously sets the new landscape and we're constantly adapting.

**On that note of caution, do you think 2020 can be a year where affiliates improve overall compliance levels?**

I don't think the affiliates will be forced by law to take more responsibility, but I think they will be forced by the market and bigger partners. I think, in general, ComeOn are choosing to work with those partners that take a bigger responsibility. Sweden is a good example. We are the biggest operator there at the moment. We choose partners that take compliance very seriously and I think the partners that choose us see the value in dealing with the biggest operators.

Obviously, it sends them lots of marketing, but it also helps affiliates when their partners share lists with us. You have eight different brands to choose from with ComeOn. I'm quite sure if partners aren't being compliant and aren't listening to our advice when we talk to them, we would not hesitate to cancel our deals.



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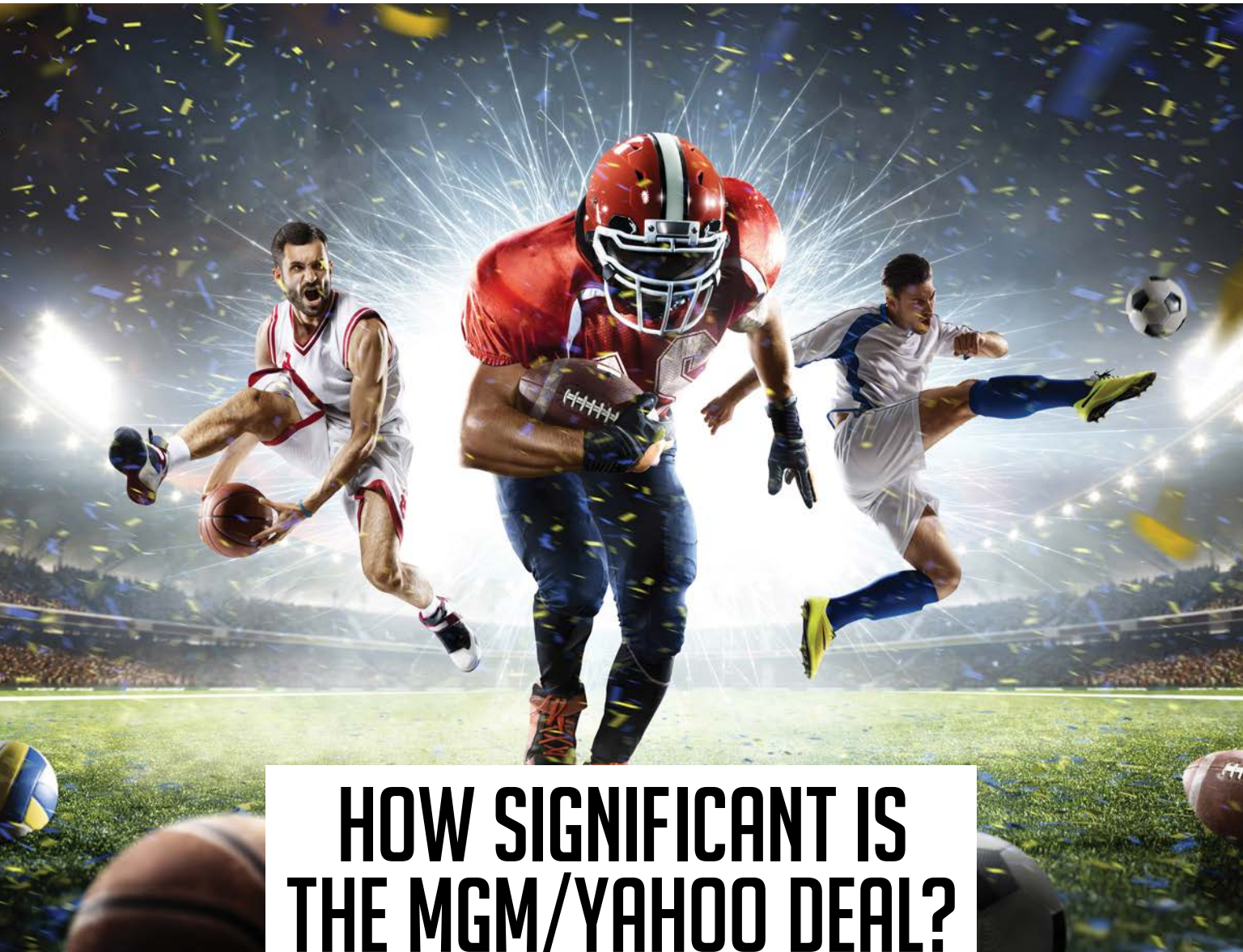
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# HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THE MGM/YAHOO DEAL?

**Tim Poole** looks into Yahoo's partnership with BetMGM and explains why it has more relevance to the affiliate market than one might have expected

When speaking to *Gambling Insider* for the US CEO Special last summer, MGM Resorts International CEO Jim Murren wanted to get the idea across that his company does things differently. He told us: "Most of the work done has been to take a map of the US and to game theory which states are going to approve sports betting now the Supreme Court overturned PASPA. Then they try to figure out how to get 5% to 10% of that market share. That is not the way MGM looks at it. MGM looks at sports betting as an introduction to a global consumer; to have a digital conversation with them."

Whether this strategy is successful – compared to FanDuel and DraftKings' land-grab, first-mover approach – will only

be determined by the test of time. But Murren and MGM's commitment to the method is not in question; that commitment was demonstrated by the partnership MGM signed with Yahoo in late October. As part of the deal, Yahoo officially entered the sports betting space – a move many had anticipated – but not quite in the fashion many had imagined.

## A NEW SPORTS BETTING AFFILIATE

To all intents and purposes, Yahoo is now a sports betting affiliate. Rather than entering the space as an operator in its own right, the online media firm (owned by Verizon Media) has signed an





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exclusive partnership with MGM Resorts and BetMGM. Yahoo users will be sent through to BetMGM's sportsbook app and there will be a significant level of integration between the two brands. The sportsbook will "power sports betting for Yahoo Sports and create collaborative content experiences and live events."

If that kind of partnership reminds you of anything, that's because it's basically an affiliate deal – even if not in name. Yahoo has a huge base of users (anticipated to be around 60 million) and also has its own daily fantasy sports (DFS) platform; all of which MGM can now tap into in the states it is live and that is a list of regions which will grow with time. DFS players are not insignificant, of course, as they are prime for conversion to sports wagering. So, as Murren alluded to, this different approach MGM has taken allows for it to save a huge amount of early legwork thanks to one particular deal.

#### **NEW YEAR, NEW JERSEY**

Mirroring the post-PASPA legalisation of sports betting in the US, the MGM-Yahoo integration kicked off in New Jersey on 14 November. Regarding the launch, MGM President of Interactive Gaming Scott Butera told reporters: "We believe in appealing through quality and breadth of product as opposed to spending a ton on advertising and promotion (which we still do, but it's much better with a great product). We're committed to that and excited about Yahoo; they feel the same way."

Which jurisdictions will follow the Garden State? Butera earmarked Nevada and Mississippi, adding there are market-access agreements with 10 other states. In states without legalised sports betting, 'play-for-fun options' will be available to players. He explained: "We get to bring the MGM brand into that system. There's significant opportunity to capture a lot [of Yahoo's 60 million users]."

#### **NOT JUST ONLINE SPORTS WAGERING**

An ambitious take on the deal is a link between online affiliation and land-based resorts. In other words, by capturing users for BetMGM through Yahoo, Butera is interested in the possibilities offered by cross-selling MGM's land-based products – including resorts and restaurants, not only gambling. "[Sports fans are] very active people," the President of Interactive Gaming said. "We expect they'll bet on sports, but also participate in other areas of the MGM echo chamber." MGM's Global Gaming

Award-winning loyalty program - M life - comes into play here, while Yahoo Sports will additionally broadcast from MGM properties 20 times a year during live sporting events like the NFL's Super Bowl, MLB's World Series and more. In terms of player lifecycle then, we could well be looking at Yahoo sending a player to MGM's online sportsbook and that player eventually staying at one of MGM's Las Vegas resorts; from there, there is potential spending in MGM's casinos, restaurants, gift shops and more. As stated, it's an ambitious take.

#### **ARE 'EXCLUSIVE' DEALS LIKE THIS THE WAY OF THE FUTURE FOR THE US MARKET?**

With the number of sports media companies being talked about as sports betting market entrants, could this kind of deal set a precedent? In some ways, it's like an 'exclusive' affiliate contract as opposed to the standard approach of working with a broad number of partners. Could ESPN try something similar with Boyd Gaming or TheScore with Penn National Gaming?

Those are merely two speculative examples picked at random.

Something else to look at (with no details revealed publicly thus far) is exactly where the revenue goes between Yahoo and MGM. Presumably, this is a revenue-share deal, but the age-old question of revenue share vs. CPA does creep into the equation once again. If similar partnerships are agreed within the US market in future, perhaps there will be a variety of approaches – depending on which media firms and operators are involved in negotiating the terms of the deal.

#### **WILL THE MOVE PROVE SUCCESSFUL?**

Something to consider before this kind of partnership goes mainstream, so to speak, is naturally how successful the deal proves to be. While Murren's emphasis on a different type of approach syncs perfectly with Verizon Media CEO Guru Gowrappan's insistence on creating sports betting history, the all-important factor is, as always, the bottom line. With 60 million users, Yahoo is certainly a powerful sports betting affiliate in its own right through sheer numbers.

But just what percentage of that total figure will end up betting with MGM? Will the deal provide more value than a more textbook marketing approach? Will users really flock to MGM's other offerings outside its sportsbook? These are all important questions. They are also however, fascinating for us to examine from the outside. While this is ultimately nothing new, in terms of MGM onboarding a large affiliate, it's a novel approach to US sports marketing. As such, it's definitely one to keep an eye on.

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# SIGMA 2019: THE CONSULTANT'S VIEW

**Shahar Attias**, Consultant at Hybrid Interaction, talks us through his day at the Sigma 2019 show in Malta, which encompasses competition between booths, an overbearing number of slots developers, and of course, plenty of partying

## WHAT'S ON SHOW?



board the plane with laser-sharp ambition to target business partners. But once in Malta, everyone seems to relax a bit. Sweet.

Entering the exhibition hall, you can't help noticing the real networking is done outside, where people have a smoke and pretend to be very busy by staring at their phones (Ariana Grande's Instagram feed has never been more popular). But we are past that - let's see what's interesting inside.

Nothing. Let's go outside again.

Well, not really - you have all the usual suspects with their "my booth is larger than yours" approach, but my conclusion is the real innovation can be found alongside the outer walls. This is where the smaller companies are anxious to explain to those who make the mistake and walk by slowly how great and amazing their solution is (it might indeed be - I just become deaf for three minutes every time I hear the word 'blockchain'). As a side note, kudos to Enteractive for offering the best coffee around, topped by the kindest people ever who served it. Well played.

Onward to the south side of the floor, where there's some bizarre scenery. Someone thought marching barely-dressed women wearing high heels on a fake catwalk is a smart business decision. This is beyond bad taste. Marty McFly called - it's 2019 already.

## CLASSIC VS. TRENDS

We are all here looking for the next big thing, and we come across a new hip company that has 'innovation' tattooed all over its lower back.

Malta bound! Although nearly half of all European-facing operations have some kind of a presence in this tiny island, I actually don't visit the place too often; only for conferences or workshops with clients; so yes, every other month. Anyway, always good to be here, and the laid-back atmosphere of the island seems to radiate across Sigma as well. After not having any major event since early summer, affiliates already





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Me: "What do you guys do?"

Sales representative: "We develop slots."

Me: "Here we go again."

Yes, the industry is dominated by slots and all operators crave more titles, all the time. But those who have been in the industry a long time will always have a warm spot in their hearts for table games.

Table games are the most classic and authentic type of gambling. House advantage is low enough to make it interesting for the players, and as such, in most cases, the volume of money wagered delivers enough revenue - to make it also interesting for the operator.

Offering slots is at least twice as profitable for the casino than table games when factoring in house advantage though. Quick money, less risk is the choice of any accountant.

Nevertheless, whenever any of us picture a casino vibe in our minds, we think of a packed table game. Most people don't just envision a smoky row of empty slot machines when they think of casino floors. I wish we would go back to valuing such an activity instead of banning it from wagering requirements.

## AND RELAX

Every successful Sigma day ends at some point, and after only two-and-a-half hours of standing in traffic, you are finally back at a Hugo's bar of some sort. A quick shower, tons of perfume and off you go - the Maltese nightlife awaits you and your entourage. The best thing about this island is that everything is right next door. In London,



travelling between two private functions can easily take you an hour. But Sigma allows committing to all available options, as attending four or five different parties in the same night is more than doable.

On the other hand, those better parties deliver unmatched fun. Drinks? You bet. Food? The best. Fireworks? You name it. In this crazy industry, you begin your day swearing to Shiva this is your last espresso of the day, and search frantically for the single place that serves a salad for lunch. By 4pm, this turns into a Vodka fiasco, and that's just what happens while you day-drink. At night however, us CRM people remember we are here as professionals, and as such, we unleash a segmented campaign, targeting our livers.

Then, when all is said and done, there's Hugo's Terrace. How the hell do these guys make any money when they sell G & T for about €3 (\$3.33)? Well, if that's where my clients are, I can't be rude and call it a day already, can I? I have no clue why I keep paying for an unused room again and again. That's the lifestyle of the consultant, I guess.

*As an online gaming consultant, Shahar Attias has seen more than 100 operators from the inside and can help your company benchmark your strategy, procedures and KPIs with the competition. After decades of experience in senior operational roles, he has founded Hybrid Interaction Ltd., an online gaming consulting firm, and has held successful projects across all verticals and through most jurisdictions, including online migration projects with brick-and-mortar casinos in the Dutch, Swiss and US markets. Among his clients are Hard Rock NJ, PokerStars, GVC Holdings, Holland Casino, William Hill, BetConstruct and NightRush.*





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# PLAYATTACK: MEET THE TEAM

The PlayAttack management team discuss a typical day in the office, their proudest achievements since joining the operator and aims for 2020

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Ivan Kaufman**, Product Manager

**Pierre Portelli**, Senior Digital Marketing Manager

**Mark Elvyn**, Affiliate Manager

of my comfort zone at the time and become an outgoing individual. It also increased my interest in foreign languages and the discovery of many different cultures.

After the experience I gained in organisational structure in the language school industry, I began researching and exploring online gaming's invested interest. My interest in the online gaming/affiliate industry has never ceased over the years, also due to the fact the industry offered and keeps offering career growth opportunities for many talented and skilled individuals.

**IK:** Yes, I've been in the affiliate industry since 2005 and gambling since 2012.

**First, can you explain a bit about your background and how you first got involved with PlayAttack?**

**IK:** I started earning in the online space at the end of 1990s, so I had a long and sometimes hard time learning how it all works. My past online experience covers a number of areas, such as dating, shareware, pay-per-click, lead generating networks and so on. I have experience both as an affiliate and as a developer, product owner and affiliate manager. PlayAttack seemed to be a great new challenge, so when I was invited to join the company, I didn't think about it much.

**PP:** For the past eight years, I have been working in the gaming industry, mainly within the affiliate marketing segment. My first days weren't an easy ride at all. I had to struggle on a daily basis to understand the focus of the affiliate segment, but as a fast learner, I quickly picked up all the important elements. In fact, from my early days working in the industry, I covered many roles, starting in web admin and working my way up to being a product owner.

**ME:** My background goes back to general service and customer support. I worked as a customer service agent for several years in the financial field of online trading. It was a vast learning experience and it introduced me to online marketing when I started working as a junior affiliate manager for one of the binary option trading platforms. After that, I was invited to PlayAttack by one of my colleagues.

**Is the gambling affiliate world something you have always had an interest in?**

**ME:** Not always, but it has become more and more interesting for me recently. I was not quite familiar with the gambling industry before I joined PlayAttack. I didn't expect it to be so big and exciting.

**PP:** Before I began my career in the online gaming industry, my background was tourism, where for more than five years, I had the pleasure of working for one of the world's largest language schools as the events director. The tourism industry in Malta is one of the largest contributors towards the country's GDP. Working in language schools definitely helped me step out



**What is a typical day like in your role at PlayAttack?**

**ME:** It's all about new streamers, YouTube channels, traffic sources etc. My role involves making more fun stuff for viewers and inspiring influencers to create cool content and promote PlayAttack casinos in the best way possible.

**IK:** As a product manager, I'm usually solving all the tech questions that can arise from our affiliates and planning our development.





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**PP:** My role at PlayAttack requires me to meticulously prepare monthly and quarterly targets for the team. Research and knowledge of how digital marketing positively impacts our affiliate partners is key to keeping the team informed and motivated to achieve their pre-set targets and KPIs.

**What are some of your proudest achievements with the company since you first joined?**

**IK:** The launch of our new affiliate software at the end of last year really stood out to me.

**PP:** I only joined PlayAttack a short while ago, but I have been hands on, working on various tasks. I constantly look forward to facing challenges head on and making sure whatever is achieved on a daily basis isn't only the merit of one person, but that of the team. Collectiveness is key to getting things done.

**ME:** I'm not aiming for any achievements in the sense of particular milestones, but instead I just keep working, making us known and heard all across Twitch, YouTube and other platforms.

**What have been the biggest challenges you've faced?**

**ME:** My job is a challenge every day. As I stay in touch with creative guys, I am also obliged to be creative so that we together can make entertainment more entertaining.

**IK:** Almost every single day brings some new challenge, and that's good. They may be hard, but they are always interesting to solve.

**PP:** Our brands have had a strong presence for quite some time, but we are relatively new to European markets. The biggest challenge here is to do the right thing in the correct time frame, while adhering to the regulations set in many EU countries, to make sure we can offer the very best experience to our players.

**What do you feel is the most unique thing about PlayAttack? What sets you apart from the crowd?**

**IK:** From my point of view, our most unique feature is that we use only in-house software that is tailored for our needs, so we can do almost anything tech-related that our affiliates want.

**ME:** I really liked PlayAttack from the very first day I joined the team. It's a product range I feel comfortable and happy to work with. The greatest benefit is freedom of choice. As an affiliate, you will definitely find what you like and what you want to work with.

**PP:** PlayAttack is not only offering one of the highest revenue share commissions in the industry, at 55%, but we're also publishing monthly videos on our YouTube channel to inform our affiliate partners about our brands' promotions and bonuses. We are well aware video is now the most effective and popular marketing communication tool, and that is why we are planning to increase our video publishing output during 2020.

**Do you feel the affiliate program space has changed much in the time you have been involved with it?**

**IK:** Well, when I started, almost all affiliate traffic was from SEO sites, and now a huge part of it is streaming or social.

**PP:** Affiliate programs haven't stopped evolving, just like the industry itself in the past few years. Affiliate commission offers have seen a shift from CPA deals to more structured and beneficial revenue-share deals. In fact, many affiliate partners are now more interested in seeing how they can reach their monthly targets, in terms of monthly revenue share commission. Let's face it; if you own an affiliate site and throw everything at Google to outrank your competition and increase traffic to your site by working hard on your white SEO strategy, content promotion and so much more, the last thing you want is to not get the best ROI for your business.

**What are your aims for 2020 and where do you see the company in five years' time?**

**PP:** This year will no doubt be very challenging. We are in the advanced stages of storming many European markets with our brands. Our team of affiliate managers are tasked with establishing a strong foothold in these markets through in-depth lead generation. As previously mentioned, with a great team in place, we will be undoubtedly hitting our ambitious marketing targets, so as to increase our brands' reach and awareness.

**IK:** My main personal aim is to polish and expand our new affiliate software that we launched at the very end of 2019.

**ME:** I want to make PlayAttack the best affiliate program for streamers so that most broadcasters would prefer us before to any other brand.

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# LOOKING AT NEW MARKETS

**Emanuele Saroli**, Group Senior Key Affiliate Manager at Betsson Group, reflects on an eventful 2019 and looks ahead to IGB Affiliate London and plans for 2020 with **Tim Poole**



migrations and rebrandings, with the aim of having all our brands under our affiliate platform and launched new markets for our existing brands. We were also shortlisted and successful in several awards categories during 2019.

### **What are you looking to get out of IGB Affiliate London this year and how do you aim to stand out on the floor plan?**

We try to get the best position available on the floor plan, but we also try to offer something unique and peculiar that can entertain the people. We introduced the football challenge when we first attended the show last year with our former ambassador John Arne Riise. This year, we'll have a racing simulator because of our partnership with Alfa Romeo. This is in line with our ambassador and sponsorship strategy. People can compete with each other on the racing simulator; it will involve a lot of adrenaline and a lot of fun.

### **Is there anything you are particularly looking forward to at IGB Affiliate London, in terms of talking points or conferences?**

We expect to have a lot of meetings to discuss new opportunities, especially as this year we will have the Uefa European Championship in football. We will speak to a lot of people and it will be great meeting with our established partners, as well as introducing ourselves to new and prospective ones. When it comes to the conference itself, I'm sure there will be a lot of interesting topics to discuss. A lot of well-known names are listed, with plenty of experts in different markets. I'm sure people will come back from London with great ideas for affiliate strategy in 2020.

### **Looking ahead, what do you anticipate from the affiliate sector in 2020?**

When it comes to what I expect, especially for our brands and our program, we will look at new markets for sure. This is also something other affiliates have spoken to me about and links to our multi-strategy brand. We want to increase our number of markets year-on-year. We aim to optimise the current affiliates we have and find new strategic partners. We'll be attending the big conferences, for sure.

Again, a focus would be on the optimisation of the resources we have, in terms of people and technical resources – more A/B testing and dedicated CRM campaigns for our affiliated players. We aim to increase our conversation rate and lower our churn rate, making sure in general affiliates want to partner with us because they'll make more money with us than anywhere else.

### **How do you look back on 2019 for Betsson Group Affiliates?**

We started with some challenges, as did any other operators focusing on the Nordics and Sweden in particular. We managed to overcome those challenges thanks to a multi-market approach. The fact we focused on more than 20 markets in Europe and around the world helped us overcome a challenging start to 2019. The focus on regulated markets means we faced compliance issues; which every other operator had to face too.

We try to offer our affiliates and partners the best possible tools and try to give them a direct response. In this sense, something else we implemented was Skype assistance three months ago, so we basically use a direct line on Skype. It's a very good way to have direct contact with our affiliates, so they can ask us questions and queries which are replied to in a live and friendly manner. This proved to be very successful, while we hired more affiliate managers, to cover the needs of all our affiliates.

We also implemented A/B testing of new landing pages on Bannerflow, so we can provide our better-performing landing pages to affiliates, to increase the conversion rate. We always try to attend the best conferences, which are in London, Amsterdam, Lisbon and Malta this year. We introduced a football competition at the stand, which proved a fun way to create a bit of a buzz. We had a few



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# LOYALTY IS A USP

**Nick Witcher**, CEO of operator CashiMashi's parent company, Victoria Square, speaks to *Trafficology* about changes in the affiliate industry

**Where does the CashiMashi name stem from?**

Yeah, it's a funny one. It somehow came up in a conversation and is based on how younger generations are using words today, particularly in Europe. It fit the brief of what's happening at the moment. People are being creative with words and it worked across any territory.

Anyone we spoke to would laugh at first, but then repeat it again and again. We found the name makes an impact at shows and people remember it.

**What are some of the challenges you have faced this year?**

The industry has a lot up in the air at the moment. All sorts of markets and territories are pulling in different directions and things are uncertain. We're always finding ourselves looking in the crystal ball to try and see what is going to happen and base contingency plans around those predictions. It has been challenging from that perspective.

**What are your core markets or territories?**

We're mainly in Europe; Germany, Austria, the Nordics and the Netherlands. But we also operate in Australia, Canada and Italy. That's where our main experience is.

We come from the affiliate side really; that's where we began. Then we started up our own casino based on all the knowledge we accumulated during our affiliate days.

**Are you looking to move into any new territories and what makes a market exciting and desirable to you?**

Asia is one market we have always been interested in, but we do not have the expertise at the moment. We are trying to see if there are opportunities there and we have a project in development at the moment where we are looking for Asian partners. That would be interesting to us.

But for now, our focus is going to be on Europe. That's where we've had all our experience in previous years; it's a case of doing what we know best.

**What makes CashiMashi unique?**

Our USP is our customer service for players. We have people who have been working in that department for eight years and there is hardly any turnover at all. That's how we've been successful; we've kept a really loyal player base and that's key to our success. That is the same level of service we offer to affiliates. I always try to get back to them; for me, if I haven't got back to them in 24 hours, that's a failure.

**Typically, the responsibility for following regulation falls on the operator in the affiliate-operator relationship. Does this need to change?**

It's difficult, because so many affiliates are people in their bedrooms making some extra money on the side.



That's also one of the beauties of the industry. I know in the US now you have to be registered to work as an affiliate and face regulations.

I wouldn't agree with regulation, and the responsibility to make sure affiliates are playing by the rules should be with the operator. That's where operators need to be really hands on. I think the balance is fair.

**William Hill US recently emphasised to its affiliate partners that they should not promote William Hill marketing materials next to any unlicensed operators. It sent out a short, generic email to all its partners. What do you think about the way it went about this?**

I think that would detract from the importance of the message. If I think with my affiliate hat on, you would definitely want much more involvement. If you can have a conversation rather than these quick, impersonal decisions, that would be better.

**What are CashiMashi's plans for the affiliate division for the next few years?**

We launched the site earlier this year, so we've been tweaking the platform and have made a lot of fixes that rolled out in the last few weeks. The website is getting much better. Our plan is to be much more integrated with affiliates via our CRM plan. We want to do more campaigns, keeping the affiliates in mind.

It's good to provide unique codes and offers they can use. We're trying to further personalise the service we provide and give as much as we can.



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# AFFILIATE CONCERNS: MAINTAINING TRUST AND INTEGRITY

Ellen Learmouth, Golden Euro Affiliates Partner of SafeAffiliatePrograms.com, looks into the causes of trust issues in the relationship between affiliate and operator



some interpretation and different operators demanded different amendments to the affiliates' advertising spaces. In extreme cases, affiliates would be terminated under the guise of non-compliance.

Why is it that affiliate marketing is hardest hit when the market evolves? Affiliates deliver: that's a fact. But as soon as a deal is struck, the control is never really in the hands of the operator. Does the affiliate really stick to the terms and conditions? Will they stick to the compliance demands? If they do not, it is the operator who must pay the fine.

In cases where the affiliate is self-hosting the advertising materials, the operator is unable to force an update unless the affiliate can be reached. The decisions of if, when, and where the adverts are placed are solely in the hands of the affiliate.

The same cannot be said about the relationship between an advertiser and publisher. Here the advertiser is still king and very much the customer. Service is provided to the customer (operator) and the service provider (publisher) does everything to keep the paying customer happy. Now, we see a notion where this type of relationship is developing within the gambling affiliate market. Big media companies have emerged during a fast consolidation of the affiliate space, which are miles away from the lone home-office affiliate of the past.

These are multi-million dollar operations with offices some operators are jealous of. Their trust in the operator is regulated by individual business contracts outside of the operators' affiliate programs terms and conditions. But their responsibility and delivery of service is also held to account.

Where does this leave the ordinary affiliate? Moreover, is there still room for trust in this modern market? The answer is: of course there is; why wouldn't there be?

If we look past the noise of the so-called "revolutionary" platforms that cut and ditch all that has made them what they are today, there are quiet giants out there that have a history of doing the right thing: affiliate platforms which honour long-standing agreements, that never change terms and conditions retrospectively, that coach partners through times of change and respect their affiliates. This does not mean they are dinosaurs that have not evolved themselves; it simply means they value business relationships no matter how big or small and believe in integrity and honesty.

Finding them is not so hard. There are prominent affiliate marketing forums that offer a world of insights into operators and programs enabling affiliates to find ones with little or no open issues. It is also worth checking the ones with not much activity, as this could mean there are no complaints.

Base your trust in programs on your own ability to do a little research. Failing that, word of mouth has always been a powerful marketing tool. As Ronald Reagan once said: "Trust but verify."

Why are we talking about maintaining trust and integrity, when there has always been a lack of trust towards operators?

This is based on the unusual relationship between the two business partners. The operator holds the key to any affiliate earnings as the affiliate business is a "deliver first, get paid after" operation. Historically, gambling operators relied heavily on affiliates; but once operators realised digital marketing was more than placing a banner on a mainstream website wishing for conversions, they started re-inventing the wheel.

The initial phase was heavy investment in staff to reduce their dependency on affiliate traffic. This new staffing level grew in the form of content, SEO and SEM teams. The next evolutionary stage was to reduce the affiliate marketing costs by introducing new performance targets into the terms and conditions, sometimes retrospectively; performance targets and marketing disciplines that some operators themselves struggled to meet.

Was this the lowest point? Not by a long stretch, because a new curse word appeared on the horizon – compliance. The core of compliance is undoubtedly good; it aims to reduce the risk of gambling issues for players, such as addiction and underage gambling. It is no secret some players fail to understand their own susceptibility to gambling advertisement and their own addictive nature.

The industry understood the need for further regulation and compliance was it. However, this newest obstacle was left to





# FROM THE GROUND UP

**Robert Reinikainen**, Affmore Founder and CEO, speaks with *Trafficology* about why, after launching multiple casino sites, he chose to start an affiliate program from scratch



We also focused on being able to track everything. We wanted to be as open as possible and show all the information from the players live. Now we are almost there with only a 15-minute delay on the stats. We want this to be as fast as possible, so everyone can see right away how they are doing, and since the beginning, we have never missed any clicks or registration.

#### **Have you chosen to offer revenue share or CPA?**

We offer a hybrid, so all the models are possible. The normal program is revenue share, but depending on the affiliate, how well we know them, and how well we know the traffic, it can be whatever is preferable for them.

#### **You mention on your website the Affmore retention team can keep players active for longer. What are your methods for boosting retention?**

We have four brands at the moment and all of them are a little bit different. We try to make those casino brands as automated as possible, but you still need to do at least 30% manual work. Maybe when AI becomes more popular this will change. These brands are our biggest draw.

We had the idea initially that the affiliates could use part of their commission to boost some players, but the response to this wasn't that great. Some of the biggest affiliates don't have the resources to activate so many players, so it would have been targeted for smaller affiliates.

#### **How pleased are you with the progress of the Affmore program so far?**

For us, the value lies in creating a program that works well and we have definitely done that. The Affmore program is really easy to configure and modify. It doesn't matter what trends the industry takes, because we can change it in a matter of minutes. For example, say you have to implement tax for a certain country's players, I assume this would be a huge hassle for other affiliate programs, whereas adding tax to our players would take around five minutes maximum.

#### **How did you first get involved in the gaming industry?**

I actually started working in the industry in 2009. I applied to all the companies I could find in Malta. It was a quick process, because around 10 days after I sent my first application, I had a job. The plan from the beginning was at some point I would start my own company.

#### **Was it always the plan to create an affiliate program after launching your first casino site in 2014?**

Actually, we felt the available programs were so poorly made, we decided to make our own; otherwise we wouldn't have even considered it. We just found the options were far too pricey for what you actually get. It was a way to save a bit of money at the time.

#### **Did you experience any specific challenges in getting the Affmore affiliate program running?**

We didn't really experience any problems no, it was quite a smooth process. There are a lot of moving parts but it's not too complicated. I was the only one who had ever used the back or even front end, so I gave instructions to the guys who built the program.

We knew it wasn't going to be completely perfect straight away, but the idea was we would build it so well stats-wise and tech-wise that it wasn't going to fall apart; and if we needed to change anything later on, we would be able to do so.

#### **What have you done to try and set the program apart from others?**

Usability was a main focus. We found in other programs there were so many features no one even uses, or someone might have used 15 or 20 years ago but are completely useless nowadays. You have to scroll around a lot to really know what you're doing with offerings like that, so we decided we had to be completely user friendly. We wanted everyone to be able to use our program right away.

**“WE FOUND IN OTHER PROGRAMS THERE WERE SO MANY FEATURES NO ONE EVEN USES, OR SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE USED 15 OR 20 YEARS AGO, BUT ARE COMPLETELY USELESS NOWADAYS. YOU HAVE TO SCROLL AROUND A LOT TO REALLY KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING WITH OFFERINGS LIKE THAT”**



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# PLAY HARD

**Triston Smook**, Key Affiliate Manager at Betsson Group Affiliates, talks getaway drivers, Ferraris and automatic coffee makers with **Tim Poole**

**YOU AMASSED A FEW YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE AFFILIATE INDUSTRY BEFORE JOINING BETSSON GROUP. WHAT IS THE FUNNIEST OR STRANGEST STORY FROM YOUR CAREER IN THE SECTOR SO FAR?**

I started my gaming career in customer support working for American-facing brands in Johannesburg back in 2001. One evening, we received a call from an American player who was very excited to be speaking to our support team in South Africa. The player was quite surprised we were able to communicate with him on the telephone, let alone have access to the internet, what with us being located so deep in the jungle.

We decided to have some fun with him and explained that, while we were on shift, we took turns riding the bicycle generators to power our office so we could keep the lights burning and stay connected. The player was really impressed. We advised that we often ride zebras and wildebeest to the office as they are cheaper to manage than cars, and with few roads, it was easier that way to move through the bush.

**AS BETSSON WILL HAVE A RACING SIMULATOR AT ITS STAND FOR IGB AFFILIATE LONDON, WHAT WOULD YOUR NICKNAME BE IF YOU WERE A FORMULA 1 DRIVER?**

Indeed, we will have an F1 racing simulator on our stand - Stand M22 - and I invite all readers to come and give it a shot as the prizes are really cool - including two tickets to watch the Italian F1 Grand Prix 2020 at Monza. Back to your question, my nickname would have to be something flashy and double-barrelled, like T-Bone the Hurricane, Mr. DRS - "Drag Race Speed-Star", or Mad-T Thriller.

**IF YOU COULD CHOOSE ANY GETAWAY DRIVER IN THE WORLD, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

Without a doubt, I would have to choose Sebastian Vettel. No matter what, when he wants to get to first place, he will crash into anybody in his way, including his own team-mates and he's done that before! He takes a no-nonsense approach to the track and gets to the front, no matter what the team orders are and no matter the situation.

**IF YOU COULD CHOOSE ANYONE TO BE YOUR UBER DRIVER, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

I would say the ideal Uber driver would have to be Dave Chappelle. I think it would be the funniest, most entertaining, historic ride ever. Even if you were going for a five-minute drive, it would be super entertaining. You would be like 'wow, I'm not getting out of this car.' It might be a damn expensive ride - but the conversation would be a unique experience.

**WHAT DO YOU PREFER AND WHY; MONSTER TRUCKS OR MINI COOPERS?**

Mini Coopers. I'm just immediately thinking about my current environment in Malta; you need a simple parking situation and you need to navigate very, very small roads. Of course, you can't drive very fast, so you need something that can go quick in first and second gear.

**FINALLY, IF YOU COULD INTRODUCE ANY NEW FEATURE TO A CAR, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

It would have to be the automatic coffee maker. To be able to make coffee in your car, when waiting for traffic or whatever, I think it's the one way you can make sure you have a nice cup of coffee at any time when you're stuck, because it's that me time you want.

Now and again, you want to get away and relax. When you're stuck in traffic, there's nothing you can do except swear at other people. With an automatic coffee maker, you'd get to enjoy a cup and enjoy the sights.

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