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JANUARY 2021

## INSIDE:

**Shahar Attias on why OKRs are the future for online gaming**

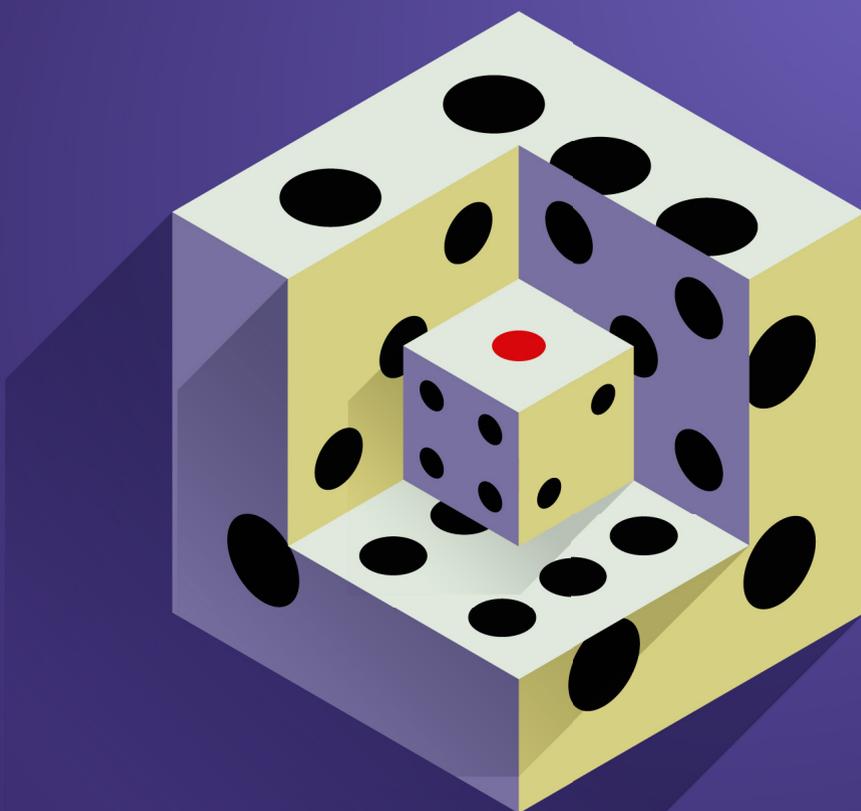
**Thomas Vermeulen, Smarkets: exchange model benefits for a typical sportsbook**

**WhichBingo's Gadi Shoshani on the UK bingo market**

**Affiliate predictions for 2021 and beyond**

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## A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Assessing 2021 in a shifting landscape

# TRAFFIC REPORT

*Trafficology has partnered with data experts Casino City Press to provide insight into website and traffic trends across the gaming industry. In this edition, we focus on web portal owners, including affiliates themselves, other media groups and operators. The below is a breakdown of the top 20 web portal owners by vertical for November 2020 including: overall, casino, sports and poker across all devices (desktop, mobile and tablet)*



# OVERALL

Rank	Name	Owner	Primary Game	Primary Language
1	bet365.com	N/A	Sports	English
2	Caliente Sports	Grupo Caliente	Sports	Spanish
3	Yahoo! Daily Fantasy Sports	Yahoo Fantasy Sports	Fantasy Sports	English
4	Nesine.com	DOL	Sports	Turkish
5	Wplay.co	Aquila Global Group	Sports	Spanish
6	DraftKings	DraftKings	Fantasy Sports	English
7	Betway	Betway Group Bluejay	Sports	English
8	eToro	eToro Group	Financial	English
9	BetPlay	Corredor Empresarial	Sports	Spanish
10	The National Lottery	Camelot	Lottery	English
11	Bovada	Lynton	Sports	English
12	Hong Kong Jockey Club	HKJC	Sports	Chinese
13	Europa Casino	N/A	Casino	English
14	Betika!	Shop and Deliver	Sports	English
15	BetFair	Flutter	Sports	English
16	IG	IG Group	Financial	English
17	CBS Fantasy Sports	CBS Interactive	Fantasy Sports	English
18	TAB Sportsbet	Tabcorp	Sports	English
19	William Hill	William Hill	Sports	English
20	Bet9ja	KC Gaming Networks	Sports	English

# CASINO

Rank	Name	Owner	Primary Language
1	Europa Casino	N/A	English
2	Vera & John Casino	Jackpotjoy	English
3	bet365 Casino	N/A	English
4	Sky Vegas	Stars Group	English
5	888 Casino	888 Holdings	English
6	Platin Casino	Red Rhino	German
7	LeoVegas	LeoVegas	English
8	Videoslots	Videoslots	English
9	Unibet Casino	Kindred Group	English
10	Stake	Medium Rare	English
11	Virgin Games	Gamesys	English
12	Casumo	Casumo Services	English
13	Jackpotjoy UK	Jackpotjoy	English
14	Mr Green Casino	MRG	English
15	JackpotCity Casino	Bayton	English
16	Wildz	N/A	English
17	Grosvenor Casinos	Rank Group	English
18	King Billy Casino	Direx	English
19	BC.Game	Media Games Malta	English
20	BitStarz	Direx	English



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.

# SPORTS

Rank	Name	Owner	Primary Language
1	bet365 Sportsbook & Racebook	N/A	English
2	Caliente Sports	Grupo Caliente	Spanish
3	Nesine.com	DOL	Turkish
4	Wplay.co	Aquila Global Group	Spanish
5	BetPlay	Corredor Empresarial	Spanish
6	Unibet Sports & Racebook	Kindred Group	English
7	Betfair Sportsbook & Racebook	Flutter	English
8	Bovada	Lynton	English
9	Betika!	Shop and Deliver	English
10	Hong Kong JockeyClub	HKJC	Chinese
11	Betway	Betway Group	English
12	TAB Sportsbet	Tabcorp	English
13	William Hill Sportsbook & Racebook	William Hill	English
14	Bet9ja	KC Gaming Networks	English
15	Sportingbet UK	GVC Holdings	English
16	Betway South Africa	Betway Group	English
17	bet365 Spain Sportsbook & Racebook	N/A	Spanish
18	Ladbrokes Sportsbook & Racebook	GVC Holdings	English
19	Tipsport	Tipsport	Czech
20	Paddy Power Sportsbook	Flutter	English

# POKER

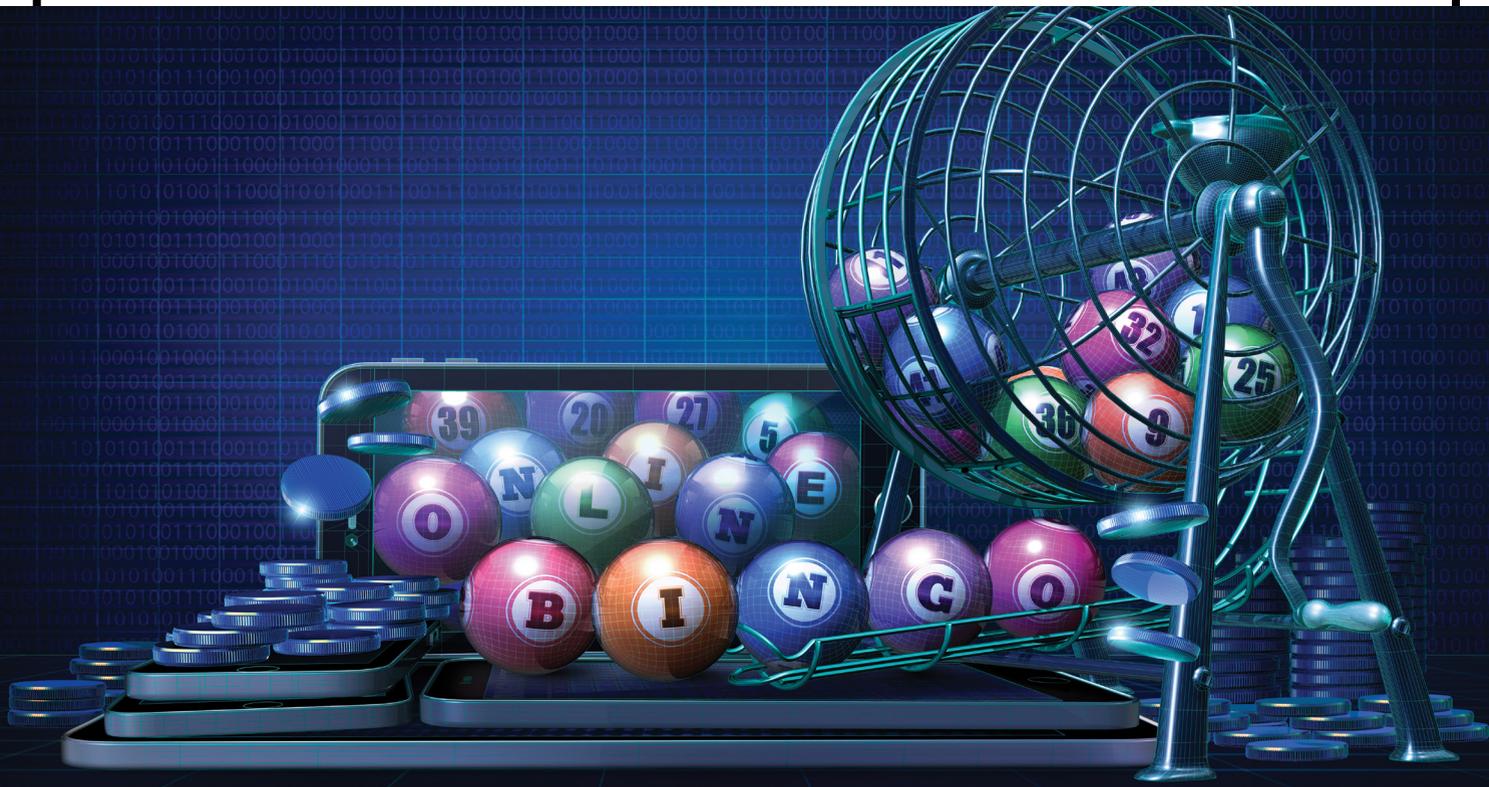
Rank	Name	Owner	Primary Language
1	Partypoker	GVC Holdings	English
2	888 Poker	888 Holdings	English
3	Americas Cardroom	Winning Poker Network	English
4	Winamax Poker	Winamax	French
5	PokerStars	Stars Group	English
6	Global Poker	VGW GP Malta	English
7	Adda52	Gaussian Networks	English
8	Sky Poker	Sky Betting & Gaming	English
9	Khelo365	K365 Web Assets	English
10	PokerStars Europe	Stars Group	English
11	bet365 Poker	N/A	English
12	GGPoker	N/A	English
13	PokerStars Spain	Stars Group	Spanish
14	TheSpartanPoker	Quadrific Media	English
15	Poker88	N/A	Indonesian
16	PokerStars India	Stars Group	English
17	PokerMatch	N/A	Ukrainian
18	RaPoker	N/A	Spanish
19	PokerBaazi	Baazi Networks	English
20	BetOnline Poker	CommissionKings	English



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.

# BINGO: BACK IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Gadi Shoshani of XLMedia-owned affiliate WhichBingo talks Tim Poole through how the UK bingo market is progressing following a year of lockdowns and online activity



## How exactly did 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic affect online bingo?

During the past 18 months, I can share that the industry itself has shrunk and many brands have closed. In bingo, we always see fluctuations; the smaller brands either get bought or die out. But these last 18 months were super interesting because of the sheer amount of brands that have closed down activity. Considering WhichBingo is working with pretty much all bingo brands in the UK, we have our finger on the pulse.

About 30% of all brands have closed during the past year and a half. But it's not necessarily related to COVID. When we start looking at COVID and the impact it had, we can say there was a positive impact in terms of an increase in general users since April. There was a high increase in certain demographics, almost a 100% increase in the female demographic and even more than a 70% rise in the male demographic to the website. In terms of age ranges, there was a spike as users above 65 doubled and, interestingly enough, young adults also soared 110%.

Why is that happening? The obvious part is the closure of bingo halls, which pushed the older demographic to WhichBingo. On the other hand, social bingo halls do exist and they attract younger crowds, while back in April we also had a lack of sports events. We saw people who would usually place a bet on sports somehow migrate a little bit into online bingo. So the impact of COVID has seen the elderly turn to online bingo and, on the younger side, either people have moved online from the social bingo halls, or due to the lack of sports events.

## Now there's less competition, have those who have remained gained greater market share?

Yeah, that's pretty accurate. Brands do consult with us about how we see things and what our users are looking for. Sometimes they'll also tell us what they're working on and we'll give our feedback. In terms of specifics, brands are working on making the bingo game more social and interactive. That's something many brands are mindful of and we can also tell you there's an



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interesting game about to be launched, a new bingo game. It's probably going to be launched in a couple of months (at the time of speaking in early December) and it's really trying to make the bingo experience more interactive. Anything that has to do with AI and machine learning, there's an emphasis on personalisation. It's not a new concept but, in a way, the bingo industry has kind of lagged in terms of innovation. It didn't really get any focus and attention in the past couple of years. The brands have been focusing on casino but it seems now someone has discovered, if you will, that online bingo is right there and hasn't seen much innovation. So brands are starting to focus their attention on online bingo and evolve it in a similar way to casino.

**Are personalisation and the social side of the game the most important aspects now for bingo sites, when trying to stand out and compete with each other?**

It's always going to be one of those areas, either they're putting an emphasis on the personalisation, which is a silent aspect that brands would not come out and announce, or makeovers and rebrands are important. Some brands have been given makeovers as a result of M&A and that's another way of brands staying fresh – users like a fresh approach. Everything that's related to the social aspect comes from the game creators, or via chat rooms or live streaming. Those are probably all the topics getting prioritisation in terms of emphasis on innovation. All the bigger brands are focused on those.

**What percentage of the overall online gaming market would you estimate belongs to bingo? Do you see this figure growing?**

I'm Europe VP marketing at XLMedia and we do have activity in not just bingo, although WhichBingo is the biggest source of bingo traffic in the UK. The website is also ranking very well on slots-related key words, so we are an expert in slots. Although in terms of evaluating the exact market share, I wouldn't guesstimate, being a numbers guy, because even if we're ranking number one it doesn't mean we are getting 100% market share. What I can share with you is that right now we're working on market research, looking at those exact things, trying to understand the numbers behind sports betting, bingo and casino, as well as the players that bet on more than one of those games.



**GADI SHOSHANI**

**Long term, what do you think the future holds for bingo? Is it more online or will there always be a place for bingo halls?**

Great question, it's something I've looked into recently. On average, we know 20% of online bingo players remain in the online bingo world. So it would be fair to assume that out of these newcomers we would still have 20% that would stay. It's an average based on large numbers, so I wouldn't expect that number to change much. The second thing is, like you just mentioned, bingo halls are starting to come back and close again. This COVID thing is apparently not a fling or a 12-month thing. So I think we will see that attractiveness of online bingo is definitely here for a significant period of time.

I think what will happen is, even today if I told you all bingo halls are now open, assuming you're a bingo player you would probably not feel 100% secure. Even once this kind of thing clears out, I would still expect online bingo to get an extra oomph out of the pandemic. In two years, looking a bit farther in, I would still say that 20% is still here to stay. Like I said, even in the 65-plus population, people have discovered online bingo and they probably won't leave it soon, even once bingo halls have completely reopened.

It's like a revolving door, people come and go all the time but, out of 100 players, there will always be that 20 that stay and feel more connected. Looking at a year and a half from today, especially in the social bingo halls, I think it will still be a fun experience. But people who have discovered online bingo and like it have found their community. Bingo is starting to get a bit of the spotlight again and I think this next year will also be very interesting on the innovation front.

**“THIS COVID THING IS APPARENTLY NOT A FLING OR A 12-MONTH THING. SO I THINK WE WILL SEE THAT ATTRACTIVENESS OF ONLINE BINGO IS DEFINITELY HERE FOR A SIGNIFICANT PERIOD OF TIME”**



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# TAKING CONTROL

Smarkets has experienced impressive growth since being added to Oddschecker in 2018, with the betting exchange's sportsbook following suit in November. Smarkets affiliate & internationalisation manager **Thomas Vermeulen** talks to Iqbal Johal about plans in the pipeline and the benefits of the exchange model over a typical sportsbook



**THOMAS VERMEULEN**

has got us to where we are now. There are still barriers, though. Some people might not bother to dig into the betting exchange model and try to understand it because of the learning curve, and then they might just sign up to a classic sportsbook, which means they miss out on the extra value of exchanges.

Education is really key and educating customers definitely helps. This can be from posting blog content to a wider marketing campaign. Our affiliate partners help explain the benefits of a betting exchange to users.

### **What would you say were the main benefits to this model?**

The main differentiator from an exchange to a sportsbook is the fact that users can lay selections. On sportsbooks you can obviously only back so laying means you can bet against an outcome happening, which is something you can't do with a bookmaker, and it opens up a lot of opportunities for making money.

Another big benefit for exchanges over sportsbooks is price, which means much better odds for the customers. When a player bets against a bookmaker, the bookmaker's profit margin is factored into the prices they offer, while an exchange is a peer-to-peer model. You're able to bet a higher amount with us, we don't block users because they are winning and we even welcome high-value traders.

Another benefit from a user perspective is a higher amount of control, again because you're not playing against the bookie. If you don't like the odds, you can request higher odds, similar to a real stock exchange, and leave them unmatched until another user matches them.

A final thing would be higher transparency, as the exchange model is a product that is fairer, and because you are trading against other users, you just pay commission.

### **With higher transparency in mind, how can affiliates use the exchange model to maximise revenue?**

There are not many betting exchanges out there, hence why education is really key and the need to inform their users on what sets an exchange apart. Affiliates can do this with pages explaining what laying a bet is, really targeting key words such as matched betting and hedging, but lots of blog content also helps. I see lower conversion if you just show a welcome bonus on a bonus page and do not add anything, just an overview of bonuses. A welcome bonus is aggressive in terms of being an exchange but if you compare it to other casinos and bookmakers,

### **Have you seen a rise in popularity in the betting exchange model in recent years?**

I think we've definitely seen a rise. We're aiming for more, though. Smarkets has existed for more than 10 years now and we've been growing heavily since 2014, mainly by bringing a better alternative than the existing betting exchange offering.

A betting exchange has a higher learning curve than a classic sportsbook so users want information that's easy to digest, easy to use and looks appealing, and once you've got that, you want to gather more users.

Smarkets was added to the Oddschecker grid in 2018 on the wave of a great FIFA World Cup for us, and a lot of great work

it's obviously much lower. We don't do minimum odds or wagering requirements and it's key that you explain that to the users.

Another thing you could do is cross-sell to users, whether it's getting new people into betting. For example, a lot of my colleagues have never bet before, they have a finance background or tech background and they're very fascinated with the concept of a betting exchange. You can target people who actually trade with stocks who are used to trading and you can maybe cross-sell them in using us instead of an exchange broker.

### **In which markets do you see the exchange model being most popular and what are the next markets on Smarkets' agenda for expansion in 2021?**

We're only active in regulated countries. There are some big ones that could be appealing in terms of liquidity but we steer away from them. UK and Ireland is our core market; we also have a Malta licence but the UK is definitely our biggest one. Our users are a very high mix of high-value traders to matched bettors, recreational punters and also everyone who wants to check and trade on our political markets. In terms of new markets going forward, we first want to grow in the UK and then grow in the markets we recently launched in this year.

Even during the pandemic we launched in Sweden, meaning the Smarkets exchange is live there despite the recent changes in regulation. We also launched our SBK sportsbook in the US market, which is obviously a massive milestone for us. The US market is booming right now and there are plenty of articles you could write about it alone. We've been live in Colorado since July and are making some very exciting product improvements there that we think will set us apart from the big players.

Our focus is really pricing and product there with SBK. Indiana is another market we're targeting, we're planning to go live there in Q1 2021, so there's a lot of regulation we need to go through but we're confident we will be live there as well.

There's also Denmark, which is a market we want to launch our exchange in. At the moment our focus has been on Smarkets but the growth of SBK will be one of our biggest priorities looking forward into next year. I mentioned those countries but if you look beyond 2021, every country that makes financial and regulatory sense is obviously appealing; for example there's interesting movements in the likes of the Netherlands and Canada.

### **With SBK going live on Oddschecker, how big of a boost is it to your sportsbook brand?**

This was a project we've been working on for a while and it's definitely a big boost. Next to social features, the main string of SBK is its pricing and the pricing of the exchange. We also show this in-app by showing our odds to competitors. We have this feature called Price +, which has a green triangle when we're the best price. What's a better place to highlight the power of our pricing than on Oddschecker, which is the UK's biggest odds comparison site?

It's a long-term strategy so we really want to show that we're in it for the long haul. Oddschecker is a big commitment so we definitely take it seriously and are not like a sportsbook that's not going to be here in a year.



### **What can we expect to see from Smarkets in 2021 in terms of product enhancement and aims?**

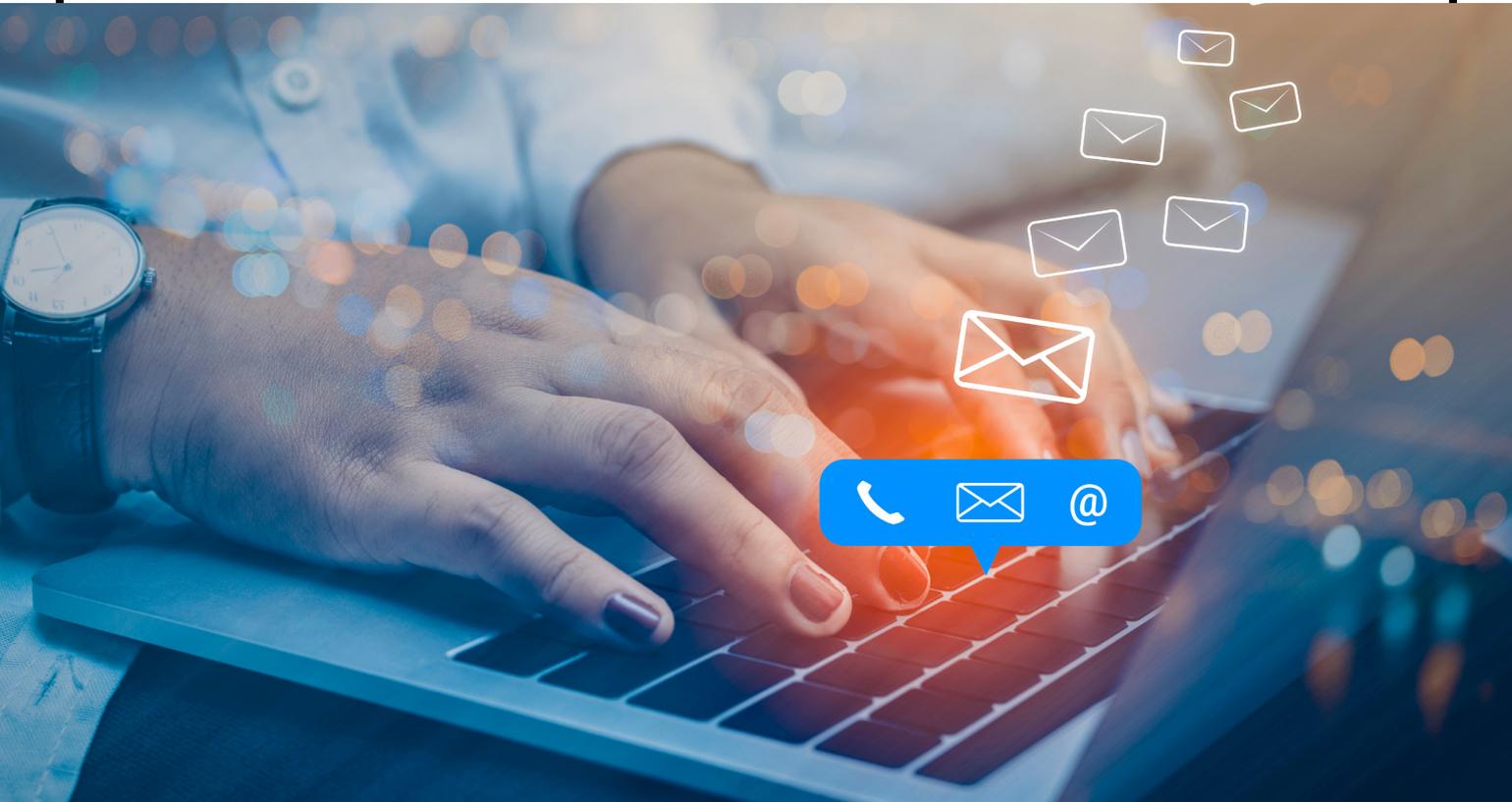
Our aims for next year are twofold. A lot of what I've previously mentioned was about SBK but we still have the Smarkets exchange. In terms of features, we launched multiples on the exchange, which is quite advanced on an exchange as most of the bets on the platform are single-focused. We're the first betting exchange where users can put their own selections together to back and lay multiples.

We're also going to try to push our politics offering next year and beyond. We just had the US elections but we're now thinking about our 2021 strategy as at the moment, a lot of it is focused around Brexit, which is still ongoing for now. In terms of politics, we want to continue to be seen as a source of information, for example we send political pricing emails where journalists come and check Smarkets to see the latest trends.

In terms of SBK, we are the best price in terms of the markets we offer but we need to offer more markets. That means covering more events and pricing, better in-play and more in-play. The other aspect is social. Every user on SBK has a social account where they can place comments on the tips of their friends and brag about them too. We don't want it to be a gimmick, we want to expand it so there will be improvements coming in the next six months to a year. A few sportsbooks have tried to be a social sportsbook; sometimes they get frowned upon but we believe if we get it right, combined with the best price, it will definitely take off.

# OKR: THE WOKE VERSION OF KPI

Despite the effectiveness of KPI, Hybrid Interactive consultant **Shahar Attias** tells us why OKR – objectives and key results – are the future for online gaming



We consultants lead an ultra-modern lifestyle, very 2.0. Stories on LinkedIn? Sure. Migrating all workspaces into Notion? Did it yesterday. Following on James Charles? Hi sisters! So why are we still hung up on the same old KPI methodology?

Well, for starters, it worked pretty awesome so far, which is quite a decent argument. I mean, we do work in betting, so we all know that you never change a winning team. Unless of course, you're a Dutch regulator. In that case, you never do anything anyway.

Going back to key performance indicators, they are simple and brilliant: you decide which activities are crucial to your business success, set desired targets and monitor progress along the way. Online casinos will closely follow deposits and NGR over time (as well as reinvestment, or bonus out of GGR, for example, and additional ratios as supporting indicators). Social gaming operators are following on their in-app purchases (as well as retention, DAU and ARPDau as secondary KPIs). On the other hand, people working for state-owned retail lotteries follow the clock until 1pm and that's it.

So, why on Earth is there a need to change such a successful methodology? Because we are the most advanced online marketing industry, that's why. E-commerce has carts. We have cashiers. Online stores have same-day-delivery. We have real-time everything. They hire sales people. Please... we have affiliate account managers.

Since we're always on the lookout for the most advanced technologies, when it comes to management practices, where can we go from here? Say hello to OKR: objectives and key results. According to Andy Grove, who developed this methodology during his time as Intel's CEO, this is a "goal-setting framework, where the objective is the direction, toward which the organisation needs to be in the medium term". Let's break that into terms that aren't buzzwords and something we can actually work with.

Setting the objective would be a process in which you align the company and your team goals. Such an objective should be ambitious, qualitative and time-bound. It's not your regular "we need a 75% MoM retention rate" bark from the CMO. Instead,



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expect something like “Improve our casino brand loyalty” as your quarterly objective, Meiko Shiraki style.

**What can you do with such a vague request? Set some key results to support it. In OKR, each O has 3-5 KR, and they must be measurable, quantitative and value-based. Here we go:**

- Ensure 40%+ of our first-time depositors (FTD) will remain active the following month
- Dedicate at least half our bonus budget to segmented promos for constant three-month active players
- Reach out over the phone to all players in last month’s top 20% depositors, who haven’t deposited yet, after the current month’s 10th day

What do we have here? All KR are easily measured and the value is quite clear (generating further deposits from last month’s active players is, well, the basis of your job, honestly). Also, note that the requirement was to boost loyalty and here we went from FTD to last month’s top players and through to three-month actives; targeting these groups (if done successfully), is bound to increase repeat visits and – with the right offer (budget), and using the right channel (even phones) – their likelihood to stick around.

But all you basically have here is a bunch of KPI in disguise. Surprisingly enough, this claim is kind of true, but not entirely correct. KR essentially encompass KPI, that’s clear to see. But not all of your KR will include numbers, for example, “reach out over the phone” is measurable, yet in a binary manner. And KPI are straightforward metrics, whereas KR are derived from the objective; when you complete all your KR, this should give you confidence that your objective is achieved. In fact, the objective will have a sliding percentage scale that progresses as KR numbers are met through the quarter. It’s like gamifying your work processes and reporting.

Let’s run a quick recap. An objective is the direction we want to go in. The metrics (KR, KPI) will help us monitor how we’re performing. Roughly, that’s the main difference between the two methodologies. OKR also has a goal, set first on the company level, and shared between the teams so they could set their KR accordingly. Obviously, as with our example above, brand loyalty can and should be supported not only by CRM, but also additional marketing functions (acquisition, social media, etc.) and definitely on the product level as well.

With OKR, you define an area for improvement, or a problem to be solved. KPI are used to set revenue targets, growth or performance expectations.

Do we actually need it? It’s quite the “it” thing right now, and all posh start-ups brag about “adopting what made Google big”. (Sure, it was OKR, not PPC for adult-related keywords.) So what about our dear iGaming CRM people? I somehow feel such a methodology is better suited for large organisations (let’s say, 100 to 200 employees or more), who are trying to become more efficient by working quarterly instead of annually. Most B2C operators in our industry usually have no more than a couple dozen employees who monitor the activity as it happens and react instantly.

Our world is moving so fast and the competition never stops challenging us. Can we really afford being patient enough so a process will last a full three-month period? An old joke is that strategic thinking in iGaming is limited to planning your weekend when it’s Wednesday. Only last Christmas we saw enough advent



calendars being updated, on the go, with last-minute adjustments due to positive or negative results early on. With such a hectic vibe, setting a retention rate objective for Q2 2021 is as practical as gazing at Instagram holiday photos during COVID-19. Sure, it looks stunning and you wish you were doing it as well, but in reality it disturbs your work, rather than help optimise it.

That said, maybe we should take the leap, perform a mental switch and allow ourselves to also focus on long-term projects with top-level goals. After all, you might say setting an objective has nothing to do with the tweaks you need to perform daily; you take care of your key results (same as you currently do with your KPI), be as agile as you already are and find solutions to the never-ending catastrophes knowing that your work keeps contributing to push that quarterly needle in the right direction. On a macro management level, it does make sense.

*As an iGaming CRM consultant with over 20 years of industry experience, Shahar Attias has helped both start-ups and publicly traded operators to optimise their player retention efforts, and can help your company to benchmark your internal marketing strategy, procedures and KPI with the competition. Following senior executive roles with 888, Playtech and Pokerstars, he has founded Hybrid Interaction Ltd, the premier online gaming consulting firm, and has held more than 150 successful projects across all verticals and through most jurisdictions.*

# SIGN OF THE TIMES

**Claire Wellard**, director, iGamingXL, discusses affiliate predictions for 2021 in an ever-shifting landscape



2020 was a turbulent year all around the world on a scale I've never seen, nor do I suspect will we experience something like this again. It's forced people to communicate in different ways, change behaviors and evaluate what's important in their lives.

Not only did we need to adapt personally, we needed to adapt professionally too. Gone were the sports games and tournaments, and with many people either furloughed or working from home, there was the need to grow, expand and diversify.

2021 will be no different. With the UK plunged into a Tier 5 total lockdown situation, and with the majority of people still stuck at home, and in many parts of the world, we must continue to grow and adapt accordingly.

In addition to the global pandemic, we have seen tighter legislation over the last two years in different regions, meaning the role of an affiliate is not an easy one. There has been lots of talk about esports, Arabic markets and other geos such as India and LATAM during 2020, and I'm sure the

development of these sectors and markets will continue to rise during 2021.

### ESPORTS

If you're looking into esports, make sure you find some great writers for content. It's a huge community so make sure you know what you're talking about when attracting them. North America and China are two of the biggest territories; however the UK showed a growth from £50k (\$67k) in March 2019 to £4.6m in May 2020. To ensure you understand the subject, don't underestimate your homework. The majority of esports players are skilled youngsters whose trust is hard and key to get.

### ARABIC

Given the legislation and language barrier, this is a hard one to target, yet the player value can be much higher than other geos. There are only a couple of great brands operating in this market that really know what they're doing with their

players, so if you can find a native content translator and designer who can get you some specific branding pages ready, this could be a good one to try. The competition is still small, so there is space for someone to come and grab it by the horns.

## INDIA

India is unfortunately a numbers game. There are a vast number of bonus hunters, and the player values are low, but you can get a large volume from this region. I have a couple of brands really pushing into this geo, and my research shows there aren't that many affiliates really doing so well here. So again, if you have the reach and knowledge, this could be a great year to target India.

## AFFILIATE/OPERATOR RELATIONSHIPS

Not only should we look at new opportunities for growth in 2021, but the way we do business between affiliates and operators should be addressed also. Since there were probably 10% of the normal opportunities to meet face to face last year, my Skype was set alight with everyone communicating faster and more often. I even had some clients facetime me and add me on Whatsapp this year,

which was usually only used around conference times or for my closest affiliate friends.

Now more than ever is the need to build stronger relationships. There needs to be trust between both parties and transparency over results and expectations. Personally I hate working with a faceless affiliate program, a generic email address, not knowing whether the same people are answering your enquiries.

I know a long-burning issue is that affiliates want more transparency over their stats, to understand player journeys, and what works for the operator and what doesn't. This would make the affiliate able to optimise their traffic and placements of the brand accordingly and both the affiliate and operator would see better bang for their buck. After all if an operator asks for placements on a specific page that aren't relevant to their brand, they're taking up real estate and will not convert the players. This will result in the affiliate removing them from the site and no one wins in this situation. Operators need to know their strengths and communicate this with the affiliates.

Affiliate partnerships should not be forgotten as a good marketing tool especially for newly launching brands. When done correctly, the boost of traffic can come fast on a lower



With as much clarity that is afforded us, given such unpredictability in the industry, **Oren Arzoni**, director at House Tech Ads Ltd, discusses what we stand to encounter in 2021

### Do you predict this year will be good for gambling operators?

Looking at the global situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, it's really hard to predict how the industry will adapt to the new world which we're seeing. While 2020 was a year defined by social distancing, which made many people homebound, there was an upsurge of activity almost all over the world. We now have vaccines being distributed, and regulations that are defined by many restrictions for gambling like we've seen in Spain, Sweden, Latvia and more. Those came into force

as a result of the pandemic situation, so it's probable to assume 2021 will be challenging for the industry.

### With regards to gambling regulation, will 2021 be a good year for gambling affiliates?

Regulations are becoming more stringent with many new countries being added every year and more limitations introduced, like we've seen in the case of the UK and what's coming in the German market this summer. This will introduce many new challenges to the industry for operators and affiliates alike, and at the same time, it'll create an improved industry, safer and framed.

### How do you see different verticals performing, such as casino, poker and sports betting?

From what I've seen during 2020, there weren't many sporting events, lots of leagues cancelled or postponed. I predict 2021 will be defined by the rise of sports betting, which will bounce back as the world will hopefully heal from the pandemic. We're very optimistic about it. Regarding casino and poker verticals, I believe they're going to be affected by the rate of ongoing regulation and restrictions. But in general, they'll remain at the same level since it would take quite some time for the vaccine to make people feel safer to leave their homes.

### What predictions can you make for online marketing as a whole?

With all this being said, the online marketing industry is the place to be in the coming years and is the future. We've seen how this industry is most required in almost every field. As years go by, more online businesses can't generate income without using a marketing tool or services of any kind.

*House Tech Ads Ltd owns and operates OnlineCasinoReports.com, GamblersPick.com & JackpotsFinder.com and more.*

cost compared to direct marketing. The strong partnership, transparency and trust certainly help the affiliate to push and build great PR for your brand in the long run. Both sides should, however, keep in mind the meaning of partnership in terms of making money. It's up to the brand to do the math on the overpriced deals considering the cost, profit and PR.

### **FUTURE OF LAND-BASED CONFERENCES**

Here's some food for thought. Land-based events, if they go ahead this year, will be different than we're used to. Wouldn't it be great to spend the money on education rather than the biggest and showiest booths? I would much rather listen to a 20-minute speech from the operators on what their plans are for the year, what they are doing with my traffic and how I can better work with them to increase my earnings. I want to know what geos work and don't work for them, what casino games are working best for players. Don't tell me to promote all 200 slot machines from X provider. Tell me what are your top 10 in the UK because that's my area of expertise and traffic. I want operators to give affiliates honest data so they can better promote the brand to become more effective and efficient with their own work and traffic.

### **LEGISLATION MINEFIELD**

How many of you have received emails from numerous operators with updates on how to promote them? Is anyone confused? I know I am.

What I would like to see is a centralised place that gives affiliates a place to go for central information. These are the areas I miss from conferences, and I rely heavily on newsletters and video interviews to get consistent information on this topic.

### **FINAL TIPS FOR 2021:**

• Look at your social media engagement. See what works and what doesn't; what is engaging your audience, what would you want to read about. If you don't want to read it, why are you publishing it? Maybe there's a specific time of day, day of the week, type of article that works best? Really nail this. There are millions of people using

**“WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO SPEND THE MONEY ON EDUCATION RATHER THAN THE BIGGEST AND SHOWIEST BOOTHS? I WOULD MUCH RATHER LISTEN TO A 20-MINUTE SPEECH FROM THE OPERATORS ON WHAT THEIR PLANS ARE FOR THE YEAR”**



**CLAIRE WELLARD**

social media on a daily basis. Find what works for you and stick to it.

- Using TikTok or Twitch yet? Operators are always on the hunt for new streamers so check out your competitors, see what is or isn't working and find your niche. There is plenty of room to dominate in these areas so get in there quick.
- An industry poll provided us with these stats recently of how affiliates are using social:
  - YouTube (40%) rose to tie as the second-most popular, while Instagram (36%) also had its best showing when compared to previous surveys. Twitch finished with a 13% increase, while a somewhat surprising 19% said they do not use any social channels.
  - When affiliates were asked to look ahead and consider what social media channels they are likely to focus on moving forward, Facebook was the top response (35%), followed by YouTube (31%), Twitter (27%), Instagram (25%) and Twitch (17%).
  - If you're looking to get into esports, make sure you nail the content. Those betting on esports are just as passionate as those sports bettors – they know their stuff and if you don't, they'll find someone who does. Maybe look to find a gamer who would love to be a contributor.
  - Finally, build your relationships with the operators you trust; the operators who know what to do with the traffic you send them and look at this as a partnership not a one-way street.

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# PLAY HARD



**Giacomo Bettoni**, head of acquisition from Spinurai.com casino/GVG Partners, tells us about the last person he shook hands with (a long time ago) and more

But again, I really hope we can just go back to not being scared of having social interactions.

### WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO RIGHT NOW?

Here are my top 10 tracks on my playlist:

- Don't worry be Happy (Lil Duval, T.I.)
- Legend (the Score)
- Man on a mission (Oh the Larceny)
- September (Earth, Wind and Fire)
- 24K Magic (Bruno Mars)
- Something's Got to Give (Labrinth)
- Reste (GIMS, Sting)
- Sunflower (Post Malone, Swae Lee, pictured below)
- Blinding Lights (the Weeknd)
- Hooked on a Feeling (Blue Swede, Bjorn Skifs)

Obviously all clean versions, especially if you listen to your playlists during the school runs.

### HOW MANY TIMES A DAY DO YOU CHECK SOCIAL MEDIA?

I am not a fan of social media for my personal use so I check my Facebook once a year on my birthday and I don't have a personal Instagram or Twitter account. I might still have a MySpace account, though; I feel really old saying that. And I check LinkedIn maybe once or twice a day.

### WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE YOU INTO TO MAINTAIN EQUILIBRIUM?

I take an hour a day to train and immerse myself in music and disconnect. But lately, to give a good example to my boys, I picked up reading, I just started *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. I do enjoy playing video games with my boys and we often play family games, and try and go to parks as much as possible.



### WHAT DID YOU HAVE FOR BREAKFAST THIS MORNING?

The usual, a cappuccino and a Cornetto (like a true Italian) but in reality I have two little boys, seven and two, and in the mornings there is really no time for anything more.

### DESCRIBE YOUR BEST STORY FROM AN AFFILIATE SHOW

I will never forget one of the first lessons I got from one of my managers and mentors when I was an affiliate manager and went to one of my first LAC shows. I was new to the whole affiliate show world, so I was a bit shy in my approach and acquisition of new possible leads. My manager noticed and got hold of one of the stress balls we were giving out at the stand. He got close to me and, throwing the ball in the air as far as he could, told me: "Now see what happens". Not a minute passed and a young guy comes to the stand with the ball to return it. That was the first affiliate I signed for that brand.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE PASTIME DURING THE PANDEMIC?

I have two kids; what does pastime mean? Jokes aside, I think that it has been particularly difficult for any parent during the pandemic to manage to save time and space for ourselves. But I have tried to use the time for my daily exercise to also disconnect, so I bought a very good pair of noise cancelling headphones since music really helps me relax, and I take an hour break from everything and everyone.

### WHAT ARE THE THINGS YOU CAN'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT (PROVIDED YOU CAN STILL LEAVE YOUR HOUSE)?

Pre-COVID: phone, wallet, glasses, headphones. During COVID: phone, wallet, glasses, headphones, mask, hand sanitizer, wipes.

### WHO WAS THE LAST PERSON YOU SHOOK HANDS WITH?

My colleagues, and a good friend and affiliate that left the island (Malta) a good few months ago.

### WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU'RE GOING TO DO WHEN SHOWS RESUME?

Well I guess it really depends from what that normality will be. I am Italian so if I can meet everyone and listen to as many stories and experiences as possible, that would be my goal.

