

trafficology

AFFILIATE FOCUS BY GAMBLING INSIDER

JUNE 2020

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ADAPT AND THRIVE

Exploring industry introspection as difficult decisions and prime opportunities appear in equal measure



TRAFFIC REPORT

Trafficology has partnered with data experts Casino City Press to provide insight into website and traffic trends across the gaming industry. The below is a breakdown of the top 20 affiliate programmes geographically for April 2020, across all devices (desktop and mobile)



OVERALL

Rank	Name	Website
1	IQ Option Affiliate	affiliate.iqoption.com
2	bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
3	NetHive Affiliate Program	nethive.com
4	eToro Partners	etoropartners.com
5	Kindred Affiliates	kindredaffiliates.com
6	PM Affiliates	pmaffiliates.com
7	U-affiliates	uffiliates.com
8	Betfair Partnerships	affiliates.betfair.com
9	1xBet Partners	1xpartners.com
10	Gamesys Group Partners	gamesysgrouppartners.com
11	IG Markets Partners	ig.com/uk/marketing-partnership
12	GVC Affiliates	gvcaffiliates.com
13	Stoiximan.gr Affiliates	affiliates.betano.com
14	Rabbit Affiliates	rabbit-affiliates.com
15	FDJ Affiliate Program	fdj.fr
16	William Hill Affiliates	affiliates.williamhill.com
17	XM Partners	partners.xm.com
18	PlayAmo Partners	playamopartners.com
19	Winamax Affiliates	winamax.fr/en/affiliates
20	WinBet Affiliates	winbetaffiliates.bg

CASINO

Rank	Name	Website
1	Gamesys Group Partners	gamesysgrouppartners.com
2	Rabbit Affiliates	rabbit-affiliates.com
3	WinBet Affiliates	winbetaffiliates.bg
4	U-affiliates	uffiliates.com
5	PlayAmo Partners	playamopartners.com
6	Buffalo Partners	buffalopartners.com
7	bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
8	Stakes Affiliates	affiliates.stakes.com
9	Videoslots Affiliate Program	partner.videoslots.com
10	LeoVegas Affiliate	leovegasaffiliates.com
11	GVC Affiliates	gvcaffiliates.com
12	William Hill Affiliates	affiliates.williamhill.com
13	Wildz Affiliates	wildzaffiliates.com
14	Best Partners	bestpartners.com
15	Kindred Affiliates	kindredaffiliates.com
16	Mr Affiliate	mraffiliate.com
17	NetHive Affiliate Program	nethive.com
18	Betsson Group Affiliates	betssongrouppaffiliates.com
19	Casumo Affiliates	casumoaffiliates.com
20	Lord Lucky Affiliate Program	lordlucky.com/en/affiliate-program



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



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aplaycasino.com



mrbit.net



slotv.com



frankcasino.com



driftcasino.com



casinosolumbus.com

SPORTS

Rank	Name	Website
1	NetHive Affiliate Program	nethive.com
2	bet365 Affiliates	bet365affiliates.com
3	PM Affiliates	pmaffiliates.com
4	1xBet Partners	1xpartners.com
5	Kindred Affiliates	kindredaffiliates.com
6	Betfair Partnerships	affiliates.betfair.com
7	Stoiximan.gr Affiliates	affiliates.betano.com
8	betway Partners Africa	betwaypartnersafrica.com
9	Tipsport Partners	tipsport.cz/partner
10	Tipico Affiliate Program	tipico-affiliates.com
11	Betway Partners	betwaypartners.com
12	Winamax Affiliates	winamax.fr/en/affiliates
13	Danske Spil Partners	partner.danskespil.dk
14	William Hill Affiliates	affiliates.williamhill.com
15	Marathon Bet Affiliate	affiliates.marathonbet.com
16	Sportsbet.com.au Affiliates	sportsbetaffiliates.com.au
17	GVC Affiliates	gvcaffiliates.com
18	TwinSpires Affiliates	twinspiresaffiliates.com
19	ZEturf Affiliates	affiliationen.zeturf.com
20	VivaroBet Affiliates	affiliates.vivarobet.am

POKER

Rank	Name	Website
1	Stars Affiliate Club	www.starsaffiliateclub.com
2	U-affiliates	www.uffiliates.com
3	Winamax Affiliates	www.winamax.fr/en/affiliates
4	WPN Affiliates	www.wpnaffiliates.com
5	GVC Affiliates	www.gvcaffiliates.com
6	The Spartan Poker Affiliate Program	www.thespartanpoker.com/affiliate/overview.html
7	CommissionKings	www.commissionkings.ag
8	bet365 Affiliates	www.bet365affiliates.com
9	NSUS Affiliate Club	www.nsusaff.com
10	Royal Stakes	www.royalstakes.com
11	Shen Affiliates	www.shenaffiliates.com
12	NetHive Affiliate Program	www.nethive.com
13	Ladbrokes Partners	www.ladbrokespartners.com
14	Natural8 Affiliates	affiliate.natural8.com
15	Kindred Affiliates	www.kindredaffiliates.com
16	Intertops Affiliate	www.intertops.eu/affiliate
17	FTR Poker Affiliate Program	ftropoker.com/affiliate/overview.html
18	Punto Scommesse Affiliations	www.puntoscommesse.it
19	Juicy Stakes Affiliates	https://affiliates.juicystakes.eu
20	Black Chip Poker Affiliates	affiliates.blackchippoker.eu



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Q & A: ICE ASIA DIGITAL

Clarion Gaming group event director **Greg Saint** gives us his thoughts on the success of digital trade shows so far



GREG SAINT

Taking place between 8 and 10 June, ICE Asia Digital follows Clarion Gaming's recent edition of ICE North America as the virtual gaming calendar continues to stand in for physical events. We caught up with group event director Greg Saint to hear all about Clarion Gaming's virtual events.

HOW HAS CLARION FOUND ITS VIRTUAL EVENTS SO FAR?

Virtual events are something we've looked at previously. Obviously, we've got a digital department in publishing that does what you would call online digital products. Normally they are slightly less involved than a digital week, but really we've drawn on some of that experience. What we've looked to do is really focus on five or six things within the digital forum. It's one of those mediums where there's a lot of ways to interact and display. But really we're looking for something that is robust in the first instant, and really enables people to connect and get to information in the context they need to.

ARE THERE ANY LESSONS OR TAKEAWAY POINTS CLARION IS APPLYING FROM ICE NORTH AMERICA INTO ICE ASIA? IS THERE ANYTHING THAT WORKED PARTICULARLY WELL OR ANYTHING YOU'LL DO DIFFERENTLY?

I think the takeaway points we've found is to realise what you can do within the sphere of what your day-to-day activities are. Your sales teams, your marketing teams etc., but equally where you need help from the right partners. We've partnered on our digital events with Smart Digital for our content, which is a partner we use at ICE London. It really ensures you're getting your content in the style you want in the visual and audio formats you want.

Another thing we wanted to incorporate was a platform for interaction, for contact exchanges as well as networking facilities, which we've done through Swapcard, exactly as you would during a live event. That's put us in good stead. For ICE North America, we had just over 4,000 people register and we're noticing we're getting higher returns, so if you compare those registrations to pre-registrations, you're looking at 60-65% dipping in and out of contact and content. We're very pleased so far and looking forward to the same for Asia.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, DO YOU THINK WE'LL SEE MORE VIRTUAL EVENTS LIKE THIS, GIVEN THEIR SUCCESS, WHEN 'NORMAL' SERVICE RESUMES, OR WILL IT BE BACK TO BUSINESS AS USUAL?

I think you'll continue to see digital offerings. I think they'll probably be two-fold, depending on the amount of information or change that's generated in any particular industry. Within regional aspects as well, things are changing at different rates, especially in gaming. But I think it's a great way to offer a 365 potential for both sets of customers, as well as to utilise digital within the live environment. I think you'll see that being used more often.

When events are stretched across the globe, not everyone can come every year. But if you identify the people who can't attend, you may be able to offer them something virtual during the live event itself. I think some of those products would need to be a bit more advanced than what we're currently using. For now, what we're using is absolutely fine but with more time, you can develop more technology. The future's going to be out there. There's lots of new technology in gaming anyway.

"WHEN EVENTS ARE STRETCHED ACROSS THE GLOBE, NOT EVERYONE CAN COME EVERY YEAR. BUT IF YOU IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE WHO CAN'T ATTEND, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO OFFER THEM SOMETHING VIRTUAL DURING THE LIVE EVENT ITSELF"

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Representatives from Clarion discuss a new way forward for iGB Live! and reveal how virtual and actual are mutually beneficial

CAN YOU WALK US THROUGH YOUR STRATEGY GOING ONLINE TO MAKE THE BEST POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO IGB LIVE!?

Naomi Barton, group director, iGB Events: Our online strategy is a little different, in that right now iGB Live is still happening in Amsterdam on 22-25 September, so our online event could be considered a pre-show or a 'Part 1'; the live event being the 'Part 2'.

Our strategy is to gather our iGB community together and keep them engaged, and offer them a platform in the digital world instead of making people wait until the September show. We're aware that not everyone may be able to attend the physical show in September. Having an online platform that compliments what we do at the live show means that we're covering all bases and allowing businesses to continue growing, while helping them to discover innovation and to connect with new partners digitally or physically.

AT WHAT POINT DID YOU REALISE THAT A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE WAS NECESSARY AND WAS THERE ANY DISCUSSION ABOUT CANCELLING ALTOGETHER?

NB: Ultimately, any decisions like this are decided by our community, and what they want. We spent time talking to the iGB community and asked how things were going, how things had changed, and what they were doing to

respond to some of the major business and personal challenges they were facing in recent months. It became clear that due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, a July event was not going to be possible. And when we realised that we needed to postpone the live show, we heard from the industry that they still felt it was important to have an opportunity to connect as the iGB audience in July, so we created a digital opportunity via iGB Live! Online.

iGB's live events offer a huge opportunity to deliver business to a really engaged iGaming and affiliate industry, and it offers strong ROI for the customers who participate and attend – as long as this is the case, we'll always look to find a way to ensure that we deliver an event, with health and safety clearly right at the top of the priority list.

IS THIS A FORMAT YOU'LL RETAIN FOR ANCILLARY EVENTS ONCE LIVE EVENTS RESUME?

NB: Absolutely. We're really excited to look to deliver on this new 'hybrid' event strategy, particularly during a time when we need to think differently about how to gather people together. It also allows us to potentially increase visitor audience by up to 30% by having them available digitally – we can consider live streaming our conferences, thus opening up our community even further to a more global audience. This goes back to ROI, increased delivery of ROI and potential business for our customers via a new and wider audience reach.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE THAT CAN'T BE EXPERIENCED IN PERSON (AND VICE VERSA)?

Alex Hamilton-Tomlinson, senior marketing manager, iGB Events: We strongly believe in the power and the value of doing business face to face; there's genuinely no other marketing medium that allows you to do so many things at the same time. Bringing people together is fundamentally what we do, and our customers continue to want us to physically deliver these events when and where we can do so safely, as they deliver really impressive growth and data acquisition opportunities for them alongside many other tangible benefits. One of the benefits of having a virtual event is comfort. If you attend from home, you don't need to dress up. That's a big win for some people I think.

You don't need take an entire day or more out of your schedule to travel to a live event – you can drop in to attend specific sessions, book one-to-one meetings with potential clients and scout the attendee list for who you really want to speak to.



NAOMI BARTON



ALEX HAMILTON-TOMLINSON

An important benefit for virtual attendees right now is also cost. A virtual offering means no travel and accommodation costs, and iGB Live! Online will be free to attend, as we want to open up our community to a global audience.

WHAT MEASURES DO YOU HAVE IN PLACE SO IGB LIVE! ONLINE RUNS SMOOTHLY FROM A TECHNOLOGICAL STANDPOINT?

AH-T: We're working with the best technology providers to deliver a really smooth event, using Swapcard since it has had incredible feedback already since it was used for Traffic and Conversion Summit, and ICE North America. From an AV perspective, we have some great partners already in this field and they're working hard to get the best footage for our sessions to deliver clear content that people really enjoy watching.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM DIFFER NOW THAT IT'S BEING CONDUCTED REMOTELY? WHAT ALTERATIONS DID YOU HAVE TO MAKE?

Curtis Roach, conference manager, iGB Events: Adjusting the agenda to fit a digital format took a lot of time and consideration. We're very aware that since the lockdown, our audience's screen time in general has increased significantly and so with that comes the bigger risk of attention fatigue.

To counteract this, we have consolidated the conference agenda into a shorter and punchier format. There will be fewer sessions and none will last longer than 20 minutes. In order to make best use of the shortened time, we've recruited only the very top, most senior members of the iGaming industry to speak and help us deliver the most relevant and timely insights to our audience.

We also recognise the importance of our customer's ability to meet and connect with the market. The lack of face-to-face meetings means we have now put extra emphasis on fully interactive networking opportunities throughout the agenda. We've worked very closely with our event platform provider to ensure that attendees are able to easily find and connect with each other, encouraging conversation, new business and the exchange of new ideas.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE INDUSTRY RESPONSE IN TERMS OF REGISTRATION NUMBERS SO FAR?

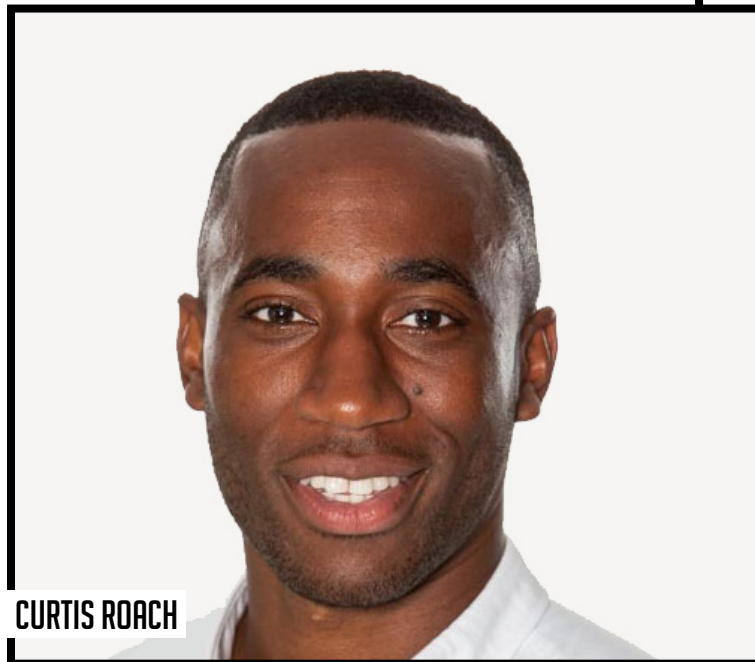
AH-T: We've had a fantastic response to the online event so far, which is great to see. We're currently asking people to let us know which part of iGB Live! they will be attending this year and its good news to us to see that people intend to attend both the online event and the physical event in September.

AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC, ARE YOU GETTING A SENSE OF INDUSTRY COHESION AND A GREATER WILLINGNESS TO HELP STRENGTHEN IT ACROSS ALL DISCIPLINES?

NB: Yes. It's very heartening to see that out of a really tough situation, we're also witnessing innovation and creativity.

We want to prioritise the customer first and foremost and understand what they want, what they need, and what we can offer via our products to support them, be it an event, a digital offering, a content platform or all of the above.

Collaboration is key here as well. We all need to keep talking but above all, we need to keep listening and coming up with solutions that benefit everyone. As we continue to move on from this period, working closely together with the iGB community will be the only way to ensure that the industry will not only survive, but actually thrive going forward.



CURTIS ROACH

AFFILIATECON REVIEW: A WORD FROM THE MODERATOR

AffiliateCon Virtually Live presenter and panel moderator **Tim Poole** looks back at the event's first ever virtual edition



TIM POOLE

AffiliateCon made history on Tuesday 12 May, running its first-ever virtual event – and it went off without a hitch. With analysis from a range of distinguished speakers, AffiliateCon Virtually Live delivered high-quality content across a mix of engaging solo presentations and lively group

discussions. Covering topics such as SEO, sports betting, esports, virtual sports, marketing, responsible gambling, regulation, affiliate-operator relations and more, the event offered a variety of insights across all sectors of the gaming industry.

One of numerous highlights was Louise Agran, Spotlight Sports Group CMO, discussing the *Racing Post* stopping printing of its newspaper during the coronavirus pandemic. She said: "That gives you an idea of how strong the effect has been. It's something that's quite unprecedented and not something we wanted to do at all. With a lack of UK and Irish racing, it was just not viable or feasible to print something. We didn't have enough relevant content for our audience to put in the paper and enough to justify the price of the paper. I think that's an indication of what we've had to do and how we've had to adapt, that we've been really trying to promote wherever there has been racing."

Meanwhile, addressing the recent surge in esports betting, SickOdds co-founder Tom Wade offered a 'hopeful' estimate of how many players will stay with the vertical once the coronavirus pandemic subsides. He explained: "My hopeful estimate is we will see 30% or 40% of the new audience stay with esports in some capacity, a pessimistic view would be 10-20%, which would still be a massive rise. We've seen our traffic double across a number of esports titles and seen an outstanding interest in some crossover sports titles, such as FIFA and NBA 2K20. They are titles that are very easy for users to come along and understand esports, where players from traditional sports betting can still recognise players."

In our final panel of the day, OddsPedia co-founder Jeton Kodja also had a message for operators: "Some operators got into trouble because of their own marketing activities and then sent out several warnings about using the pandemic for

advertising. In general, I completely agree that such a situation should not be exploited and there's nothing to say against it. But the wording and the threatening language in these kinds of emails is in my eyes unprofessional. Operators could have communicated this to affiliates with respect instead of treating everyone like criminals."

FROM THE MODERATOR

For a first-time presenter and moderator at a conference, I could not be happier while I reflect on the success of the inaugural AffiliateCon Virtually Live. I'd like to thank all our panellists and viewers, the brands who supported the event, as well as the superb work of the AffiliateCon team behind the scenes. We aimed to deliver first-class content and analysis, not just to engage our audience but to help operators and affiliates, during a truly challenging time for many amid the coronavirus pandemic.

From the positive feedback we've received so far, I'm delighted to say we've succeeded in that area. Content is king and there's no point putting on an event without having anything worthwhile to say. But all our solo presenters and panel speakers all provided valuable and relevant messages, while at the same time having plenty of encouraging and positive things to say about the industry.



"WE AIMED TO DELIVER FIRST-CLASS CONTENT AND ANALYSIS, NOT JUST TO ENGAGE OUR AUDIENCE BUT TO HELP OPERATORS AND AFFILIATES, DURING A TRULY CHALLENGING TIME FOR MANY AMID THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC"

Hopefully, we'll be able to return to Sofia, Bulgaria, for AffiliateCon in May 2021, to meet everyone involved in the event in person and experience the real-time networking we have all so dearly missed in recent months. Should lockdowns continue across the world, however, we'll always be on hand to give you the kind of top-class analysis you just won't get anywhere else. Once again, a huge thank you to everyone involved and a sincere thank you from me personally, to all who have welcomed me with open arms as the new conference moderator on the block.

MAKING THE BEST OF IT

A panel at AffiliateCon discussed how sports betting operators and affiliates have had to adapt in order to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, but it's not all been bad news

When the English Premier League announced its suspension on 13 March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, affiliates knew they were in for a period of adaptation.

Then with all major live sport being suspended in mid-March, operators and affiliates had to find alternative markets to offer, delving into the unknown with the likes of the Belarusian Premier League.

Affiliates have always been a creative bunch. The pandemic has shown they are able to adapt quickly, and market niche offerings just as though it were a major sports league.



LOUISE AGRAN

A great example of the industry making the best of the cards it has been dealt is the success of the virtual Grand National. Shown live on ITV on 4 April, the race raised £2.6m (\$3.2m) for NHS Charities Together, with a peak audience of 4.8 million viewers, the equivalent of 30% of the UK television audience.

For *Racing Post* parent company Spotlight Sports Group CMO Louise

Agran, it was a highlight in an otherwise tough time for the affiliate, but also mentioned the focus of niche markets during this period.

Speaking at AffiliateCon Virtually Live in May, she said: "There has still been racing almost continuously in the US behind closed doors and in South Africa. Whatever racing has been around, we've been providing content for that racing, tipping guides for our customers, and giving people who don't have in-depth knowledge of racing abroad some of that information.

"We've also had to turn to other sports as well and searched the globe for stuff to talk about and what we believe will be interesting for our customers, such as Azerbaijan and Nicaragua football and esports, which has been the focus for us.

"The most surprising part of what happened in lockdown is with the virtual Grand National. We covered that as if it was an actual race. We were able to provide cards, guides and all that kind of stuff. As an affiliate, we didn't overtly push the betting side of that because all of its profits

went to NHS charity, so we didn't think it was appropriate to do that.

"Nonetheless, it was fantastic that people could engage with it and they did, and it was one of our biggest ever days in terms of visitors to our website and apps."

Pressbox PR director Alex Donohue, was quick to mirror those words and mention how proud he was about how the industry pulled together, to produce and push the virtual race that raised a substantial amount for charity.

He said: "As a massive racing fan and someone who has been in the gambling industry all my working life, the virtual Grand National for me was probably the proudest I'd ever felt about our industry.

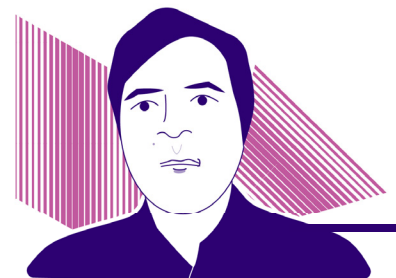
"The industry has had its fair share of negative headlines but showed it could really pull together and do something positive. I think the way it was received and the fact I think it's been one of the most watched pieces of TV in lockdown provides something really positive to cling onto when things get back to normal."

"It demonstrates how much the public responds really well to the sports and events they know and love like the Grand National."

But despite the positives, the two months that passed without major live sport took a major toll on affiliates. Despite the initial appetite and interest in new offerings such as the stay-at-home darts Donohue eluded to earlier, customers much prefer the familiarisation and knowledge of a particular sport when betting.

"One of the misconceptions is gamblers have switched uniformly from betting on the Premier League to obscure offerings such as the Belarusian Premier League," Donohue explained.

"To me, it seems like that hasn't really happened and we're not really going to be able to judge the recovery until we have proper recognisable live sport and live horse racing under our belts.



ALEX DONOHUE

"One of the problems you have, is overkill of these niche offerings and an opportunity for fatigue to set in with the customer base.

"Affiliates and operators have been doing a great job in pivoting so quickly to cover these events but if the audience isn't invested, no matter how hard the publisher or operator tries to sustain an interest in it, it's natural it will drop off."

With that in mind and the fact niche offerings were wearing thin with player interest, live sport couldn't come soon enough by the time Bundesliga returned on 16 May.

Agran mentioned the industry's excitement ahead of that start, saying: "It's not a cautious approach, we're really excited about the Bundesliga and we're trying to get our customers excited about it and we're going to provide them with some really great content to help them to guide their way through that league and the sport that will be on. We're treating it as an opportunity, encouraging people to get involved, and do whatever we can do to generate interest."

However, the coronavirus pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the *Racing Post*. On 26 March, it temporarily ceased publication after 34 years of daily UK circulation due to a lack of racing content. But it announced it was returning to print to coincide with the return of British horseracing on 1 June, after more than two months without it illustrates the sort of battle affiliates have had during this pandemic.

"No sport means no betting, and very little content," Agran explained. "The decision gives you an idea of how strong the effect has been. It's something that's quite unprecedented and not something we wanted to do at all. With a lack of UK and Irish racing, it was just not viable or feasible to print something. We didn't have enough relevant content for our audience to put in the paper and enough to justify the price of the paper.

"I think that's an indication of what we've had to do and how we've had to adapt, that we've been really trying to promote wherever there has been racing."



WARREN SAMMUT

In terms of other verticals filling the void of live sports betting, and while there have been contenders, nothing has come close. That's according to Betsson group SEO marketing owner, Warren Sammut. Although esports interest has risen, it hasn't replaced

the interest of football, but there is an opportunity for such verticals to attract live sport bettors.

Sammut said: "As an operator, the majority of our business comes from casino, so that has remained largely unaffected and sort of kept the momentum going. We've seen a rise in

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"AS A MASSIVE RACING FAN AND SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN IN THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY ALL MY WORKING LIFE, THE VIRTUAL GRAND NATIONAL FOR ME WAS PROBABLY THE PROUDEST I'D EVER FELT ABOUT OUR INDUSTRY."

- ALEX DONOHUE

esports but it doesn't exactly replace the interest of football; if someone is betting on a team they love they don't suddenly switch to esports and start betting on that.

"There's a bit of a learning curve with esports. What's interesting with things like Formula 1 doing esports is it's similar to the sports people follow, with actual race drivers customers see on a Sunday, such as Charles Leclerc driving and actually winning. What I think that has done is bring esports to a wider audience. We've seen that reflected in the activity, and even when it comes to content production, we're covering these types of events in the same way we'd usually cover traditional sports."

The talk ended on a relevant and important topic: the promotion of responsible gambling during the pandemic. The panel was in agreement that the industry has stepped up during this period to promote safer gambling, particularly with protection action plan announced by the Betting and Gaming Council (BGC) in March. The importance of acting responsibly and ethically during this time is crucial for the industry, especially affiliates.

"We've communicated with our partners the importance of being ethical at a time like this because it affects everyone. We've also been one of the companies who have signed with the EGBA's [European Gaming and Betting Association] code of conduct that goes over marketing and advertising in a responsible way," Sammut elaborates.

"When it comes to gambling, we've always been looking at the best interests of the customers, which is something we'll be doing regardless of the times."

Donohue added: "What I've been impressed by in the regulated industry is that operators and affiliates have been incredibly responsible in the way they've marketed themselves, obviously learning lessons from past mistakes. I think the industry has stepped up and been incredibly responsible."

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LOOKING BEYOND THE HORIZON

At AffiliateCon Virtually Live, a panel of industry experts discussed the challenges created by COVID-19 and the pandemic's effect on the industry outlook for the rest of 2020

Rewind to the end of 2019 and operators, affiliates and suppliers were all looking forward to a successful summer. For sports betting operators and their affiliates, the European football championships, the Tokyo Olympics and the Grand National all lay just beyond the horizon, while the casino industry continued to make great progress in most areas of the world. Now, just six months later, that future is far less clear.

While COVID-19 has been detrimental to large parts of the industry, it's also very true that the pandemic has affected everyone in different ways. During AffiliateCon



TAL ITZHAK RON

Virtually Live, the Tal Ron All-Stars Panel met via video link to discuss the effects of COVID-19 on the industry, and when the panel's moderator Tal Itzhak Ron, CEO and co-chairman of Tal Ron, Drihem and Co, kicked off proceedings, it was clear that those within the industry

had differing experiences during the crisis.

Assaf Stieglitz, Odds1x2 and PlayWiseCasino co-founder, made clear that the B2B side to his industry had struggled due to a lack of sports, something that had led to operators dropping out of contracts. "On the affiliate side, we were hurt badly," Stieglitz explained. "On B2B we provide odds comparison to other companies. Those companies will come to us because they have a contract with us, and they will say, "You don't provide us with anything so let's compromise." That compromise is for them to pay nothing. Now, the challenge is to work on a tighter budget."

In comparison, Matan Amoyal, Boiling Offers CEO, suggested that for him the main challenge had been adapting marketing efforts. As the pandemic spread across the world, Amoyal said the main struggle was to "understand the mindset of people in each location", including the status of the pandemic

in specific regions. While some areas like the UK have experienced a full lockdown for a number of weeks, other areas such as Sweden have had a more relaxed approach – something that has to be taken into consideration when catering a

marketing strategy, according to the Boiling Offers CEO.

The necessity of a diversified portfolio is something we have heard reiterated from industry experts during the pandemic as we see players shift their focus to different verticals. This is something Stieglitz recognised, cursing his own company's decision not to focus more on its online



ASSAF STIEGLITZ



"IT'S IMPORTANT TO FIND THE POSITIVE AND KEEP MOVING. HERE IN THE FINANCIAL MARKET WE EXPECT TO HAVE THE SMALLER CRISES AT LEAST ONCE EVERY TEN YEARS. IT SHOULD BE BUSINESS AS USUAL AND IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO KEEP GOING AND FIND THE POSITIVES IN THE BUSINESS"

- SAULIUS RACEVIČIUS



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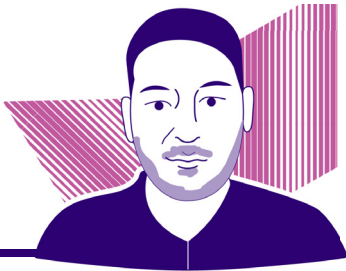
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casino space, PlayWise, when it had the opportunity. "We started it and then pushed it a bit but then came back to our comfort zone and focused on sports," Stieglitz admitted. "If I could, I would do this differently by enhancing the offering in casino and esports, the things that are still ongoing right now."

But how has this all changed the industry's outlook for the near future according to these experts?

From a regulatory perspective, we've seen a number of temporary measures and guidelines introduced in different regions as they look to ensure homebound customers are protected – namely in Sweden and the UK. Ron argued that this could be used as an excuse to implement harsher regulation post-COVID. However, he also admitted ensuring



MATAN AMOYAL

the compliance of operators and affiliates was "not a bad thing".

This sense of positivity extended to the payments sector, too, with ConnectPay CEO Saulius Racevičius telling the panel: "It's a really good time for payment services providers. It is difficult to compete with incumbents usually. But now it is a perfect storm. We can get a bigger market share from incumbent banks and service providers. It is an opportunity to be better, to get a bigger market share."

Asked for his advice to affiliates, Racevičius said: "It's important to find the positive and keep moving. Here in the financial market we expect to have the smaller crises at least once every ten years. It should be business as usual and it's very important to keep going and find the positives in the business."



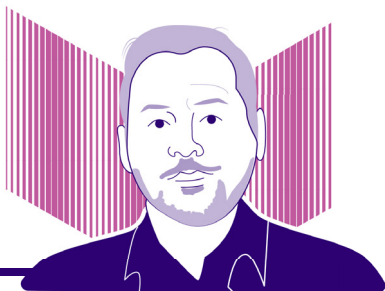
SAULIUS RACEVIČIUS

VIRTUALLY UNSTOPPABLE

Martin Wachter, Golden Race CEO, discusses a 220% growth in online ticket sales for virtual sports – and more

Online virtuals ticket sales have seen significant growth during the coronavirus pandemic, as sports bettors look towards the vertical as a substitute for traditional sports betting, according to Golden Race CEO Martin Wachter.

Speaking during AffiliateCon Virtually Live this week, Wachter explained why operators are turning towards the vertical.



MARTIN WACHTER

"We asked some of our clients for their opinion on virtual sports," the CEO of the virtuals supplier commented. "All of them together say that it has turned into a very important source of revenue.

"It is very important at this stage because it is the closest substitute

for a real sportsbook. They see a lot of possibilities and growth in this area.

"I found some statistics online and, in terms of average players, virtual sports has increased by 206% as a result of the impact of COVID-19."

Although the sale of retail tickets for virtual sports has decreased during the crisis as a result of the closure of betting shops, Golden Race has seen significant growth in the sale of online tickets since January.

Wachter explained: "January was quite okay, and then we had growth in February and March. We saw a big move from retail to online and then in April we saw more growth.

"From January to April we saw growth by more than 220% in online ticket sales.

"We expect this to grow more because up until this time we only speak about existing customers but from March until today we signed nearly 130 new operators.

"Most of the clients are not live now but in the next few weeks it might double again with all of this business."



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CASINO BRANDS*

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Warren Jacobs, managing director of ActiveWin, and **Jeton Kodia**, co-founder of Oddspedia JSC, met via video link during AffiliateCon Virtually Live to discuss the relationship between operators and affiliates during the COVID-19 pandemic

The relationship between operators and affiliates is often a fragile one at the best of times. An operator must trust its affiliate partners to be completely compliant with regulation, while an affiliate must trust an operator to treat it fairly and with respect.

When Warren Jacobs, managing director of operator ActiveWin, and Jeton Kodia, co-founder of affiliate site Oddspedia JSC, met during AffiliateCon Virtually Live to discuss the operator/affiliate relationship, it was evident they believe maintaining good communication with partners has never been so vital.

Asked how they would assess the industry's responsible marketing efforts during the pandemic, both industry representatives agreed that, for the most part, operators and affiliates had taken the opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to compliance.

Jacobs described player safety as the "primary objective in the current climate", insisting that he was impressed with everything he

had seen from operators so far – even if this might be flying under the radar of those in the anti-gambling camp.

"I think it's been very good so far and it would be great if this was recognised," Jacobs commented. "The industry has made massive strides when it comes to its understanding of

responsible gambling. I genuinely believe the majority of gaming companies are far more responsible for their actions."

In addition to the utilisation of compliance experts, Jacobs commended the UK industry on its charitable contributions during the pandemic. In April, a number of bookmakers donated funds from the Virtual Grand National towards the NHS, while during the same month, Denise Coates, CEO of Bet365, donated £10m (\$12.3m) to an NHS trust to support staff fighting COVID-19 in Stoke-on-Trent. Both acts demonstrate the generosity of an industry, which is itself experiencing a turbulent period as betting shops and casinos are forced to remain closed.

While both panellists agreed that the industry had been working well to fight negative stigma during the pandemic, as always, there have also been a small number of operators and affiliates who have let the side down, albeit mainly in the grey or black markets. In March, two Russian gambling websites were found to be offering odds on COVID-19 betting categories, while in the Netherlands, the regulator was made to take strict action when

operators began using the pandemic to promote illegal online gambling websites.

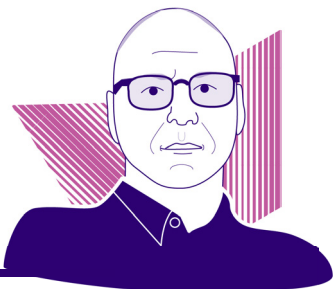
Following this news from the Netherlands, the Malta Gaming Authority and Gambling Commission were both quick to issue notices warning licensees not to reference the pandemic in any marketing. Kodia pointed out that operators were also quick to clamp down on this behaviour from affiliate partners. However, he said the wording of certain emails had led to a breakdown in communication between affiliates and their operator partners – something which he said indicated a "lack of respect".

In sending emails to partners warning them against such behaviour, Kodia suggested a number of operators were in danger of tarnishing all affiliates with the same brush. "The wording in their emails is just unprofessional," he commented. "Operators could have communicated this without treating everyone like criminals. Communication has to change in general, not only now because of COVID-19. We're an internationally operating company with a lot of responsibility. The word respect means a lot for me and it's something operators have to work on in the future."

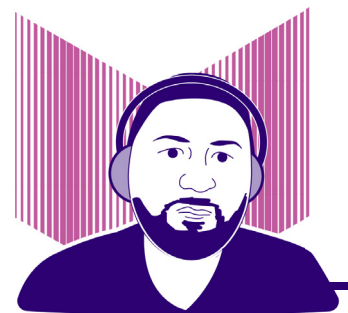
It would be certainly difficult to disagree with Kodia on this point. When an affiliate is doing its utmost to play by the rules, being chastised by a partner because of a few bad apples is not going to sit well. This is something Jacobs clearly understands, confirming his own "complete respect" for affiliate partners. He said: "It needs to be treated as a partnership. Recognition of effort is vital in how much they contribute to the sector. I would argue that affiliates are a fundamental component of the online gambling industry."

Despite the difficulties inherent in maintaining a good operator/affiliate partnership during a global pandemic, both panellists demonstrated that, with the right amount of respect and trust, this is certainly not an impossible feat.

Asked for one final piece of advice for affiliates, both panellists agreed on the necessity of diversification and expansion. In particular, Kodia recommended expanding into new territories to avoid suffering from problems in certain regions. "Depending on one market could be a big risk," the Oddspedia co-founder concluded. "I would recommend entering as many markets as possible."



WARREN JACOBS



JETON KODIA

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CROSSING OVER TO ESPORTS

SickOdds co-founder **Tom Wade** speaks at AffiliateCon, on the opportunity that has arisen for esports during the current pandemic, and what it could mean going forward

In every crisis there's an opportunity. The coronavirus outbreak has had a devastating impact all over the world and on our daily lives, with many businesses in almost every industry feeling the pinch.

That's no different with the gambling industry, as most major sport remains suspended. However, there are still positives that can emerge from the pandemic, and esports is one of them.

Esports betting is a vertical in the industry that was rising in popularity before the outbreak. But now, it's well on its way to establishing itself as a major offering for operators and affiliates, which is set to continue long after we come out the other side of virus lockdowns.



**“THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS
HAVE BEEN THE STRANGEST BUT MOST
EXCITING WE’VE BEEN THROUGH
AS AN ESPORTS AFFILIATE.”**

“The last couple of months have been the strangest but most exciting we’ve been through as an esports affiliate,” admits Tom Wade, co-founder of esports odds comparison platform, SickOdds, when speaking at May’s AffiliateCon Virtually Live.

Popularity with esports has increased tenfold during the pandemic. According to EveryMatrix data, there has been a 40-times growth in esports betting from March, 80% of which from titles Fifa and NBA2K. The same data also states that 10% of real sports players are now esports bettors, with a turnover on esports higher than 33%.

During that period, SickOdds has seen its traffic grow by more than 200% for so-called cross-over titles, such as Fifa, NBA2K and F1, which act as platforms for traditional sports bettors to make the move from live sports to esports.

The interest levels of esports has also spiked on social media, but what’s come as a surprise to Wade, is how adaptable traditional sports fans have been to taking the leap with esports.

“When we started in 2016, we positioned ourselves on an esports focused brand on the basis esports fans are not the same as traditional sports fans, and the user experience and style of messaging does need to reflect this,” explains Wade. “But what we’ve seen over the past couple of months is that this style is adaptable for traditional sports fans as well.”

The fact customers are making the switch from live sports to esports bodes well for both the vertical itself, and affiliates who are desperately looking for other markets, with a lack of sports leading to a lull in traffic and revenue.

Wade advised fellow affiliates to “ensure your affiliate network

has enough diversity to ensure it can be sustained. Slots, virtual sports and, most importantly to us, esports have flourished during this time.”

Yet the more interest in esports and the more it’s offered by operators reinforces how it’s now being viewed as an “antidote to the deficiency of sports betting”, as Wade puts it. That means sportsbooks are putting in more investment on marketing just to further boost esports’ footing.

And there are elements of esports that make it comparable to live sports, which is another factor in its favour. Just like live sports, there are real teams you can follow, real players with real skills, such as hand eye co-ordination and reaction speed, with a lot of strategy and different playing styles noticeable to the keen eye.

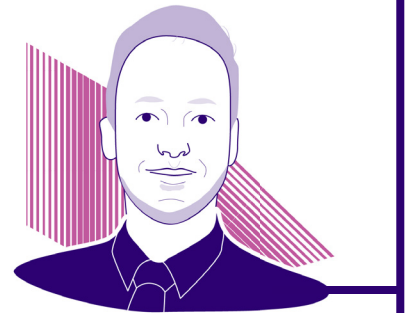
It’s also a very adaptable market in terms of how it has transitioned from offline to online, with broadcasting rights available on Youtube and Twitch so fans can follow 24/7 free of charge.

But will the new audience stick with esports once live sports are back in full flow? Wade thinks so. He expects esports to continue thriving after the pandemic, estimating 30-40% of the new audience will be retained.

“Even if we can retain 10 to 20% of those players, which is a pessimistic view, it would still be a massive influx into the esports market, and we’d see a big benefit to the underlying industry,” Wade added.

There’s certainly no guarantees. But right now it’s a great time for esports, with the new interest and buzz surrounding it.

“At the moment you’ve got a hell of a lot of people who are looking at esports; eyes are certainly on it,” Wade concludes. “We hope people continue to immerse themselves with the new and exciting market.”



TOM WADE

KEEPING IT REAL TIME

Solitics VP of sales **Harel Falk** discusses how choosing a real-time marketing automation platform can make a real difference for the income of affiliates and operators



Working as an affiliate can be tough, with many challenges to overcome before you can get the maximum value from new referrals. Converting leads by getting them to deposit for the first time is only the first step. If you have an affiliate contract that includes a share of the lead's lifetime revenue, you also want them to keep on spending as much as possible to maximise your own income.

This is often easier said than done. You want to encourage leads to spend, but the world of online gaming is highly saturated, making it difficult to generate revenue from new referrals. To ease the way for your leads, you should look to connect with operators that increase your chances, and use smart tools such as data-driven marketing automation.

HOW DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING AUTOMATION CAN HELP YOU

Imagine if you were able to peer through the internet and find out exactly what's causing leads to hesitate over making a deposit or playing a game, and then instantly communicate with them to help resolve their doubts or explain confusing instructions. For example, what if a new user signs up, makes a deposit and then loses half of it in the first 10 minutes of play? They are very likely to leave in disappointment and never return – unless operators can quickly reach out to help.

That's where data-driven marketing automation steps in. Marketing automation facilitates the process of getting a lead to convert, make purchases and keep coming back



HAREL FALK

for more. The software automates a series of customised responses based on the operator's data that nurture an authentic relationship, helping the lead to become comfortable placing deposits and bets on a new platform, thus bringing the operator (and you) more income.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A MARKETING AUTOMATION PLATFORM

The faster operators respond to a user who is frustrated, stalling, confused or facing difficulty, the more likely they are to convert and retain them as a customer. However, operators also need to utilise their data in real time, to generate the most appropriate, relevant and personalised response.

For example, if someone has signed up for a new gaming platform and made a deposit but hasn't yet begun playing, they need to spot whether the player is perhaps overwhelmed by the options or confused about how to begin, and this needs to be done swiftly. Get it right and respond in time, and you'll score a happy new referral who trusts you, feels comfortable on the new platform and is willing to make ongoing bets, which will boost your long-term earnings.

All of this depends on an automation platform that utilises the data in "real" real time and at lightning speed. Accessing all the data about the user, their activity, and responding in the most personal, contextual way is a process that needs to take place within seconds, not minutes.

"REAL" REAL TIME IS A GAME-CHANGER

That's the difference between "real time" and "real real time" that affiliates and operators notice when using data management and marketing automation platforms.

These platforms pull together data from distributed offline and online sources like CRMs, apps, websites, databases and call centres to create a personal customer journeys for each player and respond to their actions and non-actions within 1.8 seconds.

Using data management and marketing automation, operators can create effective dynamic content and personalised special offers for each and every player, alongside a web of triggers based on each player's specific historical data, and current actions and preferences. When the platform triggers an automatic response, it applies all the data and sends a response that is relevant, personal and delivered through the appropriate channel, such as pop-ups, email, push notifications, text messages and other channels.

Both small and large companies like Codere and DelaSport have chosen to work with such platforms, like Solitics, recognising the value it brings. These and other operators pursue data-driven real time capabilities, enabling operators to push the right content to the right lead at exactly the right moment. Working with the raw data and responding in real time, based on all the available data, enables operators and affiliates to increase conversion, retention and generate revenue uplifts of 15% or higher.

A REVENUE BOOST FOR AFFILIATES

In the face of such challenging conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic, affiliates need to do all they can to ease the way for new referrals. It makes sense to favour the operators who use tools that will help them meet these challenges. Providing the most personalised, contextual customer experience to every player will accomplish just that. Don't settle for dumb luck. Tilt the odds in your favour by working with operators that use technology, and maximise your work and income.

"IN THE FACE OF SUCH CHALLENGING CONDITIONS, AFFILIATES NEED TO DO ALL THEY CAN TO EASE THE WAY FOR NEW REFERRALS. IT MAKES SENSE TO FAVOUR OPERATORS WHO USE TOOLS THAT WILL HELP THEM MEET THESE CHALLENGES"

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NATURAL PROGRESSION

Clas Dahlen, founder of CasinoHacks.com, discusses how to strike the right balance between rapid growth and evolving organically to achieve continuous improvement



WHAT DO PLAYERS STAND TO GAIN AT CASINO HACKS THEY CAN'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE?

First of all, they'll get a unique and entertaining casino show with competitions and live reviews running through it constantly. They'll enjoy in-depth hacks and tips on how to become a better player through The Hackademy and through interviews with the suppliers of slot machines as well. The latest online casino news will be served in a news sweep and interviews with operators' key staff. On-site, we'll also be able to provide the best exclusive bonus deals since our business model differs from the competition.

DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU GOT THE FORMULA RIGHT AT CASINO HACKS CONSIDERING HOW QUICKLY IT ALL CAME TOGETHER?

A good question. As a content production company and casino affiliate, it's crucial to be agile in our strategy, customer needs and business model. All operators and suppliers at ICE were very enthusiastic over the concept and so far, we've been successful in all aspects and growing very fast. However, I strongly believe in the Japanese LEAN philosophy and its core word – Kaizen, meaning continuous improvement. So the answer must be that we will continue to improve the formula of our show, site and creative sales every day we go to work.



CLAS DAHLEN

It will most probably look quite different in the next six months, optimised for our viewers and business partners such as the operators, suppliers and sponsors.

IN TERMS OF TEAM EXPERTISE, DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE THE RIGHT SYNERGY TO MAKE IT A CONTINUED SUCCESS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT CONSUMERS ARE MORE AT HOME WITH DISPOSABLE TIME DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC?

Oh yes, the team is fantastic, and we have become a creative community with a dozen fantastic creators and technicians that work in a part-time digital network. Everybody working is becoming shareholders, which tightens the team and creates both passion and long-term determination, all because of Coronavirus. Without this situation these team members would never be available.

HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC FORCED YOU TO AMEND YOUR BUSINESS MODEL?

It has only been positive for us work wise and the business side is quite straightforward. Some interviews however have to be done on video streams.

CREATING A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH OPERATORS IS CRUCIAL. HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC ACCENTUATED THIS NEED FOR AFFILIATES TO GET THE FORMULA RIGHT DURING THIS TIME?

I think it's crucial to become a dance partner for real with the operators. It takes two to tango right? We want to be humble, smart and create a win-win scenario with our dance partners, make them look good, make them more money and not stomp on each other's feet. If the operators are winners, then it's a win for our viewers and for us.

YOU SAID THAT THERE'S A NEED TO CREATE NEW BUSINESS MODELS IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE. WHAT DOES THE IDEAL

MODEL LOOK LIKE THAT EQUALLY INCORPORATES PLAYERS, OPERATORS AND SUPPLIERS?

It's a kind of business secret what it looks like but let's say that there are five stakeholders in our casino eco system that all have to benefit: the players, the operators, the suppliers, sponsors and ourselves. They are all intertwined, and our job is to visualise that, create value and revenue for them.

IS CREATING MORE KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE INDUSTRY WHAT'S NEEDED RIGHT NOW?

In some geographic areas such as Japan & LatAm, there's definitely a rising need for online casino education. We are doing it in a straightforward and entertaining way we believe, and our first tests are proving that as well.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE SUCCESS SO OF FAR OF CASINOHACKS AND WHAT IS YOUR PLAN FOR GROWTH?

We were very happy to set up our own streaming function and push it through our site. We've made fast launches in Canada, New Zealand and Iceland, and this summer we're creating our Japanese set up and building two new studios. We also see a need to expand the creative sales team since there are so many creative marketing solutions for our customers when they choose live streaming as a marketing channel.

WITH THE LAUNCH OF YOUR TV SHOW FOR ONLINE CASINO PLAYERS, WHY DO YOU THINK NO ONE ELSE HAS PURSUED THIS FORMAT AND WHAT IS THE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL CASE FOR IT? WHAT HAS BEEN LACKING IN THIS SPACE?

It takes some knowledge of how streaming, TV tech and marketing works together and I believe we have the winning formula. Larger enterprises have the tech capacity, of course, but not the speed or quick creativity thinking to do it. It's cheaper, smarter, more trustworthy and quicker for them to work with us. Too many affiliate sites have looked the same for over a decade with top lists, perfect SEO work and text masses that not many users read. We believe that entertaining "in your face" televised information is the way to reach customers. When I left the operator side, I was really astonished that no one had done this before. When presenting CasinoHacks to the industry at ICE, they all said things like, "Oh, I've been thinking about doing that" or "At last someone is doing it."

WHAT ARE YOUR CRITERIA FOR ONLINE CASINO OPERATORS AND CASINO GAMES SUPPLIERS TO PARTNER WITH YOU AND SPONSOR THE TV SHOW? WHAT KIND OF STANDARDS ARE YOU DRIVEN TO MAINTAIN?

Now all casino operators really have a chance to go creative and get in touch with their customers. Since we are a creative collective and generous with our time and business models, we will only collaborate with serious casinos that are interested in doing something extraordinary – to market their casino, brand or slot machines in a new manner. We are convinced that if we focus on differentiation and collaboration, the revenues will come.

Our company standards and values are very easy to understand: "What if? Why not? Yes, we can! and Hell yeah!" Thinking that nothing is impossible must run through our company's veins.



PLAY HARD

Gareth Kennedy, new business development manager – media services at bet365, speaks to *Trafficology* about X-Factor, portacastles, basketball and Stoke-On-Trent

the penthouse suite and all of its weird and wonderful seasonal features. It was cold in the winter months though.

YOU'RE ALSO A BASKETBALL FAN. WHO'S YOUR ALL-TIME MVP?

Ha! Do you know what? American sports are tough to follow. About seven years ago, I started to take up some of the night shifts for customer support, so I thought I'd get into the NBA and pick a team to follow throughout the season. So naturally, at the time, as anyone would, I decided to choose the best team in the league, the Miami Heat. Then over the course of two years, they fell apart. The Big 3 (LeBron James, Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosh) all left, which meant I had to watch a distinctively average mid-table team!

MVP wise though, there'll always be a spot in my all-star team for LeBron James. His work ethic in the game is second to none. (LeBron, if you're reading this – please come back.) A future MVP has to be Giannis Antetokounmpo though, for sure.

IF YOU WERE STUCK ON A DESERT ISLAND AND COULD CHOOSE ONE EXPORT FROM STOKE-ON-TRENT WHAT WOULD IT BE?

For those that aren't aware, besides Stoke-On-Trent being where bet365 developed its roots, the city is also known for a popular savoury food of choice called the oatcake. Despite oatcakes being made up of merely oatmeal, flour and yeast, if you combine them with cheese and other condiments, you've got a dish that's flexible for breakfast, lunch and dinner. So yeah, not thinking of the long-term health implications, they'd be my one export from Stoke-On-Trent.

WHAT'S THE AFFILIATE TRADE SHOW YOU'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO ATTENDING MOST ONCE LOCKDOWN IS OVER?

Let's face it, the industry is going through a tough time at the moment for both operators and affiliates. Therefore, setting up a meeting face-to-face has never been more important. Given that we have now shifted to an online environment, they don't really have the same impact.

So I couldn't isolate just a single event, but rather look forward to having them back in general in their physical form (as I guess the rest of the industry would). We also plan to launch our new affiliate site near the end of the year, which would have been great to talk through in person. We'll just have to wait and see. Stay safe!

For anyone who wishes to talk to Gareth about Olly Murs' breakdancing skills or the bet365 affiliate programme, feel free to contact him via Gareth.Kennedy@bet365.com.

WE SEE YOU'VE PREVIOUSLY WORKED AS A PRODUCTION COORDINATOR ON THE X-FACTOR AND THE VOICE. HOW DOES WORKING ON THESE TYPES OF SHOWS COMPARE WITH WORKING IN THE GAMING INDUSTRY?

It's been a while since I hung up the headset but from what I can remember, the two industries couldn't be any further apart. For example, back in 2007, my job was to create talent profiles of the contestants auditioning. Usually before a contestant goes on to sing, the producers and judges would read a quick synopsis of the contestant's profile.

The issue was, shows were obsessed with creating factory refined winners that could sell the whole package, rather than just the product. This meant regardless of how talented contestants were, if they didn't have the right back story to go along with the voice (which a particular UK show loved to emphasise), they were less likely to progress to the next round. So I guess you could say, academy trained vocalists don't really help with exciting programming.

On the other hand, the gaming sector and affiliates were innovating at a time when the industry was seeing exponential growth. New products and ideas were being developed, which I guess are being used today (which is longer than Jedward's career). Just to leave you with a little something, I managed to witness the greatest dance-off ever, between Louis Walsh, Gok Wan, Dermot O'Leary and Olly Murs.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FINEST ACHIEVEMENT DURING YOUR TIME AT BET365?

There's been a few. I've been lucky enough to join a very well established affiliate team, which still has some of the finest affiliate marketers in the industry. To reward everyone's success, we also have a jam-packed awards cabinet of programme accreditation.

But I guess, on a personal level, my finest moment would have to be when I won 'Best Sports Betting Affiliate Manager,' for onboarding and developing new partnerships for the affiliate programme last year.

WHAT'S YOUR FONDEST MEMORY FROM YOUR YEARS WORKING WITH AFFILIATES?

This might sound odd, but when I joined back in 2012, the business was expanding at such a rate, they had to build portakabins (or portacastles as we called it at the time) on the company's car parks. So when I joined the affiliate team a few years later, who were inhabiting one of the portakabins, I had the pleasure of experiencing

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