SiGMA

COVER STORY
HON. DR. JOSÉ HERRERA INTERVIEW

C-LEVEL EXECS
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GAMING IN MALTA UPDATE

ISSUE 1
FALL/WINTER 2014-2015
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Welcome to the very first issue of SiGMA magazine, a publication intended to shed light on the gaming industry, specifically in Malta. Whilst obvious to many, some might ask, “Why Malta?” The country is fast becoming the ‘Silicon Valley’ of the gaming industry, not only remote gaming, but also digital games. Remote gaming alone is responsible for 12% of the island’s GDP. The digital games industry too, still in its infancy, has all the makings of another pillar in Malta’s economy, with an increasing number of games companies relocating to its shores.

With this in mind, the idea to organise SiGMA (the Summit of iGaming in Malta) took off in January 2013 to showcase the industry to the outside world whilst fostering a dynamic, networking environment. Pertinent stakeholders were brought on board; the Lotteries and Gaming Authority, the Malta Tourism Authority, Chamber of Commerce as well as the likes of media agencies CalvinAyre and GPWA. In addition, Scandinavian Power Media Group and their strong network of affiliates too joined the fast moving bandwagon. We all seemed to agree on the dire need to create a platform that brings the i-gaming industry, C-LEVEL executives and affiliates from hundreds of companies, under one roof in Malta.

The summit couldn’t coincide at a more important time. Renowned speakers Nick Nocton (JGR Law), Sarah Kostense-Winterton (KW Communications), Eric Benz (GoCoin), Hon. Silvio Schembri (Gaming Foundation) Joseph Cuschieri (LGA), Hon. José Herrera (Govt.), Hon. Chris Cardona (Govt.) and others will discuss global regulation, the legal landscape, best practices in operations, and the convergence between interactive and land-based gaming. Throughout the second conference, speakers Ralph Tegtmeyer (logobotixX), Julia Logan (Irish Wonder), Lukasz Zelezný (uSwitch), Ebbe Groes (EveryMatrix) and others will focus on remote gaming acquisition, SEO, latest e-marketing techniques, industry trends, affiliate, social media marketing and more.

The first attempt is a do-or-die and, needless to say, the team of which I’m part of the organisers will leave no stone unturned to ensure that the trust loaned by speakers, exhibitors, media partners and delegates is reciprocated. The relationship won’t end on November 2nd. We’ll follow up, stay in touch with all stake holders and ensure that the right, long term networking environment is nurtured.
Changing the Game

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As far back as 2004, Malta was the first country in Europe to identify the potential of this lucrative industry and enact the appropriate legislative framework in order to position Malta as a leading global player in remote gaming regulation. With the regulatory and financial incentives in place, the portfolio of companies setting up their operations in Malta started to grow at a fast pace and today the Lotteries and Gaming Authority of Malta (LGA) hosts a remote gaming industry which directly contributes 8% of GDP, employs more than 8,000 people and its direct and indirect economic benefits have created a multiplier effect impacting many businesses like for example property, ICT services, hospitality and corporate services amongst others.

Malta’s huge success is underpinned by a package of incentives and hygiene factors which when put together make Malta a unique gaming jurisdiction of international repute. The Malta package includes key elements such as corporate and personal tax incentives, a robust ICT infrastructure, an English speaking population, a strong educational system and a regulatory framework which focuses on consumer protection, strict compliance and the prevention of money laundering. In fact, other European jurisdictions have looked at Malta as their role model when developing their national legal frameworks for remote gaming. More than 250 remote gaming companies and 400 licenses are currently on the LGA’s books and the numbers keep growing steadily.

But what got us here won’t get us there and past successes are not a guarantee for the future. In order for Malta to stay at the top of the game, we need to innovate and re-think our strategy in a much more challenging and competitive environment. We need to rethink what Malta as a gaming jurisdiction stands for. What makes us different from the rest of the jurisdictions? What do we need to do to future proof ourselves for the next decade? To this effect, the LGA is currently undergoing a broad reform exercise targeting the way it operates, its organisational structures, processes, positioning, IT infrastructure but also the recalibration of its long term strategy so that Malta’s position as a gaming jurisdiction is consolidated and the sector keeps growing at a steady pace. Our current legislative framework is in the process of undergoing a major overhaul in order to put in place a new legal framework which is innovative, cutting edge, growth focused and one which raises the bar in consumer protection, innovation and technology. Furthermore, the LGA is evaluating entry into new geographical markets such as Asia and Latin America where Malta can be positioned as the gaming jurisdiction of choice. The regulatory scope of gaming shall also be widened as well to include other forms of remote gaming licensing like social and digital games of skill with prize. This will ensure that Malta taps this growing market globally.

Another key initiative which we will be launching soon is the setting up of Gaming Malta. The latter will consist of an independent foundation tasked with promoting Malta as a gaming jurisdiction internationally. This move will separate the promotional activities from the regulatory function of the Authority. In the area of human resource development and knowledge, we are working on the setting up of a new Gaming Academy with the aim of building the necessary skill sets required for the gaming industry both land based and remote. This institution will have the necessary educational accreditation and partnerships to become a centre of excellence in training and development for the gaming industry.

Our management ethos is based on the continuous engagement with all stakeholders to make sure that our decisions and strategic initiatives are grounded on evidence, performance, research and quality information. Our ultimate objective is to make Malta the most respected jurisdiction of choice for the gaming industry globally. The latter can only be achieved through the creation of a unique eco system which differentiates Malta from the rest whereby all the players in the industry can develop, grow and sustain their businesses within a serious and transparent regulatory environment.

I and the entire team at the LGA are very excited by the future. We have the drive and resolve to make a difference and future proof Malta’s gaming industry for the next decade.
Global tax policy and trends are seeing a focus on digital supplies and a drive toward ensuring appropriate taxation at the point of consumption. In the area of indirect taxation, specifically, VAT, the drive toward taxation at the place of consumption will culminate into a significant change for digital supplies consumed within the EU effective as of 1 January 2015. This date will mark the entry into force of changes to the taxation of electronically supplied services within the European Union, which were announced back in 2008 (Directive 2008/8). This change, which will essentially complete the transition to taxation in the country of consumption, will impact the VAT liability of cross-border supplies of electronically supplied services, which, by definition, include online gambling games and games of chance.

Today, EU B2C supplies of electronic services are treated for VAT purposes as supplied in the country in which the supplier is established, therefore the VAT rules and rates applicable in the country of the operator determines the VAT treatment of such supplies, irrespective of the location of their customer. An exception to this rule currently applies to electronic services when supplied to EU consumers by non-EU suppliers, who are required to charge and collect VAT in the country of their customer.

As of 1 January 2015, electronic services supplied by EU and non-EU operators alike to private consumers within the EU will become taxable in the country where the consumer is located. This means that the VAT treatment of the relevant electronic services in the country of the supplier will no longer be relevant, and suppliers of these services, wherever located, will in principle have to charge VAT at the rate applicable in the Member State of consumption, unless an exemption applies in that Member State. To a Malta-based online gambling operator having customers across the EU, this means a shift from a VAT exemption on ‘sales’ to potentially VAT (at different VAT rates) for the same service in any one or more of the 27 other Member States. Whilst in terms of the EC VAT Directive, an exemption applies to gambling and betting activities, Member States are permitted to apply such limitations and conditions to the exemption as they deem fit. A review of the VAT treatment of online gambling and betting activities across the EU has shown that not all Member States apply an outright VAT exemption for online gambling and betting, with certain (limited) Member States levying VAT on most categories of online gambling and betting.

Whilst the term “Electronically Supplied Services” may appear obvious and self-explanatory, as in all things VAT, interpretations may vary from one Member State to another, and such a variation may prove to be the first, and definitely not the last, of the issues which cross-border operators may face when adapting to the 2015 changes. The existing and proposed draft legislation does contain definitions of the terms however, these are non-exhaustive, and in particular in the case of electronically supplied services, leave room for varying interpretations. The current definition expressly brings within the scope of ‘electronically supplied services’, services relating to gambling games and games of chance. Notwithstanding the drive toward the harmonisation of interpretations across the EU Member States, whether any or all categories of online betting and gambling would classify as an electronically supplied service in a given EU Member State, ultimately depends upon the interpretation applied by that Member State.

For online gambling and betting operators, the 2015 changes will require an assessment as to whether their activities classify as electronically supplied services in the EU markets within which they operate as well as the VAT treatment in those Member States. If VAT is chargeable on services supplied to players in a given Member State, the question of the ‘taxable base’ arises, one which may
not be straightforward, given the difficulty in identifying the ‘turnover’ derived from such activities. Once again, this may vary from Member State to Member State, since ultimately it is the rules and practices in force in the country of consumption which would apply.

The 2015 changes will render a number of factors, which are currently possibly only considered relevant by operators from a commercial perspective, relevant, if not to say key, from a VAT perspective. In the context of overall VAT exposure, the changes could, for certain markets, impact pricing and margins. From an operational perspective, service providers will need to identify where their players are located, specifically where the customer has his “permanent address or usually resides”. The EU Commission has proposed legislative provisions which provide guidance on the criteria to be followed when determining a customer’s location, and the proposed provisions also list evidentiary details which may be relied upon for the purposes of determining the customer’s location, such as bank details or an IP address.

The administrative issues resulting from the 2015 changes are not inconsequential, the foremost being the obligation to register for VAT in the EU Member State where the supply takes place. No threshold has been introduced, which means that one single taxable (and not exempt) supply to a consumer in another Member State, even if that supply is of negligible value, would trigger the obligation to charge and collect VAT there, and to comply with local invoicing and reporting requirements. The potential administrative burden that multiple VAT registrations would bring about, is addressed by the introduction of the so-called Mini One Stop Shop, an optional scheme which permits B2C suppliers of electronically supplied services2 within the EU to register for VAT in one EU Member State and to report and pay all of the EU VAT charged and collected in one single Return which will be submitted to the Member State of registration. The Member State of registration will then distribute the VAT received to the various EU Member States of consumption. Notwithstanding the simplified reporting option, VAT compliance will take on an entirely new dimension, and the added administrative burden, and resulting cost, cannot be avoided.

The EU legislative framework for the 2015 changes to the VAT rules is, for the most part, in place, and Member States should now already have their Mini One Stop Shop system up and running (by October 2014). Of course, the practical issues and considerations will only come to the fore as and when the legislation enters into force and operators begin to comply.

The 2015 changes to the VAT rules invariably add a completely new dimension to the VAT reality currently enjoyed by Malta-based online gambling operators (and those established in other EU jurisdictions). Whilst these changes will essentially extend, to EU-based operators, the rules which have already applied to non-EU operators for a number of years, the new legislation and guidance concerning the compliance system and the audit process is expected to result in an enhanced level of monitoring of supplies of electronic services to EU consumers, with a view to collecting any VAT due thereon, thus arguably rendering the 2015 changes to the VAT rules for electronic services equally as relevant to non-EU operators.

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For further information on the 2015 changes to the VAT rules visit www.deloitte.com/mt/vat2015

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2 and telecommunications services and radio and broadcasting services

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You have to know the field
to play the game

Deloitte Malta's experience and understanding of the online gaming industry and its concerns has enabled the firm to participate actively and effectively in industry-driven endeavours to address the needs and demands of its operators.

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INTERVIEW WITH
MIKAEL GUMMERUS

ABOUT THE FOUNDER
Can you tell us a bit more about your working background? How long have you been in this industry?

My first proper job after night shift gigs at local gas station was in a SaaS eLearning company. I was their first sales guy working in close operation with the development team. That was very valuable work experience where I learned a lot about customer oriented software development and about conversion optimization as our website was very valuable sales channel.

After couple of years there I moved onto Fremantle Media which is part of Bertelsmann, one of the world’s largest media companies. My responsibilities included producing and selling TV-shows like the Apprentice and Idols. I worked closely with the broadcaster’s web team in order to gear our company towards the digital world. The web started to become more and more important channel to tie viewers to our products.

At that job I finally had the courage to become an entrepreneur and founded my first company which was casual browser-based online gaming and MMO gaming. I learned so much about conversion optimization and results-based development. I’m still the chairman of the board of Dodreams and currently the company is developing casual mobile games. At this company I came up with an idea of Frosmo.

SiGMa: We know that you have been an entrepreneur for a while, first creating a gaming company, producing games, then Frosmo. Originally Frosmo was a gaming platform, helping game makers. That concept appears to have widened, and nowadays the term ‘Customer experience software’ is used. Can you explain in more detail?

MG: The idea of Frosmo was originally to help game developers get more revenue from their games. Developers added their game to Frosmo and we then recommended them based on what we understood about the gamers. Eventually we realised that this kind of statistic based interactive conversion optimization will spread to all websites. We decided that we will start offering Frosmo’s solution to all eCommerce sites.

Currently our customers include airlines, travel, retail, banking and gaming industries.

SiGMa: Given your office base and background, is Frosmo predominantly strong in Finland? Scandinavia? Europe? Rest of world? What are the short, medium and long term projections?

Frosmo has a very strong presence in Finland and in other Nordic countries. Our customers are nearly all biggest companies who sell to consumers more than one product online - Veikkaus, RAY, Finnair, Eventim just to mention a few (see more at http://frosmo.com/en/our-customers). As eCommerce will be the biggest sales channel for all companies in all industries, Frosmo has an unique and strong position to grow into a very big company.

MG: We started to expand last year to UK, France and Spain and we have excellent customers from all these markets and they are growing rapidly. We have just opened in Germany and we will continue expanding our market share with key focus in Europe for 2014 and 2015. We already have some clients in Asia and we will later expand Frosmo to global market.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY
SiGMa: in the world of remote gaming, there is increasing talk of localisation. How important is this to optimize player conversion? What are the lessons you learnt about creating competitive advantage?

MG: When you optimize your service to fit particular users’ interests and needs, it is bound to maximize your conversion. Naturally, when a remote gaming service is localized for a certain market it becomes more accessible for users, closer to their expectations and what they are used to. You can’t just release something on a “one size fits all” principle and hope that it will stick. Not anymore, not in this day and age when users expect you to cater to their whims. You get profits from this afterall.

However, localisation is just one of the many steps on the road to creating competitive advantage. And even that should be tested and checked if it brings positive results to your business’ bottom line. There is no point in doing something, because everyone else is doing it.
In conversion optimization it is crucial to test everything.

SiGMA: From your experience with Frosmo, how does the remote gaming industry compare with other industries?

MG: Naturally all industries have some differences, but at the general level we have discovered that within all our customer industries we can share learned lessons and the problems we are helping to solve are very similar. Usually they are related to the fact that the eCommerce platforms - in this case gaming platforms - are not flexible enough to allow iterative development process.

SiGMA: Malta is very strong in remote gaming, with close to 300 companies based in Malta. The country is also creating the right environment to attract digital games companies to its shores. What is the difference between the digital games industry and remote gaming industry?

MG: Digital games industry covers a broad perspective of entertainment: from children games to hard core role playing games. We see that remote gaming is one part of digital games industry with its own approach to entertainment. Within remote gaming there are also different genres and niches. The key difference is business model. Best learned lessons will spread within both industries and gaming as entertainment will continue to evolve and dominate the entertainment industry.

SiGMA: It is very competitive out there. Best practices are copied immediately. How important is personalisation to retain a competitive advantage?

MG: The key thing is to never stop continuous improving using iterative testing process tied together with longer perspective strategy. That will be the only way to keep your players returning and happy and to grow your business from there.

ABOUT THE PRODUCT

SiGMA: Is Frosmo a software? What is the technical risk of implementing your product on a site? Does Frosmo’s approach into content apply to any kind of content or is it applicable to gaming only?

MG: Frosmo is a cloud based SaaS - software as a service. Our customers are companies that sell products to consumers online. They use Frosmo to increase sales conversions. In addition to our software we offer complete service with implementation, ideas and reporting. There’s no technical risk implementing Frosmo to our customer’s website. We have been audited at the highest banking level security standards even.

Everything is based on an easy-to-install, highly scalable and absolutely secure Javascript tag. Currently we get over 1 billion rows of data every day to our databases. Frosmo’s approach works for all companies that sell online to consumers and it works on all devices: computers, tablets, phones. We are both content and platform agnostic.

SiGMA: What makes Frosmo unique and can you tell us a bit about your typical client?

MG: Frosmo’s uniqueness comes from our core philosophy: versatility combined with transparency. We don’t know any other solution on the market that combines so many different conversion optimization features into one solution, thus allowing us to show brutally transparently what works and what doesn’t. There hasn’t been any single technical challenge we haven’t been able to solve for our customers. In addition, as a software company we provide full in-house service for our customers - which is very rare.

Our typical client is in a situation where their team responsible for the business side of the service feels that they cannot really do any improvements to their site. The gaming platform is too inflexible, the IT department is crowded with projects or outsourced. They feel that they are blindly driving a car and they can’t break, turn or accelerate. Frosmo removes the blindfold and gives power to the operative team. Upper management is happy as they can monitor results, the IT team is happy as they can concentrate on the development roadmap and customers are happy as the service improves.

SiGMA: Is experimentation and testing risky? Important? Also, are the suggestions made by Frosmo as simple as, for instance, changing the colour of a button? Or is your support more complex?

MG: The iterative experimentation and testing with results tracking related to conversion optimization is the single most important thing to focus on. That’s your everyday business which will help the company to make long-term decisions related for example to branding or new platform features. The risks are controllable as tests can be isolated to only certain kind of users.

The tests vary from simple things like changing the colour of a button to complex dynamic tests like pre-setting bets according to users preferences or basing recommendations on the local weather conditions.

SiGMA: What are the differences and similarities between targeted ads, using cookies to localise the most relevant customers, and Frosmo? A lot of tools seem to be readily accessible out there, no?

MG: There are lot of tools available at the market for advertising and targeting advertising. Frosmo’s idea is that when you do conversion optimization at your site it should work hand-in-hand with your advertising. That’s why we can feed the segmentation data you collect at your site to your advertising solution. We have integrated Frosmo to all major ad-servers like Google, DoubleClick, Emediate and Adtech.

In practice it means that you create targeting rules using Frosmo at your site and then target the users you want where you want. The key difference is that whatever you learn about your users at your site you can utilize in advertising and measure the impact. Naturally you can use this data also in email campaigns, SMS campaigns and push the information to your CRM.

SiGMA: What does the future hold for Frosmo? What are the next projects? Anything you can divulge?

MG: Frosmo’s software is developing very fast. We release new features at least every month. The next exciting features we are about to release are sales and trend forecasts. These features will help our customers to make decisions to which kind of users they should use how much resources. It will help to identify hidden revenue potentials.

SiGMA | Interview

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VIP player experience at a lower operational cost

Maximise player lifetime value using the AI technology within the Bit8 advanced bonus engine.
A HUB FOR CONFERENCE BUSINESS

by Hon. Dr. Edward Zammit Lewis, Minister for Tourism
When we discuss tourism in today’s Malta, it is important to bear in mind that this sector today is not only involved in attracting visitors for simply leisure purposes only. In fact, tourists also visit Malta for educational, health-related, religious, research, commercial and business reasons.

During 2013, a total of 118,000 tourists visited Malta for business purposes, equivalent to 7.5% of total and that represents an increase of 2.5% over 2012. A portion of these tourists visited Malta for private business reasons but it is estimated that a total of 77,000 pertained to the MICE segment, (Meeting, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions). Therefore, this means that around 5% of Malta’s tourism inflows for last year consisted of MICE delegates.

MICE delegates visiting Malta arrive from many countries with Germany leading with a 12% share of total. Other important source markets are France, Russia, Italy, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium and Norway. Moreover, around 2.3% of MICE delegates to Malta originate from distant markets such as the USA, South Africa, the UAE and also Hong Kong.

MICE delegates visiting Malta display some very positive characteristics which distinguish them from the average tourist. These relate to expenditure patterns, accommodation usage and seasonality. In expenditure terms, the average spend per day, excluding airfares, of MICE delegates stands at €190. This equates to 2.4 times more than the average tourist spend per day of €78.80. In terms of accommodation usage, no less than 80% of MICE delegates lodge in 5-star hotels with the remaining 20% preferring 4-star hotels. Nearly one half of MICE delegates visit Malta during the low-season months of October to March and a further 31.2% visit during the spring quarter, implying that 80.3% of MICE business visits take place outside the peak summer trimester, contributing greatly to high-yield off-peak business when the industry most needs it.

Surveys carried out by MTA indicate that MICE delegates visiting Malta rate their visit and experience very highly and positively. Furthermore, an impressive 100% of delegates would be willing to recommend Malta as a conference and incentive travel destination.

“... an impressive 100% of delegates would be willing to recommend Malta as a conference and incentive travel destination.”

Such a market operates in a very competitive scenario and therefore also necessitates aggressive marketing activity. Such initiatives are spearheaded by the Malta Tourism Authority jointly with the Destination Management Companies and the Hotels that target decision makers and conference organisers within Malta’s core markets.

The MTA’s MICE Segment team is also supported by an extensive overseas marketing network, which includes MICE specialists in the core markets of UK, France, Italy and Germany.

The MTA is also involved in two funding schemes for the attraction of Association Conferences. One is The MTA Association Scheme that supports international associations planning to organise their events in Malta with an annual financial assistance scheme up to a maximum of Euro 10,000 for any one event. At present this scheme is available for events taking place between the months of November to December 2014 and January to March 2015.

The second scheme is the Ministry for Finance Scheme which provides a fund aimed at assisting public sector Entities in bringing international association conferences to the Maltese Islands. The authority also offers assistance during the decision-makers’ visit to Malta to evaluate our offer for conference and incentive groups.

The MICE segment is undoubtedly a very attractive one for Malta and that its continued growth and development are instrumental to Malta’s continued success and growth as a tourism destination. Success is only ensured if competitiveness is retained and the destination’s offer is also accompanied by effective, targeted and aggressive marketing. This necessitates the availability of the most effective and contemporary structures to maximize the joint efforts of the public and private sectors to ensure that we continue to reap best possible returns for the country and all stakeholders.
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While the social gaming market is predicted to be worth around US$2.5bn in 2015, the vast majority of this market is based on adaptations of casino games. Social poker and variations on casino slots and bingo games have proved to be hugely successful, especially in the States where online gambling has, until recently, been overtly prohibited.

But there is one element of the gambling industry which has not translated at all well into the social sphere – betting. The functional aspect of actually placing a bet has very little entertainment value, while making a prediction alone is clearly not as entertaining as risking money on your judgement.

Several social betting models – free-to-play and real money gaming – have sprung up and soon retreated back into their shells as users failed to be entertained enough to stick around. The eternal question of investing in a real money approach, with all the regulatory costs and pitfalls that brings, or finding a viable revenue stream from free play endeavours also meant that companies didn’t enjoy the luxury of spending time finding a winning formula.

In my opinion, there is a space for social betting, but it needs to be recognised that as betting is so deeply entwined with sports coverage these days, so must social betting. OddsLife has worked hard to bring social betting into a wider eco-system of sports consumption and fan engagement and embedding it into the narrative.

We have looked at providing social gaming into a framework to deliver what we hope is the ultimate social sports experience by pulling together all the fragmented pieces of sports consumption and package them up together in a symbiotic way. The OddsLife network packages up the many different ways that sports fans consume sport and allow them to interact and influence each other and provide greater rewards and entertainment for the fans the more involved they become. This includes activities such as sports predictions, fanzones where you follow your favourite teams, live match opinions and commentary, fan feeds, statistics, writing and competition, both on a local and global scale.

On the flip side of the coin we have seen a rapid growth in niche social sports networks in the past couple of years, many of whom have raised millions in investment capital. Many of these networks have a rush to recruit fans, with millions spent in marketing and endorsements from the latest sports stars, only for them to rush back to the drawing board with ideas for further engagement and sticky content that usually leads them to provide some sort of bolted on gaming experience. This in our view is a totally sub-optimal way of proceeding.

We want to provide an entertaining experience for the fans from the start by embedding it into the core of the network and linking it indelibly to daily activity, rather than provide it as an afterthought.

For example, a social sports network like Sportlobster is running a much more established service, with around 1.5 million registered users from all around the world. However, these fans combined to place just 600 predictions on Barcelona’s opening Champions league match this season (17/09 vs APOEL Nicosia). This equates to just 0.05% engagement on a high profile match.

Conversely, our test run in Spain during February 2014 brought in 5,000 fans in just 3 weeks, with 280,000 predictions placed. This averages out at 56 predictions per registered user. Following this, during the World Cup we saw 200,000 predictions across the 5 countries we focused on. An average of 3,125 predictions over the course of the 64 tournament matches.

This demonstrates the advantage of embedding the game engine and mechanics into the system from the

BRINGING TOGETHER SPORTS FANS AND LOCAL MEDIA THROUGH SOCIAL SPORTS AND GAMING MECHANICS

RASMUS SOJMARK, FOUNDER AND CEO AT ODDS LIFE, EXPLAINS HOW HIS FIRM HAS FOUND A NICHE APPROACH TO A BURGEONING SOCIAL GAMING SECTOR THROUGH PROVIDING ENTERTAINMENT TO SPORTS FANS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS.
beginning; the engagement levels are far higher and the product much more valuable from a customer interaction perspective.

OddsLife has also taken a different approach from these sports-based social networks in that we identified where the major cost is of the business – marketing for new fans – and looked to circumvent this with a new model.

We realised that sports media outlets are under growing pressure from technology and social media. They continue to deliver the local news, but they do not have the resources and know-how to engage the fans, ‘own the conversation’ and grow revenues. This is precisely where OddsLife can help, which is why some of Europe’s biggest sports media outlets have already partnered with us.

We’ve spent time developing the OddsLife platform to align with our strategy of teaming up with local media partners. This has the dual benefits to both sides. The media partners provide existing sports fans and marketing while we provide a more engaging and interactive experience for their audiences.

We have local media partners in Spain, Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Denmark, with many more markets in the pipeline. We take a local approach, with country managers helping to make the product feel relevant to the local fans while simultaneously being part of a global network. The deals with sports media outlets are our key to success; it’s their involvement which provides a lower CPA than for almost any other social network. They commit their own marketing space and we provide the entertainment and interaction. It also has the added benefit of instantly aligning the product with a local, trusted brand, reducing any wariness that fans might have in interacting with such a new network.

Working with local sports media outlets we not only gain access to local fans, but we are also able to use exclusive media content, branch out to local clubs and players, as well as access local sponsors, advertisers and revenue streams.

It’s a relationship which is working in many different markets and gives OddsLife a huge advantage over the competition when moving into new territories, which is something we will be doing on a regular basis as part of our expansion plans.

**ABOUT RASMUS SOJMARCK**

CEO / FOUNDER AT ODDSLIFE

Rasmus has been using the contacts he has built up over 9 years in the online gaming industry to secure high-profile investment and partners for OddsLife. From 2005 he was Commercial Director at sports betting comparison site BetBrain, before moving to take on the same role at EveryMatrix Ltd in 2009. He picked up Best Sportsbook Innovation 2010, Sports Betting Rising Star 2011 and special commendation for White Label Partner of the Year 2011, all coveted EGR awards.

He is also Chairman & Founder of Sports Betting Community, a news, events and consultancy business he started in 2009.
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ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR THE RIGHT OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

Demand for good office space in Malta is on the rise. This comes about as a result of Malta being considered an attractive jurisdiction in which to do business by more than three quarters of existing foreign direct investors (FDI) as published recently by a reputable international firm in a survey examining Malta’s attractiveness to investors. This brings with it a demand for proper infrastructure and good quality property, amongst other things. The survey also shows that the ICT, telecoms and iGaming entrepreneurs rate the attractiveness of Malta for FDI very highly, with over half of the respondents believing that the iGaming sector will be the business sector driving Malta’s growth in the next five years.

These statistics are further enhanced by Malta’s rating in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015 published by the World Economic Forum where Malta is described as an Innovation-Driven Economy. The country ranks with the top fifty countries from a total 144 countries surveyed in the report in terms of global competitiveness, scoring excellently in terms of technological readiness and business sophistication.

The island is also logistically well placed with its modern port, efficient distribution facilities and good flight connections. This is backed by a highly educated, qualified and English speaking workforce. Foreign companies already based in Malta, as well as those looking to invest, are attracted by favourable corporate taxation, other fiscal incentives and competitive human resources.

Last but not least, Malta makes for a pleasant location to live in. The island still boasts a relatively low crime rate, a healthy residential property market, a stable Mediterranean climate and sound healthcare and education facilities. This is further backed by the Individual Investor Programme (IIP) which allows for the granting of citizenship by a certificate of naturalisation to individuals and their families who contribute to the economic and social development of the country.

Malta is experienced in serving some of the world’s most demanding markets and is constantly investing in attracting new investment in a number of sectors.

A flurry of investment is noticeable in the commercial office market to keep up with the ever increasing demand, with new projects and developments underway. Location hotspots across the island include the capital city Valletta, Smart City, SkyParks at the Malta International Airport, St. Julian’s, Sliema and environs. A study conducted by Miriam Azzopardi in 2013, titled “A Study of Locality Choices by ICT and iGaming Companies in Malta” has shown a preference for the latter localities in terms of office space location. The choice of location is driven by an affordable rent, attractive lease conditions and availability of human resources. St. Julian’s, Sliema and environs offer adequate infrastructure, public transport links, support services and activities such as entertainment and retail, whilst representing one of the strongest residential rental markets in Malta, and hence the tendency of foreigners choosing such locations to reside in.

Besides location, other key aspects of importance when considering leasing office space include the contract terms and conditions, asking rent (this still tends to be quite competitive compared to other European countries), other costs such as parking and service charges, the state in which the offices are being leased in terms of finishing and furnishings, whether the offices form part of a bigger block which might offer support services, and the actual space availability and layout. Office size and layout requirements will vary greatly from one company to another. One thing to keep in mind is future company growth and whether the space being considered can accommodate this. It is paramount to focus on the quality of the office space available. Aspects influencing quality include age and upkeep of the building structure, space configuration, acoustic and thermal insulation, natural lighting and ventilation, service installations, flexibility of use and overall finish. Another salient point is whether the property is offered in a furnished state or whether works have to be carried out to the property before it can be used, hence requiring time for a proper fit-out. In the scenario that the property would require a fit-out, one is encouraged to appoint competent professionals who can clearly understand the brief at hand, represent the corporate identity of the client within the office space design proposal whilst also providing the client with insight as to costings and timeframes. Other tenants occupying office space within the same building also have an impact on the attractiveness of such space to a potential client, in terms of business clustering and prestige.

Last but not least, before entering into a lease contract it is advisable to seek professional advice. Turn to a competent legal professional to review the final agreement draft before signature. It would be wise to also appoint an architect to inspect the property, especially if a fit-out is required. The latter will also be in a position to advise the client about any building irregularities and hidden defects or problems which might not be visible to the untrained eye.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Stephanie Cassar graduated from the University of Malta as an Architect & Civil Engineer and subsequently completed a Masters in Real Estate Appraisal with the University of Reading, UK. She currently runs her own architectural practice focusing on architectural design and property/development appraisal.

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CEO Nikolai Livori

Yobetit is a browser based sports trading platform.
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EMAN PULIS RECENTLY SAT DOWN WITH THE HON. DR. JOSÉ HERRERA, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR COMPETITIVENESS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT SITUATION OF REMOTE GAMING IN MALTA AS WELL AS THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AIMED AT STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING THE INDUSTRY.
When asked whether he thinks that Malta can lay claim to the title of the Silicon Valley of remote gaming, the Hon. Dr. Herrera starts off by reminding how Malta established itself a major player in the industry in just fifteen years, partly thanks to its competitiveness in offering the type of financial services remote gaming companies seek.

The basis of Malta’s success can be found in the quality of the human resources available locally. In fact, the gaming industry employs approx. 8,000 people, not counting the variety of secondary services used by gaming companies, including marketing and data hosting.

“Gaming contributes to 10% of the GDP, two-thirds of which is accounted for by remote gaming.”

The effect this has on the Maltese economy is significant. Gaming contributes to 10% of the GDP, two-thirds of which is accounted for by remote gaming. Moreover, the igaming industry injects more than €50 million annually to the national coffers through direct taxation.

The Hon. Dr Herrera reassures companies and potential investors that Malta takes the needs of the igaming industry very seriously. There are currently discussions underway between the LGA and the industry on the possibility of setting up an Academy of Gaming, which will provide specialised training courses in igaming to supply the industry with the skilled workforce it requires.

Besides investing in the local workforce, the Maltese government intends to set up Gaming Malta, an organisation tasked exclusively with the mission of promoting Malta abroad as an igaming hub and attract quality investment to the islands. Its objectives will be focused exclusively on promoting the igaming industry in Malta and encouraging more companies to establish themselves in this country.

The Hon. Dr Herrera emphasises that Gaming Malta will not impinge on the regulatory aspect of the business, an aspect which will remain firmly within the LGA’s scope. The two institutions will therefore complement each other, and igaming companies will be able to benefit from more personalised attention to their needs. This situation parallels what has already been done very successfully with Malta Enterprise, which focuses on attracting foreign business, and the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA) which regulates the sector.

In the course of the interview, the Hon. Dr Herrera also touched upon the role of the Responsible Gaming Foundation. This institution has two main scopes: to help various NGOs in Malta using funds donated by gaming companies, and also to embark on education campaigns that raise awareness about illegal gambling and help vulnerable people who are who are addicted to gambling.

Furthermore, during the past months The LGA has initiated a number of consultations with the industry in order to identify and address a number of key priority areas warranting special focus. These include amongst others, the administrative collaboration with other gaming jurisdictions, tackling cross-border regulatory & operational challenges, the development of policy in consonance with other related sectors (e.g. ICT, communications), evolving social considerations in regulatory practices, fraud prevention, consumer protection and fighting match fixing in sports are to be actively pursued.

To this effect the LGA has embarked on a reformist strategic exercise identifying key objectives and policy updates for the coming years in order to propose to the Maltese Government a number of initiatives which primarily include a new regulatory framework to be launched in 2015. This new framework is intended to revamp and consolidate all gaming activities under one law. The need to overhaul and consolidate the gaming regulatory regime in Malta is long overdue when one considers the developments which took place over the last decade particularly in consumer demands, technology and the broader regulatory landscape globally. Therefore, the consolidation, restructuring and re-scoping of the Maltese gaming regulation is expected to give both the LGA and the operators more legal certainty, consistency, and clarity. It will also modernise the Maltese gaming regulatory framework to a model which is growth focused, innovative and cutting edge.

Malta’s success as a gaming hub is attributed to a number of factors which make Malta a distinctive gaming jurisdiction of international status. The package of incentives includes a robust ICT infrastructure, an English speaking population,
a strong education system and a regulatory framework that focuses on consumer protection, fairness of games, strict compliance and the prevention of money laundering and other crimes. The remote gaming industry in Malta has a bright future ahead and should maintain a positive growth trend through the efforts by the present government, together with the Lotteries and Gaming Authority and the private industry.

“Ultimately, Malta has to be a leading force in finding innovative solutions to present and future challenges facing the industry.”

When asked if he thinks that Malta still has potential to grow its reach in the igaming market or whether a saturation point is imminent, the Hon. Dr Herrera replied that there is still a lot of scope for expansion left and that an outreach program has been set up to entice more investors from Asia and South America to move their operations to Malta.

Ultimately, Malta has to be a leading force in finding innovative solutions to present and future challenges facing the industry. The Hon. Dr Herrera is positive that this is already the case and, thanks to the local political consensus on the importance of the igaming industry, Malta’s success story has far from reached a conclusion yet.
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WHY WAIT  NETENT  microgaming  NYX  QUICKSPIN
A lot can happen in 10 years.

But you knew that already, because you are reading this, and that probably means you are a gaming industry professional. What you probably did not know though is that the number of jobs for translators and interpreters has doubled in the last 10 years, and that the language service industry has grown by almost 75% in the last 6 years. At the same time, there are fewer jobs for journalists every year.

So one could say that the career of Roy Pedersen has followed a natural course. He started a career in sports journalism in Norway, but left for Malta almost 10 years ago. After several years in the gaming industry he came up with the idea of starting a translation company specialised in gaming, in 2008.

“While working in the gaming industry and frequently playing on online gaming sites, I saw a lot of examples of poor translation. It was obvious that the websites and the games had been translated either by someone who had no idea about gaming, or was unfit for linguistic tasks. I asked some friends from other countries to see if the tendency was the same for other languages, and they told me it was. No other translation companies were specialising in games either, so I found a gap in the market”.

SiGMA: What were the key factors in making All-In Translations an industry leader?
RP: Hard work (obviously), quickly establishing a broad network in gaming, not being scared of taking risks, and karma. Some call it ethics, I call it karma, but either way I am a strong believer in operating at the highest level of business ethics and realising that what goes around comes around.

This came into play in the early days of All-In Translations. In 2009 a company ordered their very large website translated into 13 languages, but they went bankrupt before even uploading the translations. We never received payment, and we did not have funds to pay the translators that had already done the job. The bank account was empty.

It felt like I had two choices: To take the easy way out and file for bankruptcy, or to head for the bank and ask for a loan. I made the right choice, and almost overnight our reputation in the translation industry became outstanding. So the name of the company, All-In, is representative not only of our mentality, in terms of the subjects and languages we work with, but is also a fairly good description of what I have invested into it!

In any case, the translators had not expected to get paid, and word got around quickly. Ever since, all of the best translators want to work with us, so it is just up to us to figure out which translators have the best ability to create precise and attractive translations about gaming.

We also secured a very important deal with Playtech shortly after the crisis back in 2009, and I am proud to say that Playtech is still one of our clients, along with other industry giants like Betsson, Tipico and NeoGames. We are also working with new exciting clients like Casumo, Tribe Lotto and 7Red to mention a few, and we recently translated Multi Lotto into Tagalog which is one of the newest among our 70 languages on offer.

I also quickly understood the importance of exceeding expectations when it comes to customer service, and I have established a talented team of project managers and others who are incredibly service minded and do an excellent job to keep the client happy every time they make an order.
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I had the pleasure to work with Mark when he was the copywriter for Harry Casino. Mark is a great person to work with, he delivers everything on time, he comes with new ideas for campaigns and his result is always better than expected.

Mark managed to quickly get an understanding for our consumers who always were in focus in all material produced. I can strongly recommend Mark’s work to anyone else who wants to work with a senior copywriter.

Pål Andersson
Consultant at HarryCasino.com (a Betsson site)
SiGMa: More and more people understand English. Are online gaming translations necessary? RP: Absolutely. All signs point to yes. Research shows that almost 73% of consumers say they are more likely to buy something online when the information is available in their own language. That's three in every four people, who want things translated. This research is not specific to the gaming industry, but in my opinion trust is just as important for an online gaming site company than for a typical e-commerce site. There are many ways of establishing that trust, but speaking to your players in their own language is one of the easiest and most efficient methods. Then again, you need to make sure that your translations are good, otherwise they can of course have the opposite effect.

SiGMa: At which stage should a gaming company consider having their content translated? RP: I think it’s worth thinking about from the outset. I am of course a little biased here, but I see no reason to wait if the company has licensing, a marketing plan and all the content ready in one language. The sooner you start, the sooner you will see an increase in the number of players. We also offer content writing services for clients who have the marketing plan ready but no one to write their text.

SiGMa: What considerations should be taken before and during the translation process? RP: When I had a presentation at ICE in London this year I narrowed this down to five “tips and tricks”. They are: 1) be culture sensitive, 2) provide context, 3) use professionals who are highly proficient native speakers, 4) use translators with subject expertise, and 5) involve the translators early in the localisation process, as it will keep you from pitfalls like creating a design which does not leave enough space for long languages.

SiGMa: What is your view on outsourced translations vs. in-house translators? RP: In my opinion a gaming company has four options. 1) They can ask the internal customer service or marketing staff who speak the required language to do it, which will often result in poor quality or unhappy staff. Some companies can afford to hire full-time translators for some languages, and that is obviously a great resource to have if the budget allows, but I would recommend that the company really test the language skills of their candidates before hiring them, and their subject matter expertise. We added a service called ‘proficiency testing of language candidates’ a few years ago which is available to help with this. 2) They can hire a professional translator on a project basis, but keep in mind that it is difficult to find a proven gaming translator with experience in the industry, and who you trust to deliver to you on time and to the right standard. You need the terminology to be spot on. 3) They can hire a “normal” translation agency, but the prices will often be considerably higher than All-In Translations for example, and the translators might not be familiar with gaming terminology. 4) They can outsource to a specialist gaming translation company like All-In Translations, who can work with them on an “as needs” basis, even on the smallest texts, with fast turnaround times and assurance of excellent quality and professional results. This usually provides the best value for money. I imagine the biggest advantage of outsourcing translations to a company like us is peace of mind. The managers at the gaming company won’t have to worry about anything related to the whole translation process any longer, and also they can reduce cost.

SiGMa: Which markets are more attractive now and where do you see the most potential? RP: This is quite a difficult question, and the reply will always vary according to the current legal situation in each country. We did some extensive research on this topic before the World Cup this past summer, where we ranked the top 22 countries according to gaming market potential. The key things we measured were online behaviour, Gross Gambling Revenue (online) and legality/regulation. We ended up with Argentina as number 1, Brazil as number 2, Japan 3rd, then Mexico, Russia, Ghana, Colombia, Nigeria, Netherlands, and Germany in the top 10.

The first eight countries are in the list more because of their future potential than current sales, whereas English to German has been our most sold language combination this year. Traditionally the Scandinavian languages are very popular among our clients, but unfortunately neither of the countries from there qualified for the World Cup. All the findings from the research can be found in my blog on allintranslations.com.

Apart from that, I think Spanish and Portuguese are languages with a lot of potential, because you can localise the language variants at a low cost and reach large parts of the world at the same time. We have also done a lot of work from English into Chinese lately, and we were recently chosen as a translation provider for the newsletters and press releases of the Macao Gaming Show.

SiGMa: Are you afraid of robots taking over your business? RP: Robots will never, at least not in my lifetime, be able to produce attractive and “sales-y” translations, and most of the translations we work with are in some way related to marketing. The parts that are not about marketing are usually about establishing trust, and on that front, robots have a very long way to go.

We try to keep up with technology though, and we have invested in software which allows us to create translation memories in order to increase consistency and it also means we can offer discounts for repeated segments. This way a company isn’t paying for the same translation twice. We also offer something called full-context editing, which means that we proofread and review a translation once it has been uploaded to its full context, either on a website, a website optimised for mobile devices, an online game or similar, to make sure it fits, is appropriate and flows well. After all, you want it to be natural, and you don’t want the text to sound like it was translated. The best translations never do.

Roy Pedersen and the rest of the All-In Translations team can be found next to the Corporate Wellness Area.
Many questions are asked by CEOs on this topic, so I picked a few which are frequently asked:

- **Can we stay as we are?** (If it isn’t broken why fix it, right? Wrong!

- **Should we insource our IT and hire internal staff or outsource it?**
  
  Since our business is highly dependent on IT Infrastructure and software development providers, are we a ‘gaming company’ or an ‘IT company’?
  
  Our business is highly dependent on IT Infrastructure and software development providers.

- **What is my competition doing?** (decide whether you want to lead or follow)

- **What is the risk if we migrate?** (ask yourselves, “what is the risk if we don’t?”)

- **How do we protect our intellectual capital?** (who has access to what?)

- **Do we have segregation of duties in the various IT functions?** (If no, why not?)

- **Is our data protected?** (If the answer is yes, great, but how do we know if it really is?)

- **Do we have a DR plan in place?** If we do great, but did we test it and if we didn’t, why not?

- **Are we backing up our data?** If yes, great, but did we test the validity of the backed-up data? If we didn’t - why are we doing back-ups and don’t know what’s inside them?

- **Banks are using two factor authentication to access the systems both internally and externally. Are we doing this as a gaming operator?** If no, why not?

If you are asking yourself the above questions then chances are you are seeing IT as part of your business strategy, and the answers will lead you to align your IT strategy to your company’s vision. Demand more from your internal IT teams or your outsourcing provider.

Cost-effectively protecting the availability of mission-critical databases, web servers and application servers has to do with business planning as much as technical capability. A solid decision-making process must be followed to remove the fear factor from the equation.

Over the past 10 years Computer Systems are being consolidated through virtualization to reduce costs, improve manageability, support and speed of execution. Some of you are still going through the consolidation process driven by mergers, acquisition or growth of the business, and therefore are still trying to build the foundations of your IT Infrastructure. For the ones who went through this process already, the next thing in line to explore is IT Services in the Cloud & Big Data. Alongside this evolutionary process we are overwhelmed with data which makes it harder to stay focused and be clear headed on where we want to take our business in the next five years. We hear about iCloud & PayPal being hacked, and wonder how these big Industry giants with deep pockets allowed themselves to be hacked. Today we are seeing the evolution of two types of Cloud Services; (1) Public Cloud, meaning services are provided through a shared environment with other clients using the same infrastructure and with little or no control over where the data is being kept, accessed or stored and (2) Private Cloud, meaning dedicated infrastructure to each client and not shared, and having full control of where the data is being kept, accessed and stored. Big Data is being talked about by the large IT multinationals and in essence what they are referring to is business analytics and using information to allow companies make better strategic decisions.

**DEFINE HIGH AVAILABILITY (HA) AND USE SLA DRIVEN METHODOLOGY TO MEASURE RESULTS**

The definition of what highly available means with respect to a particular application is crucial in determining which problem is really being solved. Availability is always a user-defined term. If the application is performing poorly, is it unavailable? If mobile users cannot connect because the phone organization’s cable is accidentally cut, is the entire application unavailable? If a table in the database is currently offline, is the entire application unavailable? If a table in the database is currently offline, is the entire application unavailable? From users’ perspectives, the answer may be different depending on when they connect, how they connect, and what they access. Therefore, every user has a different definition of highly available. The industry measures availability in nines (e.g., 99%, 99.9%, 99.99%), representing the percentage of time the application is deemed available throughout an entire year. Vendors use terms such as basic availability, enhanced availability, highly available, and fault tolerant. Although they sound similar and are often used interchangeably, users should understand clearly what percentage of uptime the HA vendor is claiming it can deliver for both planned and unplanned downtime.
CALCULATE THE COST OF DOWNTIME

Quantifying the value of the application to the business is a best practice whenever an organization is making a technology selection. It makes no sense to pay more for the technology and its support than the application is worth to the business. In my insurance analogy, no one would pay more in premiums than the property was worth (with the exception of auto insurance), even cumulatively during a period of 5-10 years after factoring in the risk of loss versus the value of the premiums paid. Applications also have value, and organizations should take steps to quantify that value.

Calculating the cost of application downtime can be useful when evaluating the relative costs of various proposed HA infrastructures. In other words, how can the premium be evaluated without knowing the value of the property (e.g., application)? Factors to consider are hours of operation (e.g., hours/day and days/week) and direct and indirect (e.g., cost savings, productivity gains) revenue generated. This will assist not only in the evaluation of possible HA solutions later on, but also will help to identify and rank software assets to assist in future infrastructure and even disaster recovery planning.

BOTTOM LINE

Application availability greatly impacts an organization’s bottom line & brand equity, which is known across all industries, yet companies still experience downtime, projects are delivered late and out of budget, data is lost or stolen.... It is important to get the basic rights and ensure you have the right people around you, be it internal employees or external IT outsourcing providers to help you with firstly getting your house in order and progress to formulating an IT strategy that is aligned to your business vision and objectives.
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SiGMa: You recently took XL Media public. What made you choose to go public, how was the process and what advice do you have to people thinking about doing the same?

OW: We have been successful growing our business over the last few years – generating both sales and profit growth year on year. The online marketing space has been highly fragmented for a number of years and our ability to grow market share and expand our product offering has been central to our success.

In order to capitalize on some of these opportunities secured additional funding through two rounds of private equity investments (2012 & 2013). This was closely followed by our oversubscribed IPO in 2014 which provides the business with a strong financial base from which to expand. By being quoted on AIM, we believe the Group can therefore accelerate our growth aspirations, funding new organic revenue streams as well as targeting selective acquisitions.

In terms of going public, the main piece of advice would be to ensure you have an experienced management team in place and appoint advisors that can guide you through the process. Shareholders demand value and growth and being able to articulate this in a concise manner is crucial to successfully listing any business.

SiGMa: How has the affiliate industry changed over the last years and what do you think the future holds for gaming affiliates?

OW: The main difference is becoming much more ROI driven and competitive, compared to a sense of “tranquility” back in the early days. As the markets become more advanced and competitive, there is much more need for technology and expertise these days than before.

For example in the content and search world back in 2005 any simple site with limited features and content could create a large amount of players and revenue. These days you really need to publish quality content and offer serious engagement to users to compete as well as take a data driven approach as opposed to intuition.

In media the change is even more noticeable as the amount of channels, formats, publishers and products has grown significantly. We are very pleased with the progress we have made with our backend optimization and financial control systems as well as with the expertise our team has developed, allowing us to be a strong force in field, from mobile and social advertising, to display and paid search.

SiGMa: XL Media has been doing some company acquisitions lately. Is it a clear strategy for XL Media to grow through acquisitions?

OW: Indeed, acquisitions are an important part of our strategy to enhance growth while diversifying the markets we work in. In some cases we prefer to buy an existing business which complements us. This was also the rationale behind the fund raising earlier this year. Good examples of executing this strategy are the EDM acquisition announced in September which provides us an entry into the social gaming field while the UK sports betting acquisition announced in August adds a stronger presence in the UK market and in sports betting.

We are in constant search for additional acquisitions. Additional potential targets for us are technology focused companies such as companies which develop campaign optimization technology (which we invest in heavily) among others.
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BETHARD COMING SOON!

WWW.EUROEARNERS.COM
Our overarching strategy is to complement our organic growth with acquisitions. As you can see in our H1 results for this year, the strong growth across all departments was purely organic, we had only one smaller (Danish focused) acquisition the contributed minor revenue from June. Clearly we will have a stronger impact of EDM at the full year but 2014 would have seen strong level of investment in our core business which positions us for the future.

SiGMa: Which geographical regions do you see as the most interesting from an affiliate point of view for the near future?
OW: From our perspective regulated environments and ones that are in the process of going towards regulation are the most interesting ones. In the near future I would mention markets such as the UK, Denmark and Greece, as well as a few others. The Nordic region as a whole is going towards regulation in the medium – long term and represents a good opportunity at present.

SiGMa: A large part of XL Medias business is media buying. Any tips for affiliates who are considering buying traffic to boost their projects?
OW: The main tip is to try and eliminate intuition as much as possible and to develop / buy / lease strong tools and systems allowing you to make the best of your spend. (We develop proprietary tools for this). Financial control would be another tip, make sure to control ROI on every $ spent as campaigns can become costly very fast.

Once you access the proper tools and start, I recommend to carefully assess performance and not to shut down too early, you need to make sure to reach large enough numbers to really be able to assess a new campaign method, platform, publisher etc’.

Last but not least, TWEAK! Tweaking and experimenting are keys to success in any kind of online media campaign.
Worried about Consumption Tax? Decreasing Margins? Paying a high cost for your payments?

Hedge your Bets with Intelligent Payments. We commit to beating your current Payment Processing costs!

Payment processing provider of choice to many of the largest gaming companies.
Gateway services include:
- Merchant Services
- Fraud Screening
- Alternative Payments
- Mobile Payments
- Automated Payouts
- 3D Secure Management
- Least Cost Acquirer Routing

Please contact Craig Grant:
Email: craig.grant@intelligentpayments.co.uk
Phone: +44 7725 643 481

www.intelligentpayments.co.uk
EVENTUALLY, EVERY INDUSTRY MATURES. IT’S THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS. AND ONLINE INDUSTRIES ARE NO EXCEPTION. THE TECH INDUSTRY IS MUCH DIFFERENT NOW THAN IT WAS IN THE HIGH-FLYING ’90S. DOWNLOADING MUSIC DIGITALLY USED TO BE REVOLUTIONARY. NOW IT’S THE NORM.
In 2007, the iPhone captured the world's imagination. Now, it's a maturing market with winners and losers. Android phones are more popular globally, while iPhones are luxury items. Smartphone operating systems are stable. Battery life is improving, and owning a smartphone is a completely normal part of everyday life for many people.

The online gaming industry has also undergone a maturation process. When the first online gaming operations opened for business, it was the wild, wild west. Yes, it’s a bit cliché. But it’s absolutely true. There were no rules, just entrepreneurs trying to make money. Some went about it ethically. Others didn’t. Too many didn’t. So the need for rules, regulations and order grew.

Malta was a critical part of the maturation process of the online gaming industry. In 2004, it became the first EU jurisdiction to license and regulate online gaming.

Malta’s regulatory standards were tough but fair, and it quickly became a coveted license. According to Malta’s Lottery and Gaming Authority (LGA), Malta has received more than 450 remote gaming applications since 2004.

The industry has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. It experienced a significant boom period as online gaming grew rapidly globally. And over the past few years, it’s gone through a limited growth and consolidation period, seeing some mergers and acquisitions. The consolidation period has been marked by a significant shift in both the economic and regulatory landscape in Europe. Struggling economies have resulted in less discretionary spending available for online gaming.

And a general European movement to eschew a one-market philosophy for online gaming in favor of country-by-country regulations has increased operating and compliance costs.

To understand how the industry has changed over the last five years, it’s useful to look at Casino City’s data on the online gaming industry.

Casino City collects data on all aspects of the online gaming industry. From operators to suppliers, vendors, jurisdictions and everything in between, Casino City’s publications and websites provide quality data about the industry and very good snapshots over time.

In 2009, there were 2189 online gaming sites in Casino City’s comprehensive database of online gaming sites (online.casinocity.com). By 2014, that number was 2852.

In 2009, there 180 software suppliers in Casino City’s database. By 2014, that number was 381.

And as of press time, there were more than 2,900 companies in Casino City’s iGamingSuppliers database (iGamingSuppliers.com). The iGamingSuppliers database lists industry suppliers, vendors and manufacturers by product and service category. Among the product and service categories are advertising, business administration, finance and accounting, games software, MIS, IT and Communications, payment solutions, security and fraud, and turnkey solution providers.

Currently 7.6 percent of the companies in Casino City’s
iGamingSuppliers database lists a Malta address.

So with these numbers as a backdrop, where does Malta’s iGaming industry go from here?

Clearly, the licensing and regulating of online gaming companies will continue to be a central pillar of Malta’s iGaming industry. Malta has a well respected regulatory scheme that will continue to attract operators. But with more European nations looking at individually licensing online gaming, it’s a challenging environment.

The supplier sector, on the other hand, is an opportunity for real growth. With a healthy supply of operators in Malta, everyone from Know Your Customer (KYC) vendors to payment processors and game developers has a good incentive to set up shop in Malta.

Silicon Valley is the living, breathing heart of innovation in computers and the Internet. Malta can be online gaming’s Silicon Valley. Every technological advancement should be a result of work done in Malta. Every paradigm shift in the industry should be driven by work done in Malta.

Malta can be an incubator for new and established companies looking to make their mark.

That’s a lofty mark to hit. But with Malta’s history and place in the online gaming industry, it is certainly one that can be reached.

Casino City’s gaming directories and publications are available for purchase at Casino City/GPWA booth in SiGMA and online at CasinoCityPress.com.
THE EXHIBITORS LISTINGS

888
Over 25 million players have experienced 888’s exciting action, in the past 17 years, making it the largest e-gaming portal. The Company is situated and licensed in Gibraltar. Nine years ago, 888 Holdings made a successful initial public offering of its shares, which was later traded on the London Stock Exchange.

Web: www.888.com

ANNACASINO
AnnaCasino.com, founded by an experienced team of industry professionals and marketing magicians, is a fresh new casino with a focus on female players. Our fun, innovative and caring approach to the business shines through in our work. We care about our customers and value their user experience, which is clearly visible in our daily customer care and relationship management. The same applies to the affiliate side of AnnaCasino. We take extremely good care of our highly valued partners.

Web: www.annacasino.com

ACUITYTEC
AcuityTec is an all-in-one fraud prevention solution and proven acceptance rate booster for all e-Commerce businesses accepting credit card and other payment transactions. Its unique BIN intelligence researches do increase merchant transaction acceptance rates, while determining exposure to fraud and risks.

Web: www.acuitytec.com

ANCHOVY
Reputable Anchovy Luxury is widely known for assisting luxury companies across the globe with state-of-the-art digital marketing campaigns, the founders of this family owned business and their ancestors have been redefining luxury since 1837 with the establishment of numerous luxury brands.

Web: www.anchovyluxury.com

AFFILIATE LOUNGE
Affiliate Lounge is part of Swedish Betsson AB. It surely invests in companies that provide quality online gaming services. The demand for transparency and auditing practices employed in public listed companies, guarantees that the commission is always fair and 100% correct. Through a dedicated staff and a comprehensive backend system, affiliates have constant support and guidance at hand. Affiliate Lounge strives to be the best partner regardless of the size of the company. Affiliate Lounge makes it easy for an individual to make more money.

Web: www.affiliatelounge.com

ATLAS
Atlas is locally known as being a leader. Post WWII and you had motor business that began to establish itself in Malta and subsequently local agencies began to flourish. The Atlas group is firmly rooted in the Maltese shipping industry that is nearly a century old. 8 years ago, Atlas Insurance restructured to become a protected cell company, a development which takes advantage of new regulations under the Maltese Companies Act. This restructuring favours foreign investments and facilitates Atlas’ emergence into the international markets by enabling captive insurance companies to set up in Malta.

Web: www.atlas.com.mt

AFFILIATE REPUBLIK
Affiliate Republik was founded by an ex-affiliate specialist in 2012. The quite popular and unique Affiliate Program is more about the people and who they are. This is outlined and supported with effective internal communication, wide range of marketing materials and marketing tools. Easily accessible statistics, timely payments, and open external communication. All dedicated to a vast range client database, the company strives to keep their customers’ satisfaction at heart. With a very professional and friendly team, AR is mostly about being a company that you know and that you trust.

Web: www.affiliaterepublik.com

BETCONSTRUCT
BBetConstruct is a leading developer and provider of online and land-based sports betting and gaming solutions and services. Since 2003, the company has developed and provided its clients with the market leading technology, including online and land-based Sportsbook, Poker, RNG and Live Dealer Casino, Skill and Virtual games, Financial Betting and Fantasy Sports.

Web: www.betconstruct.com
BETGENIUS

Betgenius Limited is the leading provider of sophisticated data-driven software to the global sports betting and lottery sectors. The Betgenius product range enables bookmakers and lottery operators to increase revenues by improving the intelligence, efficiency and usability of their existing sportsbooks; or to purchase a bespoke, turnkey solution. With an impeccable sportbook management, excellent customer marketing and effective user experience, Betgenius sets the steps for others to follow.

Web: www.betgenius.com

BONNIER

The Bonnier Group operates several brands offering media services across mixed platforms. The company’s headquarters are situated in the Nordic region but branches of the business run across the US, Germany, UK and Eastern Europe among others. That means 16 countries of operations and some 9,000 employees. Since its establishment over 2 centuries ago, this family owned business, has been providing the highest quality of media services. It has always combined a commitment to freedom of speech with a business focus.

Web: www.bonniergaming.com

BONUS VIKINGS

Bonus Vikings is an affiliate platform providing top rated CPA and revenue share offers in casino, poker, bingo, sportsbook as well as Forex and binary. The parent company is Viking PC Health Ltd which operates from Malta, offering antivirus software.

Web: www.bonusvikings.com

CALVINAYRE

The well renowned CalvinAyre.com is participating in the Malta iGaming Summit this coming end of October. The leading iGaming online publication has been the global destination for online gambling news, lifestyle information, conferences, industry shakers and event coverage since its inception. CalvinAyre.com is a non-profit website, aiming to be carbon neutral and encouraging other players in the online gaming industry to follow this philosophy. All profit generated goes to support initiatives of the CalvinAyre Foundation.

Web: www.calvinayre.com

CAPITAL ALLIANCE

Capital Alliance Ltd is a Design and Build company for residential and commercial real estate owners and developers offering a professional consultancy and management service for the design, management and bespoke Fit-Out of any size project both locally and overseas. We are set up to design, project manage and Fit-out a project from concept to hand over meeting the exacting specifications of our international clients. Recent Clients include: Swiss Mid East, Avanzia, Overseas Health Care, Total SA, Axxeria, Enasco, Al Arc Fund management, Planet Technologies, April, and HP.

Web: www.ca.com.mt

CHERRY

This year marked the 41st anniversary of CherryCasino. During these years it became famous for being one of the oldest and most trusted online gaming sites in the world. Ever since its inception CherryCasino has attracted players that love a classic casino ambiance and experience. The company sees the importance of giving its players a good time while using its products. Whether the players are new or experienced, they will find at CherryCasino an online casino that is as authentic and glamorous with cash prizes to match.

Web: www.cherryaffiliates.com
COMEON!

ComeOn! is a on online gaming site that runs its operations from Malta. With most of the clients coming from across the other side of the Atlantic ocean, they offer a wide range of cutting edge instant Casino games. They create fair and understandable bonuses to extend their clients play and improve their online experiences. They continuously seek to improve their clients’ experience with innovative graphics and user-friendly payment methods, through their wide range of games. So if you want a superb online gaming experience, then...comeon!

Web: www.comeon.com

CSL

CSL is a leader standing on its own. This statement comes through visual and ‘felt’ experiences. CSL is simply a successful story. A dream come true. This leading systems integrator in Malta has its own Data Centre Facilities, specializing in Strategic Outsourcing, IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service), Private Cloud Services, Cloud Computing/Hosted Exchange, Data Centre & Colocation Services, Hardware & Software Maintenance, Business Continuity & Recovery Services (BC&RS). They have introduced their services, literally managing to break thru with their innovative, creative, exciting and professional service.

Web: www.csl.com.mt

DELOITTE

Deloitte Malta refers to a civil partnership, constituted between limited liability companies, and its affiliated operating entities, Deloitte Services Limited, Deloitte Legal, Deloitte Technology Solutions Limited and Deloitte Audit Limited. The latter is authorised to provide audit services in Malta in terms of the Accountancy Profession Act. Cassar Torregiani & Associates is a firm of advocates warranted to practise law in Malta and is exclusively authorised to provide legal services, in Malta, under the Deloitte brand.

Web: www.deloitte.com.mt

DMAX

A Maltese-German boutique firm, DMAX offers innovative online business solutions serving blue chip accounts in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. With an experienced and professional team that is more than reliable and multidisciplinary, this company has positive and highly adaptable professionals, able to cater to any clients’ business intelligence & social media needs. This is a company that is passionate about delivering valuable results. They have consistently built a reputation to be reckoned with because they simply offer D MAX.

Web: www.dmaxepaper.com

ECABS

ecabs has established its name as one of the largest private transport fleets in Malta. With over 50 vehicles and people carriers dotting the Island ready to service requests 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, eCabs is Malta’s leading minicab company. Their service is impeccable and punctual and combines all this with a dedicated and professional staff, that is ready to take you not just to anywhere!!

Web: www.ecabs.com.mt

EGO

Egaming Online may be the only affiliate program you will ever need. All brands feature effective, workable promotions, solid player support and conversion. The company guarantees that whether you are looking to promote one brand or all of them, EGO will work with you every step of the way. Their dedicated team of experienced affiliate managers provide a 24/7 support in many languages. EGO offers buttons and text links in a variety of colours and sizes, along with free banners. EGO is simply evolving the future.

Web: www.egamingonline.com

ENERGY CASINO

Established in 2013, Energy Casino is deemed as thriving and briskly developing casino which offers a wide range of cutting edge games from the land-based slots manufacturer Novomatic. Soon its game portfolio will be updated with games by Netent and Microgaming. EnergyCasino is backed by multiple languages, currencies, expeditious support and it invariably entices enormous throngs of customers. They are currently strengthening their team by looking for individuals that share their passions and want to be part of their dreams.

Web: www.energycasino.com

EUROSLOTS

EuroSlots offer some of the widest variety of the leading games available online. The company’s motto is - If the games are not good enough for their customers they simply do not publish them. They simply want to give the best of services and have the products and services to do so. Euroslots looks beyond and invests in what they call the ‘iGaming heart of the Mediterranean’.

Web: www.euroslots.com

EVERYMATRIX

An independent software development company providing the world class gaming products for the igaming industry, EveryMatrix was founded in 2008 by a visionary team of people. Their story and journey are special and they look forward to sharing their goals, dreams and successes. Their effort was also rewarded throughout the past years by several awards around the globe.

Web: www.everymatrix.com

EVSG

Branded as one of the best property consultants and a long way from what it used to be, last year Sara Grech merged with Engel & Volkers giving birth to Engel & Volkers Sara Grech, a co-brand with an international renowned brand based in Hamburg. EVSG look forward to being of service to this sector as they understand and want to facilitate the transition of (gaming) companies moving to Malta and offer them the best spaces and locations available fitting in their requirements.

Web: www.engelvolkers.com/en/malta/
EXANTE

Founded in 2011, EXANTE is an investment services company that provides global multi-asset brokerage services on an extensive range of financial markets, such as in the US, EU and Asia. They specialize in providing Direct Market Access (DMA). The company’s aim is to design, produce and support cutting-edge infrastructure for greater financial market accessibility and pricing transparency. EXANTE believes in liberal financial markets. The company’s envisions are to become a benchmark for transparency and market accessibility in the financial intermediary sector.

Web: www.exante.com

FAIRWINDS MANAGEMENT

Fairwinds Management Limited is a company formation and administration specialist offering a wide range of corporate, legal and financial services. Their customer oriented methodology helps them achieve the objectives of their clients within a cost-effective structure in order to maximise their profits within legitimate and transparent business structures. Whether you would like to start up a company to operate your business or would like to avail of your back office administration services, Fairwinds Management will offer you a level of service which will simply exceed your expectations.

Web: www.fairwindsmanagement.net

FROSMO

Within the gaming industry Frosmo’s operative team creates a fast and easy-to-use tool for iterative testing. It includes a user interface that allows senior management to easily see if their company strategy is being achieved online. This is essentially a way of transparently tracking which conversion optimisation actions are having real effects on the companies’ bottom line. Frosmo is used by retail, travel, online services, banking and gaming industries. It works securely with any kind of sites (as well as mobile) without load issues, including complex and dynamic Ajax service.

Web: www.frosmo.com

GLOBAL COLLEGE

Global College Malta (GCM) is a cutting-edge institution of higher education based in Smart City Malta, offering internationally recognised degree courses, specialist short courses and English language tuition in partnership with leading industry professionals and academic institutions. The courses currently offered on a part-time or full-time basis, at Global College Malta and in cooperation with University of Chester are: MBA, MBA with International Marketing, MBA with Project Management, MSc in Management, MSc in Management with HR Management and MSc in Management with Finance.

Web: www.gcmalta.com

GLOBAL TRANSLATION SOLUTIONS

GTS has been providing high quality human translation services since January 2004. From our incorporation, we have been providing high-level professional translation, and subsequently interpretation and other language services to clients across the globe. We are consistently ranked by our clients as excellent in our services, cost-effective in the way we handle projects and interactive in our approach to language projects, putting our clients’ needs at the centre of our relationship with every single client.

Web: www.gtsolutions.com

GPWA

With nearly 15,000 registered members, the Gambling Portal Webmasters Association is the only professional organization of its kind. They are committed to supporting the success of their members, and all of their programs are designed based on this objective. Membership in the organization is free and is made possible by the support of their sponsor affiliate programs. Members receive access to lively and interesting discussion forums plus a free subscription to magazines and newsletters, covering industry news of particular interest.

Web: www.gpwa.org

GRENKE

GC Renting Malta Ltd, locally based in Sliema, is part of GRENKE Group. Founded in Baden-Baden (Germany) on 1978 and listed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange since 2000, the GRENKE Group is one of the biggest IT financing specialists which is independent of banks and not tied to any manufacturer. Almost 30 years of experience in the IT leasing and renting business has made us thoroughly aware of companies needs in the area of technology financing. Our presence in more than 50 locations in 27 Countries enables us to service and advise national and international customers, handling their financing needs wherever they are located.

Web: www.grenke.com.mt

GUTS

The Guts.com office consists of a group of highly qualified iGaming professionals who set out to achieve one goal: to develop an online casino which is second to none when it comes to a high quality gaming experience. This is the highest stamp of safety available in the online gaming industry. And like their caption rightly says - when it comes to safety, one should not wait.

Web: www.guts.com

IGAME

To date their company is composed of 100 ambitious individuals working in Malta and Estonia. The iGame team consists of a wide range of nationalities and offers its services in several languages. They cooperate with industry leaders such as Microgaming, Net Entertainment and Relax Gaming and serve over 1 million customers all over the world. They have a simple and sustainable vision for everything they do: To become a market leader in the European online gaming industry by delivering what is promised.

Web: www.igameentertainment.com

INTELLIGENT PAYMENTS

The Intelligent Payments platform was conceived in 2009, by some key IT, payments and fraud experts led by David de la Yesa, who is now their Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer. The platform was the in-house payment gateway of a large pan European e-Commerce merchant. It is designed to specifically address the fraud, PCI and reporting needs of the merchant. Within a short space of time the group recognised the opportunity to deliver similar solutions to other merchants and so Intelligent Payments was created as an independent company.

Web: www.intelligentpayments.co.uk
EXPO PLAN
YOUR GUIDE TO THE EXPO
GET 50% NET REVENUE SHARE FOR THE FIRST 3 MONTHS

SPECIAL PROMOTION FOR SIGMA ATTENDEES

Start promoting leading Scandinavian brands and get 50% Net Revenue share with “No Negative Carry Over” for the first 3 months. This offer will be exclusively available to all new affiliates who register at the Sigma Affiliate Conference.

Also your personal affiliate manager will make sure you’ll benefit from:

- Up to 50% Revenue Share with No negative carry over
- Great promotional material in 6 different languages
- Content for your site
- Attractive special offers for both existing and new customers
- XML feed odds
- Affiliate newsletter in 4 languages

redbet
Vinnarum Casino
Mama Mia Bingo
bertil
VHE.
Heypoker
KARAMBA
Karamba Affiliates brings the most innovative slot and casino gaming websites into the largest affiliate program. They’re 100% committed to bringing players to the best, fairest, and most trustworthy online gaming sites, and this is evident through the dedicated service they have always provided. They also feature the leading regulated brands, Dansk777 (Denmark), Grand Games (Belgium), and Mondo Fortuna (Italy).
Web: www.karamba.com

LADBROKES
Ladbrokes plc is a British based gaming company. It is based in Rayners Lane in Harrow, London. From 14 May 1999 to 23 February 2006, when it owned the Hilton hotel brand outside the United States, it was known as Hilton Group plc. Ladbrokes has become a world leader in online betting and gaming and has made a long way since its humble beginning 84 years ago.
Web: www.sportsbeta.ladbrokes.com

LGA
The Lotteries and Gaming Authority is a single regulatory body that is responsible for the governance of all gaming activities in Malta including Amusement Machines, Broadcasting Media games, Casinos, Commercial Bingo Halls, Commercial Communication games, Gaming Devices, the National lottery, Non-Profit games and Remote Gaming. Its mission statement says it all - To regulate competently the various sectors of the lotteries and gaming industry that fall under the Authority by ensuring gaming is fair and transparent to the players, preventing crime, corruption and money laundering and by protecting minor and vulnerable players.
Web: www.lga.org.mt

LEAD TRAINING
LEAD Training services Malta consists of a team of specialists passionate about their work and with a common ambition to share learning experiences with people in the business community as well as with civil servants and civil society. Starting from, thorough training needs analysis all the way to learning styles assessments and the provision of the training courses themselves. Their courses simply stand out from others as they are designed in line with the learning styles of the attendees.
Web: www.leadtraining.com.mt

LEO VEGAS
Leo is Latin for lion. Vegas is the city of dreams. Leo Vegas is a powerful casino experience with royal service. Leo Vegas is an online casino that provides world-class game entertainment – on mobile, tablet and PC. They run Europe’s fastest and most user friendly mobile casino. It sets a completely new standard for what one can (and should) expect from their mobile phone. Playing on your mobile has never been more exciting!
Web: www.leovegas.com

LIGHTHOUSE
Lighthouse Group offers specialist consultancy services to help companies achieve their business objectives and effectively manage their budgets. Solutions offered are strategic, integrated, tailor-made and successful. Lighthouse also transforms media bookings into a dynamic process maximising effectiveness by adapting the spread and bias of a campaign according to research based strategy.
Web: www.lighthouse.com.mt

MATCHING VISIONS
MatchingVisions.com is a North European and Scandinavian Affiliate Network that specializes in the online betting and casino market. They work with the largest brands on the market and ensure that you are given the best deals and marketing material available. You won’t find the brands they are working with at your regular mainstream affiliate network. They offer all affiliates attractive revenue share and CPA deals from the start because they know, that once you begin promoting the iGaming brands they work with and see the monetary output the campaigns yield you will stick around.
Web: www.matchingvisions.com

MIB
MIB is the local pioneer in this sector with over 35 years of proven track record serving some of Malta’s major public and private corporate entities. Several of their policies enable companies to offer high-value prizes for a fraction of the cost. As more companies, especially data-driven ones, become aware of cloud computing, social media, big data, corporate bring-your-own-device policies and the associated castigating regulatory environment these operate in, Cyber Risk becomes imminent in the day-to-day running of one’s business.
Web: www.mib.com.mt

MOBILBET
Mobilbet was founded by 4 industry veterans that are driven by the ambition to make the game that little bit more exciting, accessible and user friendly. That’s why everything at Mobilbet has been crafted towards supporting a gaming experience that suits their customer’s lifestyle, timetable and game. Mobilbet.com is simply about winning anywhere, anytime, everywhere!
Web: www.mobilbet.com

NORDIC AFFILIATES
NordicAffiliates.com offers you the unique opportunity to earn money by promoting the well known brands Norskelodd.com, Suomiarvat.com and Svenskalotter.com as an affiliate. The 3 brands were launched back in 2009 and have been actively promoted through TV advertising in Norway, Finland and Sweden but has not been available to promote by affiliates until now. Norskelodd.com, Suomiarvat.com and Svenskalotter.com offer the players the best scratch cards and casino games online, including the new exclusive Mega Fortune Dreams!
Web: www.nordicaffiliates.com
OUTDOOR LIVING

Outdoor Living believes that when a team has fun, it becomes more effective and relationships grow stronger. That's why they provide teamwork activities, corporate activity days and team building events that satisfy all aspects of staff motivation. Their events are an alternative to traditional classroom-based team training by offering physically demanding outdoor teambuilding experiences. They simply motivate people while they are having fun away from the stress of their careers.
Web: www.outdoorlivingmalta.com

PRIME PARTNERS

Comprising top gaming brands, Prime Partners has the experience and know-how to be the most profitable affiliate program you’ll ever use. Become a Prime Partner and let them impress you! They have a dedicated team of international marketing, analysis and affiliate experts ready to work with you, wherever you are. Adding to that, they simply want to make things extra easy. They take care of your marketing, advertising, accounting and analysis infrastructure. You simply do not need to worry about a thing.
Web: www.primepartners.com

PORTOMASO GAMING

Experience the thrill and excitement of high class casino without leaving your sofa! Be part of Malta’s most glamorous and chic casino by participating on-line in a variety of games including LIVE Roulette, Blackjack and Punto Banco. You will be totally immersed to experience with the action being streamed live through numerous web cams installed in strategic locations around the casino. PortomasoLive.com is powered by state-of-the-art technology delivering the ultimate in realism, performance and security. All Casino dealing and transaction are audited, thus guaranteeing your complete peace of mind. Simply Superb!!
Web: www.portomasogaming.com

QUINEL

Quinel is an accredited ISO/IEC 17025 testing lab for online gaming. They offer online gaming tests and services include: Platform, RNG, Game, Live dealer and ISS. Centrally located in the island of Malta. Quinel is a leader in its sector.
Web: www.quinel.com.mt

SALESFORCE

The Salesforce ExactTarget Marketing Cloud is the world’s most powerful digital marketing 11 platform. They power customer journeys across every touch point—email, social, mobile, web, and beyond—helping marketers put customers at the centre of everything they do. The ExactTarget Marketing Cloud is a salesforce.com company and one that invests heavily in what they believe. Theirs is not a struggle in the industry but a mission.
Web: www.salesforce.com

SB TECH

SBTech has been providing sports betting solutions to top gaming operators since 2007. We have a great deal of experience in the implementation and management of sports betting platforms and managed services to top online gaming operators and existing bookmakers operating both in regulated and traditional markets. We offer an innovative and dynamic suite of turnkey and fully managed online, mobile and retail/betting shop solutions which push the boundaries of interactive betting.
Web: www.sbttech.com

SCROOGEFOG

Why do you need ScroogeFrog?
It's quite simple. And these are several of the reasons why to use: Because Click fraud of PPC advertisement is real and nobody denies it and if you do not fight this problem you lose at least 10% of your budget. Scroogefrog uses the unique algorithms and digital fingerprints and they can automatically through API block the ad impression from fraudsters. They also guarantee the integrity of your information within NDA.
Web: www.scroogefrog.com

SKILLONNET

SkillOnNet provides the best value entertainment of the highest quality for casino players and the most state of the art flexible, customizable and user-friendly online gaming platform for their B2B Clients and Partners. With over a decade of front line online gaming experience, SkillOnNet has a fully customizable turn-key solution for your online gaming needs. Powering over 21 successful Online casinos. So simply find out how their ‘Winning Formula’ software solution can work for you!
Web: www.skillonnet.com

SLBET

SLbet is a new and modern gaming platform designed to be your entertainment in your free time. We are offering the best of the casino and gaming world with a variety of casino and live casino games, poker and a very big selection of sports book events with competitive odds. We can assure you that you will always find more on our page, and with our work and determination to perfection, we will always try to offer you new and more exiting gaming solutions.
Web: www.slbet.com

SLOTS MILLION

Malta. The world’s fully adaptive casino, where your favourite game is always just a click away. No matter on what device you are playing, you will always get the same casino experience with SlotsMillion.com.
Web: www.slotsmillion.com

SPIGO

Spigo is dedicated to develop and deliver electronic entertainment of high quality. Their goal is to offer the best electronic entertainment within the areas. Their company operates in at all times, while outperforming all imaginable competitors. This includes emphasis on creating entertainment products with long lifetimes, having a wide target group and operating with uncompromising security. With a team of experienced professionals, all the software is build by Spigo, in house.
Web: www.spigo.com
SUPERLENNY
SuperLenny was launched in March 2014. It was founded by a group of fans of online sports betting. Besides the possibility to place bets on all kinds of sport events, the casino also has a flash casino where most of the exiting Netent powered casino games can be found. With an online casino gaming license issued by the renowned LGA of Malta, SuperLenny provides players with a hyper modern and above all a safe and reliable casino gaming environment, absolutely worthwhile to check out.
Web: www.superlenny.com

SUOMIVEGAS
SuomiVegas.com site offers a great range of games. Casino games and good odds for betting! You will find all the most popular Casino games as Well as a wide range of jackpot games. Casino offers include video games, table games, blackjack, video poker, roulette and many more exciting games! SuomiVegas page is managed by the World Class Entertainment Limited N V in Curacao. The company also owns Gormadan Solutions Limited, which is registered in Malta (EU).
Web: www.suomivegas.com

SVERIGEKRÖNAN
Sverigekronan is Sweden’s fastest growing gaming site with lots of entertainment. You can play casino and sports in the comfort of your PC, mobile and even tablet device and best of all - when you win, you get your money instantly! The website is run by World Class Entertainment Limited N V, a company registered in Curacao with registration number 130387. The company also owns Gormadan Solutions Limited which is registered in Malta (EU).
Web: www.sverigekronan.com

SYSTEMATO
Systemato is a boutique online agency, staffed by internet marketing professionals and copywriters. They do all kinds of internet nitty gritty. They are in the business to getting things done – making your website work for you. They plan and execute all kinds of internet marketing efforts, managing social media campaigns, handling email marketing from A-Z, and writing top quality and SEO friendly website copy. Founded and run by Mark Debono, an online advertising expert and copywriter, Systemato’s goal is to help you ensure you get your players to the click and to deposit, using powerful copywriting techniques and experience.
Web: www.systemato.com

TECMARK
Tecmark is a multi screen digital marketing agency. They specialise in working in competitive sectors. They also build digital assets tailored to the screens your customers are using the most. They then drive traffic to those assets through SEO, PPC, Social Media and Content Marketing and they influence that traffic to convert with compelling copy and simple user experience. Tecmark is not the normal digital marketing agency but a young and dynamic company with a lot of ideas.
Web: www.tecmark.co.uk

THRILLS
Thrills Casino was founded by a group of casino enthusiasts with a clear goal: to bring colour and life to the world of casino entertainment. And it is not only the vast experience that they have gained from the casino industry that has taught them both what’s important to players and what could be done simpler and more exciting. It is also the way that they present things to their customers and the way they promote their ideas with an idea of entertainment. The journey towards a more entertaining and colourful casino experience has started.
Web: www.thrills.com

VIDEOSLOTS
The company aims high and strives to become a globally known and respected brand. Videoslots.com puts continuous work into its performance in order to reach the highly set goals. All this with more games, more payment options and exciting promotions and offers. Player value is one of the company’s most sought after assets from its clients.
Web: www.videoslots.com

VIVENDO
The Vivendo Group was launched in 2008 as the parent company of five furniture retail outlets namely Ideacasa, Quadra, Dex, Krea and their latest addition Poltronesofa. Although a relatively new brand name, the creation of Vivendo brings together over half a century of experience in the retailing and wholesale business. Dex offers total project solutions including raised flooring, softfits and lighting, partitions, school furniture and a complete office furniture collection. Their participation is a unique opportunity to see what they believe in and what they have invested.
Web: www.vivendo.com.mt

VODAFONE
One of the best known telephony service operators, Vodafone Malta, want to promote international connectivity and data centre services to those iGaming operators seeking to operate within the Maltese jurisdiction. Vodafone Malta will have its own stand to show that it is not just a continuation of Vodafone, but that its stands in a league of its own, providing solutions in the fast evolving technological world.
Web: www.vodafone.com.mt

YOBETIT
Yobett is an online gaming operator holding a class 2 licence authorized by the LGA and currently located in Malta. Having attended a lot of iGaming events throughout the world, Yobett knows how important networking within the iGaming industry is. Malta is one of the gaming hubs and they always felt that it was only a matter of time before someone took the initiative to start hosting such events in Malta.
Web: www.yobett.com
# CONFERENCES & EVENTS

## FOUR DAY PLANNERS

### DAY 1: OCTOBER 30TH

**WELCOME & PRE REGISTRATION:**

**VENUE:** HILTON BUSINESS CENTRE

Avoid the queues with this early opportunity for networking. Venue: Hilton Hotel Business Centre, St. Julian’s.

Delegates will be able to register on the evening before the summit opens, giving you the opportunity to beat the queues and collect your badge and SiGMA Magazine. Pre-registration will be followed by networking drinks and an ice-breaking poker tournament between 19:30hrs – 23:45hrs.

**19:30-21:00**
Collect your name badge, then join us for some ice-breaking drinks. Hilton Business Centre.

**20:30-21:00**
Opening speeches by the organisers, Mr. Joseph Cuschieri, Hon. Dr. José Herrera, Hon. Dr. Chris Cardona

**21:15-23:45**
Networking Poker Tournament: Portomaso Casino, Hilton

### DAY 2: OCTOBER 31ST

**EXPO & CONFERENCE BEGINS**

**VENUE:** INTERCONTINENTAL, BAY ARENA

Exhibition and Conferences opens. With over sixty exhibitors and two conference tiers, expect some serious networking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C-LEVEL EXECUTIVES &amp; SUPPLIERS CONFERENCE</th>
<th>AFFILIATES &amp; SEO CONFERENCE (starts late morning)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8:00-9:00</strong> Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9:10-9:15</strong> Welcome note from conference chair</td>
<td>Bernard Mallia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9:15-9:25</strong> LGA and Malta regulation update</td>
<td>Joseph Cuschieri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:25-9:35</strong> Government Foresight</td>
<td>Hon. Dr. José Herrera</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9:35-10:30</strong> Is Malta the ‘Silicon Valley’ of the iGaming industry?</td>
<td>Ulrik Bengtsson, Anton Cristina, Nikolai Livori, Hon. Dr. José Herrera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10:30-10:45</strong> Survey Presentation: iGaming and Malta: Statistically Significant Facts</td>
<td>Lynsey Schembri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10:45-11:30</strong> Networking Coffee Break &amp; Exhibition. Hosted by the LGA.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11:30-12:15</strong> Developing Trends in Online Gambling Regulation</td>
<td>Simon Planzer, Nick Nocton</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12:15-14:15</strong> Free Time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12:15-13:00</strong> Optimal iGaming Taxation (including Changes in VAT, Point of Consumption of Service)</td>
<td>Sarah Aquilina</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>13:00-13:15</strong> Best Practice for Responsible Gaming</td>
<td>Silvio Schembri, Samuel Gauci, Simon Planzer, Sarah Kostense-Winterton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14:15-15:00</strong> Bet, Call, Check your SEO activity &amp; Get the Best Possible Link: 30 Factors in 30 minutes</td>
<td>Lukasz Zelezny, Kevin Gibbons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15:00-15:45</strong> Sawdust Monetization: Increase Efficiency in your Traffic Tunnel</td>
<td>Yancy Naughton</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>15:45-16:30</strong> Networking Coffee Break &amp; Exhibition. Hosted by DEX.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>16:30-17:15</strong> From Nothing to Hero. The Route to Success Case Studies &amp; Seed Investment Opportunities</td>
<td>Joakim Stockman, Robin Reed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17:15-18:00</strong> Staying Afloat in Turbulent Times. What is Stopping you from Succeeding in Business? insights and Case Studies from Malta</td>
<td>Cathy Ashton, Benjamin Grech, Christer Jansson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18:00-19:30</strong> Networking Drinks, Tapaz, Hosted by VideoSlots.com &amp; SlotsMillion.com</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**DAY 3: NOVEMBER 1ST**
EXPO & CONFERENCE CONTINUED
VENUE: INTERCONTINENTAL, BAY ARENA

This is the final day of the summit: another full day of conference sessions and opportunities to network at the exhibition centre, the Bay Arena.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>C-LEVEL EXECUTIVES &amp; SUPPLIERS CONFERENCE</th>
<th>AFFILIATES &amp; SEO CONFERENCE (starts late morning)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:25-9:30</td>
<td>Welcome note from conference chair</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vin Narayanan</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30-10:30</td>
<td>Is the Single Market for Online Gaming a Pipe Dream – or is it still Achievable?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Michael Frendo, Simon Planzer, Joseph Borg, Sarah Kostense-Winterton</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30-10:45</td>
<td>Speed Networking Energizer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nathan Farrugia</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45-11:30</td>
<td>Networking Coffee Break &amp; Exhibition. Hosted by the LGA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30-12:15</td>
<td>Innovation and the role of Mobile Products in Boosting Gambling Growth.</td>
<td>The Bright future of Affiliate Marketing in a Real Time World</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Johan Styren, Simon Hammon</td>
<td>Ebbe Groes, Erik Bergman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-13:00</td>
<td>Data Sovereignty, IT Strategy &amp; Planning, Cross Border of Data &amp; Player ID: Legal and Technological implications</td>
<td>Online Reputation Management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Olga Finkel, Angelo Dalli, Anton Cristina</td>
<td>Julia Logan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00-14:15</td>
<td>Free Time</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14:15-15:00</td>
<td>Match Fixing: Media and Regulatory Shortfalls and the Need for a Holistic Approach</td>
<td>Optimize, Track, Convert, Engage in Facebook, Email Marketing and Start Milking your Current Database without Destroying your Existing Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesper Ramskov Jensen</td>
<td>Ray De Bono, Zak Borg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00-15:45</td>
<td>Emerging Payment Trends: Wallets, Crypto-currencies and more.</td>
<td>Smart and Legal Structuring of your Affiliate Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eric Benz</td>
<td>Patrik Alvegren</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:45-16:30</td>
<td>Networking Coffee Break &amp; Exhibition. Hosted by Frosmo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:30-17:15</td>
<td>Play for more Conversions! Consistent Revenue Growth via Conversion Optimization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mikael Gummerus</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:15-18:00</td>
<td>Fraud Prevention and Detection: Partner up, Outsource or do it on your own?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ingo Ernst, Monroe Schmidt, Joseph G. Cutajar, Trevor Degiorgio</td>
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<tr>
<td>18:00-19:30</td>
<td>Networking Drinks, Tapaz, Hosted by EXANTE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22:00-LATE</td>
<td>Official Closing Party, The Pavillion, Westin Dragonara, St. Julian’s.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DAY 4: NOVEMBER 2ND**
FAREWELL
VENUE: ST. GEORGE’S BAY

SiGMA is not over before making some last minute networking in an informal setting. We are inviting all delegates to sip some cocktails in the sun at Paranga Beach, St. George’s Bay, one last time before heading to the airport.

**DAY 1:** OCT 30TH
HILTON BUSINESS CENTRE

**DAY 2 & 3:** OCT 31ST & NOV 1ST
INTERCONTINENTAL, BAY ARENA

**DAY 4:** NOV 2ND
ST. GEORGE’S BAY
CONFERENCE 1: C-LEVEL EXECUTIVES & SUPPLIERS

JOSÉ HERRERA
Parl. Sec., iGaming, Government of Malta

JOSEPH CUSCHIERI
Exec. Chairman, Lotteries & Gaming Authority

CHRISTIAN CARDONA
Minister for the Economy, Government of Malta

SIMON PLANZER
Partner, Planzer Law

NICK NOCTON
Director, Jeffrey Green Russell Law

OLGA FINKEL
Deputy Chairperson, Chamber of Commerce

TREVOR DE GIORGIO
Managing Director, Greentube

ERIC BENZ
Global Operations Director, GoCoin

ROBIN REED
Managing Director, Guts

MIKAEL GUMMERUS
CEO & Founder, Frosmo

JESPER RAMSKOV JENSEN
CPO, Tipico

SARAH KOSTENSE-WINTERTON
Managing Director, KW Communications

ANTON CRISTINA
Executive Director, CSL

MONROE SCHMIDT
Director, Head Anti-Fraud Amaya

MICHAEL FRENDO
European Adviser, Lotteries Gaming Authority

JOHAN STYREN
CEO, LeoVegas

NIKOLAI LIVORI
CEO, Yobetit

ULRIK BENGTSSON
CEO, Betsson

ANGELO DALLI
CEO, BitÈ

SIMON HAMMON
CPO, NetEnt

BENJAMIN GRECH
COO, Engel & Völkers Sara Grech

JOSEPH BORG
Senior Adviser, WH Partners

SILVIO SCHEMBRI
Chairman, Responsible Gaming Foundation

INGO ERNST
VP Sales, Acuitytec

JOSEPH G. CUTAJAR
Managing Director, MIB

LYNSEY SCHEMBRI
Senior Statistician, Risk Management Services

SAMUEL GAUCI
Manager, Legal Affairs, Lotteries & Gaming Authority

JOAKIM STOCKMAN
CEO, Betit
CONFERENCE 2: AFFILIATES & SEO

KEVIN GIBBONS
Director, BlueGrass Interactive

EBBE GROES
CEO, EveryMatrix

ROB WETHERHEAD
Operations Director, Tecmark

JULIA LOGAN
SEO Consultant, IrishWonder

LUKASZ ZELEZNY
Director of Acquisition, uSwitch

JAN-WILLEM BOBBINK
SEO Specialist, Notprovided.eu

PATRIK ALFVEGREN
Director, Stearpoint

MARK J GALEA
Managing Director, Quad Consultancy

KATJA LAAKSONEN
CMO, Guts

ERIK BERGMAN
CEO, JohnSlots

RALPH TEGTMEIER
CEO, logobotixX Enterprises

YANCY NAUGHTON
Founder, HasTraffic/Want

CHRISTER JANSSON
CEO, Confident Approach

ZAK BORG
Co Founder, Anchovy Luxury

GEORG WESTIN
Founding CEO, Casino Saga

RAY DE BONO
CEO, Dmax

SiGMA2015 SPEAKER: ARE YOU INTERESTED?

PANEL MODERATORS

NATHAN FARRUGIA
CEO, Ultimate Performance

BERNARD MALLIA
Director, Equinox

VIN NARAYANAN
Editor-in-Chief, Casino City

MICHAEL CORFMAN
Executive Director, GPWA
JOIN OUR AFFILIATE PROGRAM AND START PROMOTING THE WORLD’S No.1 MOBILE CASINO

Contact us today affiliates@leovegas.com
The term ‘Content Marketing’ is being used everywhere at the moment. And that’s not just a perception. Take a look at the Google Trends analysing the growth of the use of the phrase ‘content marketing’ in search queries.

You’d be forgiven for brushing it off as the latest buzzword to grace the marketing and digital industries. But content marketing is getting serious. Investment is growing among big companies globally as well as smaller businesses. More importantly, it’s yielding results in sectors, including gaming.

**CONTENT MARKETING DEFINED**

There’s a host of definitions out there, with the most commonly cited being Content Marketing:

> content marketing is a marketing technique and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action.”

- Institute of Content Marketing

me and to my team involved in content marketing projects at Tecmark, content marketing is just the use of content to achieve or contribute to certain marketing goals.

These goals vary from client to client and campaign to campaign. In some instances, content is designed to drive a new audience all on its own. In some cases, it’s designed to educate and improve the conversion rate of an existing audience. And increasingly commonly, content marketing campaigns we’re involved with have objectives related to the acquisition of organic links to benefit SEO campaigns.

**CONTENT MARKETING IS NOT NEW**

Although the term “content marketing” has only recently become embedded into the vocabulary of the masses, the act of marketing through content is by no means new:

- Let’s go back 114 years to 1900. In that year, Michelin launched its ‘Michelin Guides’. Through the production of content advising drivers on maintaining their cars, they reached and engaged their audience
- In 1904, Jell-o distributed a free recipe book that they attributed $1 million in sales to over the following 2 years.

Brands have been engaging audiences and winning customers through content for over a century. But what has changed is the fact that we can now reach an audience through more media than ever before; mobile devices, tablets, computers, TVs, social media. We have more opportunities to find our audience than we’ve ever had before. And that is huge for the gaming industry too.

**CONTENT MARKETING IN THE GAMING INDUSTRY**

My background is in SEO and, as I’ve mentioned, much of the content marketing work I carry out has SEO related objectives. The gaming industry was hit hard by Google updates that penalised some of the poor quality link building methods that were used to inflate search engine visibility.

A huge number of operators and affiliates alike have fallen foul of Google for poor practices (though, of course, there are plenty of examples of such practices still proving effective). Building links without putting your site at risk of Google’s judgement means getting more creative. And Paddy Power represents a superb example.

Through the use of effective content, Paddy Power is consistently:

- Building new links to its website thus bolstering and building its already phenomenal level of visibility from a SEO perspective
- Getting people talking about its brand online (often in a positive context, sometimes not so much!)
- Building a wider social audience it can then market its promotions to whom.

The clever approach to content taken by Paddy Power is to cite powerful emotional responses (hilarity or, for the more easily offended, absolute fury). But ultimately, their content gets people talking. And talking online often means linking. Then their content has such a reputation in its own right that they build more links and traffic by people talking about just how good their content marketing is!

And while they’ve proven they’re not afraid to throw big budgets at content led campaigns (like taking out billboards in prominent London locations just to annoy an Olympics Committee) not all of their projects are big budget. They’ve got the balance right.

More to the point, their efforts are a big contributing factor, hence they appear right up there in Google (organically) for prominent search terms like “online betting,” and “sports betting,” amongst a long list of others.

**CAN ANYONE ELSE COMPETE?**

This is gaming. By its very nature, it’s supposed to be fun. So I, for one, don’t subscribe to the notion that this is a difficult marketplace to carry out content marketing in. It takes: Commitment; Creativity; and an approach that centres around the ability to measure impact.

So yes, I believe there’s space for us to see someone achieve the same level of success in content marketing as Paddy Power have. Whether that’s your company or not, well, that’s up to you. But like it or lump it, content marketing is winning the Internet.
iGAMING AND THE CHINESE SEARCH SPACE

RALPH TEGTMEIER AKA FANTOMASTER

My Popular gaming industry wisdom has it that the Chinese are the world’s most ardent and inveterate gamblers. Brick-and-mortar casinos have known this for generations and it was blithely exploited by the Portuguese when they were running their Chinese colony, Macao: still one of the world’s most renowned gambling hubs, easily comparable to Monte Carlo, Las Vegas or Atlantic City.

In the online world, things are a bit different, however. Not that the millions of gambling aficionados in the People’s Republic of China wouldn’t just love to pursue their passion via the Internet, because given the slightest chance they quite obviously will do so. But their government begs to differ: online gambling is forbidden in China and the authorities are going to great lengths to prevent it from happening.

Not only do they maintain an army of human censors that keep monitoring the Web for content they feel they need to “protect” their citizens from. Nor is their list of no-nos limited to igaming. First and foremost, this censorship is about political dissidents and activists, be they involved in promoting democratic reforms and human rights, freedom of speech and religion or ethnic minorities’ discrimination issues to secessionist groups. They are also targeting and censoring access to sites featuring what they define as being pornography and whatever else may find the Communist Party’s current disfavour.

They are, of course, also deploying increasingly more sophisticated algorithms aimed at automating this humungous sanitisation task. While only a couple of years back these efforts seemed fairly pathetic, they have really ramped up their standards in recently times it’s getting increasingly more difficult to counter their “Great Firewall”.

Does that mean the entire huge Chinese online market is hermetically sealed off the igaming industry? Not really: it’s perfectly possible to work your way around it all if you are willing to throw a commensurate amount of effort and resources at it. As we cannot offer an entire blueprint to work from within the confines of this space, suffice it to highlight a few peculiarities you’ll encounter when tackling the Chinese search space.

We’ll focus entirely on Baidu here: While it has admittedly experienced a dramatic slide in market share from 71.7% to 63.1% in 2013, with hot contender Qihoo jumping from 10.4% to 22.5%, it’s still the biggest and baddest boy on the block and, hence, your number one target for the Chinese market. (By comparison, Google – operating out of Hong Kong – sports a measly 1.6%, down from 11.25% back in 2010.)

DIY TOOLS REQUIRED

At the time of writing, there is no reliable let alone automatable rank checker available for Baidu. The ones pretending to be won’t scale and will only render haphazard results which makes them practically useless.

For our own “SEO Fire Dragon – Defeating the Great Firewall of China” service, working in Simplified Chinese, we had to develop a proprietary rank checker tool that met our requirements. Sounds cool, eh? Well, the downside is that we have to keep it updated all the time to accommodate Baidu’s many bizarre tweaks and changes. If you’re running your own campaigns, you’ll require something similar in order to gauge efficacy.
detect strategic and tactical weaknesses, reverse engineer Baidu’s ranking algorithms etc.

What’s more, rank checkers need to be scalable if you’re working with lots of domains (or keywords or, for that matter, clients). That’s typically the case with IP delivery (also know as “cloaking”), where you delivery one type of highly optimised page to the search engine spiders while either serving an entirely different one to your human visitors or redirecting them to another landing page altogether. This is critical when dealing with Baidu in order to compensate your campaigns’ inevitable attrition: when you lose one cloaked site to Baidu’s deindexing efforts, you’ll want to roll out another one (or, better yet, several) to replace it. This is only feasible with appropriately implemented automation.

RANKED – BUT BLOCKED!

One of the most disconcerting features in Baiduland is this search engine’s one-of-a-kind knack of ranking some of your pages quite well – with a really evil twist. So your page may sit comfortably in a no. 1 or no. 4 position for your targeted term on page one. Only when a user clicks the link, Baidu may pop up a window warning their client that this particular page is blocked because it features some malware!

Obviously, this is another factor you will have to investigate lest you or your clients rejoice prematurely, celebrating stellar ranking results which, alas, aren’t quite what they seem to be.

BIO: RALPH TEGTMEIER AKA FANTOMASTER

Familiar with IT since his high school days, Ralph (aka fantomaster) initially pursued a formal academic background in Comparative Literature and linguistics.

He has worked the Web as an active self-employed marketer in various industries, ranging from offshore finance and privacy protection tools to online publishing including book retail, software development and search engine optimisation since 1995.

Ralph is also the author of Casinos, a widely acclaimed history of worldwide gambling casinos published in German, French and English in 1989.

The logobotixX Enterprises “SEO FireDragon – Defeating the Great Firewall of China” and other SEO Service Programmes were conceived and developed by him and his new partners after having co-founded and managed for 12 years fantomaster.com GmbH, one of the industry’s leading developers of SEO software and services – dominating the search engines since 1999!

He is the mastermind behind numerous innovations and best-of-breed world class products such as fantomas spiderSpy™, the world’s most comprehensive and authoritative database of verified search engine spiders, now rebranded as: bseolized IP Grabber™; fantomas shadowMaker™, now rebranded as: besolized shadowMaker™, the bleeding edge industrial-strength IP delivery (cloaking) software; the 20 Links A Day™ and 10 Links A Day™ link building service (now defunct); the world’s oldest and longest running series of SEO cartoons (Dr. Search’s SEO Pep Talk), and much, much more. So he’s really been in it for the long haul! Feel free to check out his reputation on the Web.

Ralph has been featured in Business 2.0 and ClickZ and has manned the panels at several Search Engine Strategies conferences. He has participated regularly in the ultra exclusive SEO Roadshow and SEOktoberfest events, as he has spanned the conference circuit from Barcelona to Reykjavik, from Copenhagen to Munich, from London, Manchester, Leeds and Edinburgh to Kiev, Amsterdam, Vienna, Bucharest, Posnan and Berlin. He has given extensive interviews to just about every major publication in the search marketing world, and worked for major Fortune 500 companies and leading advertising agencies in multiple language search spaces across the globe.

The only child of a German diplomat, he was destined to become a global nomad and expat from his very birth, born in the Middle East and growing up in Africa and Asia. Accordingly, he now spreads his year across various countries ranging from the United Kingdom to Austria, Germany, Portugal, Malta, and others.
SOME OTHER BAIDU QUIRKS

Baidu rankings can only be researched reliable via a local Chinese IP.

While you won’t necessarily need .CN domains to rank your sites, you will require a lot of Chinese hosting and local IPs to achieve any noticeable ranking.

Subdomains work quite well.

Keywords in pages filenames don’t hurt.

As for all other major search engines, link building is still the be all and end all of any search campaign. Regrettably, we cannot recommend any link building networks here because doing so in public will inevitably result in their immediate demotion. So think of it as a trade secret.

Baidu seems to be innovation happy to a fault – meaning that parameters keep changing all the time so expect to be scrambling to keep up-to-date.

So is there any hope left to make it in the Chinese search space, be it for political dissidents, humans rights watchdogs or igaming operators? Absolutely – see the results screenshot of a very tiny but typical subset of igaming results, anonymised to protect our clients’ interests.

[Caption: Fig. 1. Achieving success in the Chinese search space is eminently possibly, provided you devote an appropriate amount of effort to it.]
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CONNECT ALL YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CONTACTS, GAMES, NEWS IN ONE EASY TO USE PLATFORM

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DO-IT-YOURSELF SEO FOR BRAND PROTECTION & REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Proven Proactive and Reactive Strategies

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT, BRAND PROTECTION, SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND SEO HAVE NOW MERGED INTO ONE HIGHLY DEVELOPED AND INTRICATE STRATEGY NOW BEING USED IN SUPER-COMPETITIVE MARKETS, SUCH AS ONLINE GAMBLING. THESE ARE PROVEN STRATEGIES USED BY MANY OF THE TOP AGENCIES IN THE WORLD.

In today’s dog-eat-dog world of online gambling, Brand Protection and Reputation Management has become one of the top “paid-for” services. Search Engine Optimisation (a.k.a. SEO), Paid Search, Email and Retention used to be the model of a successful internet marketing plan. In 2014 the spend on Reputation Management and Brand Protection has nearly equalled SEO and PPC spend for the companies that invest heavily online and offline to promote their brand. Add to this Social Media and you have a very full plate to be concerned about.

Brand Protection and Reputation Management are like driving a car; Better to be on the defensive, not the offensive side. Being proactive as opposed to reactive can mean thousands or millions, depending on your approach.

BRAND PROTECTION

Brand Protection is sometimes needed because someone is ‘cybersquatting’ on your domain name with a different extension (e.g., .net, .it or .com.mt). They are either holding you hostage over the domain or, as an Affiliate or competitor, attempting to draw traffic by using your brand. It could even be a disgruntled but SEO-skilled individual as I have seen many times. But that’s more about Reputation Management and I’ll cover that later.

Proactive Strategy – The truth be told, anyone can buy a domain with your brand in the domain or not, have advanced knowledge of SEO and rank for your brand name. Then they either build traffic and attempt to sell you the site, or they sign up as an Affiliate through you or a third-party and steal your traffic. PPC, although not as effective as in the past, used to be a goldmine for this type of strategy: They bid on your brand.

“Brand Protection and Reputation Management are like driving a car; Better to be on the defensive, not the offensive side”

The obvious solution is to copyright your name, regulate your Affiliate agreements and enforce the DMCA when necessary. The not-so-obvious solution is to use a domain monitor tool like DomainTools.com. This tool takes your brand (or keyword) and monitors any domain purchases that include it and notifies you. While this may not be the solution to the problem it gives you the information you need to know to help deter the buyer from DMCA actions. TIP – Google has a tool that will allow the site owner to manually remove a page/website. This may be a useful if you have fallen in to the next category.

Reactive Strategy - In most cases the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) can protect you against a direct violation such as using your copyrighted brand in their URL (website address), using your logo or selling your goods or services using your brand. Usually this can be accomplished without the “Lawyer Letter” needed in the past. In fact many blackhat SEO’s regularly send fake DMCA violation reports to big names like GoDaddy and 1&1 to get sites taken down for a short period. Unfortunately this ‘short period’ for some can amount to millions.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Reputation Management is necessary in many situations. Some of the projects we have worked on have deserved the negative posts, whether from an individual, an organization or a watchdog site. Others are simply victims of a competitors questionable practices meant to slander their rivals in an attempt to scrape clients away from them. In either case we approach them the same.

I have seen these types of seemingly rare cases escalate into full-blown war, fuel a blow-back that cost a company millions, and yes, even put some out of business all together.

The internet and the inception of Social Media has changed the playing field from a one-on-one phone call or email, to a completely public forum where everything is exposed to the public and can sometimes go very wrong for a company if not handled appropriately. We have seen teams of people posting bogus negative reviews on websites like ScamVictimsUnited and SiteJabber and these same teams visit the other members posts and “agree”, “vote” or “like” them to the point that it takes on a viral head of steam that gets completely out of control. These services are for sale right now.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT, BRAND PROTECTION, SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND SEO HAVE NOW MERGED INTO ONE HIGHLY DEVELOPED AND INTRICATE STRATEGY NOW BEING USED IN SUPER-COMPETITIVE MARKETS, SUCH AS ONLINE GAMBLING. THESE ARE PROVEN STRATEGIES USED BY MANY OF THE TOP AGENCIES IN THE WORLD.
Unfortunately in some cases the company does not deserve this type of slanderous feedback, but a disgruntled punter on a gaming site, a guy that didn’t meet his soulmate on a dating site, or a traveller that got a bad waiter one night and they decided to vent it publicly. Even worse is that in this day and time in an online environment a company receives good feedback from 1 out of 10 clients. They receive bad feedback from nearly 8 out of 10.

Then you have the overly outspoken drama-king, the “I’m having a bad day” guy, or of course the individual that no one could ever please under any circumstances.

This is where the old adage, “no publicity is bad publicity” just doesn’t apply.

Proactive Strategy – Of course a proactive strategy is difficult to incorporate if you don’t know when or where this negative feedback will show it’s ugly head, but there are ways to proactively spend time putting things in place that could help minimize any negative aspects due to actions taken, or not taken on your part.

The first thing that we do before undertaking a new project is to evaluate the damage that is done. Not necessarily the story or the credibility behind it. (That is left for when everything else has been done and you just need to pay them off if possible, or make them happy...but we have never reached that point...knock on wood).

Then we look at the top 100 search results and categorise them into the good, the bad and the ugly. Here’s the difference;

- The Good – Very few social media sites showing in top 10-20 positions. Neutral or positive comments/feedback or reviews - Proactive Campaign
- The Bad – A derogatory comment or single review ranking top 10 - Reactive Campaign
- The Ugly – Multiple negative listings in the top 1-20 results, multiple user-generated negative comments, bad reviews on review sites, negatives like WOT ratings and Google ratings/votes, brand-smashing websites created by competitors, etc.

- Reactive Campaign

The Proactive strategy here is to dominate the top 5, then the top 10, then the top 20 for your brand search. The way we do this is by dominating search results with a mixture of social media, press releases, optimized images, pdf renderings, doc files, sub-domains, subdirectories, multi-brand domains, multiple domain name extensions and aggressive posting on various other sites like Wikipedia that rank high due to natural trust and authority earned through Google algorithms.

The strategy here is to create and/or push your YouTube, Facebook, Twitter accounts, website images, press releases, reviews etc. up in to the top results because they represent your brand, and they will prevent a dual-listing from say a disgruntled client or an evil competitor from showing up in any search results. These Social Media sites usually adapt a ‘DMCA-style’ approach. So if you have a copyrighted brand it is possible to get a rogue Social Media account (your brand) back, or even get these sites/accounts taken down or banned.

Another proactive measure would be to monitor your brand on multiple levels. When your brand is mentioned you need to know about it...good or bad.

Google Alerts – Create a Google Alert to monitor your brand or website and email you immediately when it finds any results. This will be in real-time. When I have a new client the first thing I do is add multiple specialised and global monitoring tools;

- Technorati – Blogs
- YackTrack – Social Media
- TweetBeep – Twitter mentions
- Filtrbox - only delivers most relevant and credible mentions
- SocialMention - searches user-generated content such as blogs, comments, bookmarks, events, news, videos, and microblogging services

All of these services can email or send you an SMS immediately. This is the best time to handle the problem. But if you are notified of negative content you have unfortunately dropped into the Reactive Strategy category.

Reactive Strategy – At the end of the day there will always be the one that you couldn’t manage to budge a bit. We have had situations where somehow someone upset a person to the point of no return, and even the offer of a cash settlement wasn’t an options. We have also had clients that had ruthless competitors that would stop at nothing to become more successful or hurt the clients rankings or reputation. Posting bad reviews, pointing bad links, hiring voter-teams to steer a negative results or creating a website specifically naming & shaming you, all of these are real threats.

Unfortunately in these cases, when you have done everything else you can to protect your interests, you need to fight fire with fire.

The mission here is to get the top 10 results showing for a brand search and purge the unwanted.

This is where SEO comes in to play.

You have a few options; black hat, grey hat, white hat, and the natural order of things. We are going to concentrate on the white-grey versions.

Pointing bad links using SENuke, posting banned keyword links on 1000’s of blogs with Scrapebox, buying nasty links through services on Fiverr or creating your very own relevant website network, get it penalised, then starting your own little blackhat network is not what I want to tell you about...that’s Blackhat after all.

Google’s Universal Search and their endless updates (the last being the 4.1 Panda) mean that fresh, quality content from trusted sources are websites that carry an unnatural bit of Google Goodness and are considered to be more trustworthy and authoritative in Google’s eyes. Done tactfully you can create or push more of your desired results in to the top 10.

In a few cases we have even created sites that rank top 10 for a certain brand to fill the results with positive content.

Some examples of these sites are Facebook (Pages and Corporate), Twitter, LinkedIn, PRWeb, ABNewswire, Local Directories, YouTube, Instagram, Google+, Pinterest, Tumblr, VK (Russia), Flickr, Vine, Google Images, Google News, Wikipedia and PPC.

All of these referrer sites have the potential for a top 10 listing for your brand, but keep in mind that many websites dominate the rankings with their brand and brand strength. 888 Casino for instance dominates the results with alternate properties as well as subdomains. A search will result in these sites as the top 5 on Google;
There are very effective ways to duplicate this strategy and even take it to the next level and dominate the top 10 with nothing but brand and positive non-brand results.

CONCLUSION

Losing a top 3 position to negative feedback can be a huge blow. The top 3 non-paid results are funnelled-out to third-party sites like iWon, Netscape and AOL. Additionally they take that traffic from your website. This could amount to thousands of visitors. Losing one spot in the top 10 results can also result in an equal loss, especially if the culprit knows what they are doing and create a damning headline like “YourCasino.com is a Scam!”, so it is important that your strategy towards online marketing includes not only a budget for SEO and PPC, but also content, social media, brand protection and reputation management.

Many companies have watched their hard-earned foundations crumble or revenue earnings undermined due to poor Reputation Management and negative content and/or poor Brand Protection due to a lack of attention. Cybersquatting, a few indiscriminate Affiliate sites, and competitor efforts prey on these types of companies and look for the weak spots. Many could have been prevented. (i.e. UltimateBet)

Get your overall website health in check, monitor 100% of what is online in real-time, take control of the assets you have accessibility to, and have an emergency fund set aside for this sort of thing in case it comes to a worst-case-scenario situation.

At the very least I recommend you have a full-time internal or external Brand/Reputation Management Specialist in your operating budget. This person/Department/Agency handles everything I have mentioned here, but most importantly he/she/they have experience in negotiation and are very detailed. But most importantly they are not afraid to use hardcore methods required sometimes to win.

Put a plan in place now rather than later. Consider what a few months of losing 40% of your revenue is worth...This is your annual BPRM budget. It is significantly easier and faster to act proactively rather than spending a lot more on fixing the problem already in place. As an Agency 100% of our clients have consistently required problem-fixing rather than defending themselves against these increasingly common negative tactics. Like they say, “It’s better to have it and not need it, than need it and not have it”. Unfortunately the majority of our clients are in the reactive category. And that gets expensive.

This article was submitted by Vanguard Online Media, a specialist in Gaming SEO.
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Portomaso Gaming has launched a new digital platform for its live Casino and studio, which are now combined into one product, following an investment of €500,000. The investment also saw the creation of 25 new job opportunities in Malta with the company.

The new platform, which offers a complete bonus system, a new studio roulette with interactive background, high definition streaming and a dynamic games lobby, was unveiled today by the directors of Portomaso Gaming in the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary for Competitiveness and Economic Growth, Dr Jose’ Herrera.

Portomaso Gaming invested in the new platform to reach a wider audience and to tap into the mobile games sector which is a relatively new area of the entertainment in the gaming industry and makes a significant contribution towards internet based products usage.

“The new technology employed means by which the games can be accessed from both desktop computers and mobile devices and is compatible with all browsers and operating systems. Moreover, all streams are broadcast in high definition (HD) for a better experience all around,” the directors explained while launching the new platform.

Explaining the differences between the previous platform and the new technology, the directors said that while the old version was built on the technology available at the time analogue streaming hampered the operation. “Besides, the advanced features of the previous platform worked to our disadvantage since it restricted operators to a fixed games lobby, although the end user could open up to 16 games in one screen. The new platform was built with flexibility in mind to enable operators to design their own games lobby and all games are HTML5 compatible meaning that they will work seamlessly on any device.”

“Portomaso Gaming will be exhibiting at SiGMA and can be contacted on info@portomasogaming.com or by visiting www.portomasogaming.com.
There are a multitude of motivations to visit Malta, but there are 5 excellent reasons to inspire curiosity...

* Maltese History & Culture

Malta's café culture is the perfect way to absorb its essence by sitting in a sun-dappled piazza sipping a fine local wine, enjoying the warmth of its people and Mediterranean charm. Individual village festas or fetes run throughout the summer as well as a number of music festivals both modern and classical. For example, Malta Music Week alongside the Isle of MTV is vibrant and youthful, while the Baroque Festival occurs annually; its classical music bringing the island’s regal architecture and art to life.

* Gozo

Gozo’s archipelago is comprised of three islands. The second largest, Gozo, is a quieter reflection of its main sister island, and the countryside is home to a bygone rural charm. The surrounding pristine waters are ideal for snorkelling and diving, and nowhere is the island’s topography more impressive than at rich archaeological sites such as the Megalithic Temples of Malta that offer a glimpse into Maltese life dating back over 7 millennia.

* Valletta & Mdina

Viewing Malta’s capital city, Valletta, from across the harbour at sunset is breathtaking; the city set against the crisp blue sea, its sandstone edifices dramatically shifting through golden hues reflected by the fading sun. Valletta is a majestic sandstone city with fortified bastion walls boldly rising from the Mediterranean Sea. In 2018, it will take on the proud accolade of European Capital of Culture.

* Beach Life

Gorgeous coastlines mean beach life and Malta have become synonymous with one another; and exceptionally clear waters offer an ocean of opportunity. Glorious daily sunshine attracts sun-worshippers, warm inviting waters are a dream to swim, sail, splash and snorkel in. All this means Malta is firmly regarded as the Mediterranean's number one diving location with unrivalled underwater visibility of up to 30m.

Valletta wasn’t always Malta’s capital city, though. Known as ‘The Silent City’ the quiet and well-preserved Mdina was once proud of this title. The walled hilltop city at the heart of the island offers stunning views across the surrounding green plains right out to the sea. Wandering the intimately narrow streets of Mdina is like stepping back in time; as you explore the medieval paths your glance often catches yet more alleyways that open into quaint little squares.

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ARE LINK INTELLIGENCE TOOLS BECOMING OBSOLETE?

By Julia ‘The Irish Wonder’ Logan

Ever since Yahoo! stopped supporting the linkdomain: search operator back in 2010, link intelligence tools have become a necessity for most online marketers. With links being an integral part of any ranking algorithm (up to this day, despite all the changes and updates), knowing what links to a site is a clue into ranking successfully.

Traditionally, link intelligence tools have been used for competitor research – if you know what a successfully ranking site is doing (and doing = building links), you know what you can do to achieve the same results. As of lately, since links became not only a ranking factor but also a large penalty factor, a different need arose for these tools: controlling the quality of your own site’s link profile.

However, when we look at a site’s backlink profile, are we really seeing the complete picture?

Take a look at some highly competitive SERPs and then check the backlink profiles of the top sites ranking on the first page – you will likely see thousands if not hundreds of thousands backlinks. But every once in a while, you can spot a link profile like this:

Seriously? 620 links off 36 domains – and this site is ranking for a really competitive keyword? How did they do it?

We are missing one very important point here. Look further, and you will likely see a breakdown like this:

Redirects, here is the clue. And never mind that you are only seeing 2 of them, in all likelihood there are more redirects in this site’s inventory (I would not even call it a link profile) than actual links. Problem is, no existing link intelligence tool is good at detecting them. Why?

Backlink tools are just that – tools designed to discover a site’s links. Redirects are a completely different animal. There are various ways to redirect URL A to URL B, including but not limited to: 301 and 302 (implemented via .htaccess), meta refresh, Javascript redirects, all sorts of conditional redirects and so on.

To add to the hassle, there can be multiple redirects connected into a chain where URL A redirects to URL B which then redirects to URL C (this can go on for any amount of steps). Link intelligence tools have not been built for the task of discovering, dissecting and tracking down all different kinds of redirects, and although some of them are trying to catch up, this is not a trivial task and a lot of ideological as well as algorithmic questions have to be answered to build a suitable working solution.

The linking landscape has changed a lot in the last few years since Google has started its war on links. Ironically, the idea of punishing for low quality links...
has brought about an unseen amount of workarounds – not cleaner SERPs as Google was hoping.

Various redirects are just one of them. They haven’t been invented recently of course – but never before have we witnessed such a widespread use of redirects. To avoid penalties, some website owners have started using secondary throwaway domains, building links to them and then redirecting these domains to the main domain. If a site was caught by Google and penalized, all its owner had to do is remove the redirect. When buying aged domains with strong link profiles has become cheaper, easier and less risky than trying to do clean linkbuilding to your own site, more online marketers started doing just that – buying aged domains and redirecting them to their money sites. When redirecting a penalized domain to a new one began being perceived as a way to get rid of a penalty, this yet another reason to use redirects has further spurred their popularity.

But it is not just barely detectable redirects that dim the picture as we look at sites’ backlink profiles. The ability to disavow links, introduced by Google in October 2012, has been an enormous game changer. Initially promoted as “webmaster’s best friend” for cases when link removal (e.g. when trying to remove a penalty) was not possible, it soon started getting used and abused in ways never imaginable before. Good sites are getting disavowed along with bad sites, whole domains as well as individual URLs, and it’s all based purely on each site owner’s subjective judgement and often complete lack of understanding. The impact of the disavow tool is likely much larger than most people are willing to admit. Essentially, we are dealing with a giant black box: we do not know what goes into it, we don’t know what rules are applied inside, we don’t know if/when our disavow requests are granted, we don’t know how many disavow requests are submitted, we don’t know how many disavow submissions make a site “bad” in Google’s perception and how it can influence all the other sites linked to from it, not just the site on whose behalf the disavow request is submitted. By looking at a site – any site – there is no way to tell whether or not it has ever been disavowed. And that’s where it becomes scary.

The World Wide Web has been called the World Wide Web for a reason – essentially, it IS a giant web where all things are connected to each other. It is built with links, links between URLs are its living matter.

Long before links became a ranking factor, they became the building material of the web. Long after Google is no longer around, links will still be there. EVERYTHING is connected to EVERYTHING and depends on EVERYTHING. Destroy links, and the web will be destroyed. Come up with as many alternative ranking factors as you can, links will still be there and they will still be important because they make up the World Wide Web.

Policing the links is the worst thing anybody could ever come up with. First assigning the links a meaning that was never meant (links as votes), then distorting that meaning and making it impossible to even approximately evaluate it. Unless Google decides to open its black box and share the data, we will never know what is really going on inside – and no link tool can help us here. Google itself could probably provide an adequate link tool presenting clearly all these data – but Google historically has been notorious for hiding the link data rather than sharing them.

Does all of this mean link intelligence tools have now become obsolete? Absolutely not.

As I mentioned above, one of the important uses of link tools is controlling one’s own link profile. Getting penalized is easy, removing a penalty is a tedious job never guaranteed to bring the desired result, and it is solely the responsibility of a site owner to keep a close eye on what is going on with their link profile.

Case in point: negative SEO attempts. Just to be clear, negative SEO is a very real threat, although it is not only about links, and not every negative SEO attempt is successful. But because of a few articles that have been making rounds, many people believe negative SEO is as easy as pointing a few spammy links at a site, and that type of negative SEO attempts accounts for the largest part of all negative SEO ever becoming discoverable.

Link intelligence tools can be very helpful in detecting such link based attempts. A sudden spike in link acquisition coupled with unrelated to the site’s topic anchor texts are usually a good indicator of some of the more uncanny attempts:

Moreover, these signals, coupled with a specific URL being linked to by the attacker, often serve as a “signature” allowing to trace it back to its originator.

Link audits are a vital procedure that should be done not once or twice but regularly as a prevention measure. Most site owners only decide to audit their links after a penalty has happened or a site’s rankings have dropped for some other reason, when in fact this is already too late. Timely detection of an issue can help solve it faster and easier.

But any tool is only as good as the person using it. Link audits should never be run by inexperienced interns or
outsourced on the cheap. I have seen link removal requests resulting from poorly done link audits, ridding a site of its best links – not by some evil competitor but by the site’s own SEO team. Hiring an experienced consultant, ideally somebody specialized in link audits, is bound to be an expensive procedure, but there is no other way to do it properly. No automated tool kits, no amount of articles written on the topic of link audits on SEO sites can replace the experience, sharp eye and often even intuition of a true professional. We are dealing with fragmented information scattered all over the place in no logical order, and unless you can put it all together and read a site’s link profile like a book, don’t even attempt it.

The purpose of a good link intelligence tool is much more than just scraping the web and detecting the HTML syntax for links. A good link intelligence tool should be also capable of detecting and analyzing connections, dependencies, relationships between sites, evaluating links and other factors influencing the site and coming up with adequate metrics connected to existing search realities formally describing the results of these evaluations. The best link intelligence tools – such as MajesticSEO – are already evolving in this direction, but it is still a long and complicated way they need to make to get us closer to understanding the web better. The scientific foundation for this ongoing development is just beginning to be created and will no doubt involve the brightest minds.
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THE NEW CAPITALISM

For long, the last true and pure capitalistic business was trading the financial markets. It was, and still is, open for almost anybody. And with very little money, if you do it right, you can grow your money into billions of euros. Financial superstars like Warren Buffet are living proof of this.

And on the eighth day God created ‘The Internet’. And it was good. And everything changed with that.

Internet has provided us with many new ways to make money. Indeed, today an affiliate is an entrepreneur that can make lots of money from his or her bed at home just by using any simple computer. There is a lot of work involved – of course! There is a lot to read and to learn and a great amount of concentration and focus is needed. But it can be done! And it is done – by many!

“AND ON THE EIGHTH DAY GOD CREATED ‘THE INTERNET’. AND IT WAS GOOD. AND EVERYTHING CHANGED WITH THAT.”

TEMPTATION WITH A “SECRET” INCOME

As an affiliate you earn the right to commissions from online gaming companies. These commissions are paid out to you in the easiest way possible. None of the gaming companies want to make it hard to become an affiliate or to receive money from them. They want you to come to them and bring lots of clients. And that’s it!

Paying individual people for services is tricky, because it is normally assumed to be a form of salary. And with salaries come several tax responsibilities for the employer. The gaming companies don’t want to take any risks that they might get into trouble in the jurisdiction where they are licensed. Therefore, commissions are often paid out from special companies set up outside of the European Union and many times go into international e-wallets such as Paypal or Skrill. This is legal and it makes it very easy to handle pay-outs to affiliates.

Many affiliates love this and see their income as something outside of the regulated system. It is easy to think that “maybe I don’t need to show this money for taxation”. Well, dear affiliate entrepreneur: you are so wrong!

Your “secret” income is not secret. In fact, the gaming companies are extremely well regulated and all their pay-outs can be scrutinised by tax authorities, if needed.

TAX EVASION IS SERIOUS

Withholding money from taxation is not a small thing anymore. It is a serious criminal offence that can lead to both time in prison and large penalty payments, often in combination. It can break you for life.

The wheels of the tax authorities may seem to spin slowly. However, do not mistake this for a lack of action. People who do that have often found out the hard way how wrong they were. Tax authorities all over the world are getting smarter, better, and more informed. And once they sink their teeth into something or someone, getting lose again is almost impossible.

It is very likely that wide tax projects will be launched in the near future targeting incomes by affiliates that have been withheld from taxation. Similar projects have already been launched against professional poker players for example. You don’t want to get stuck in something like that.
LOST IN THE JUNGLE OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

If you want to keep the money that you have earned, you need to be smart and structure your business in an efficient and legal way.

However, this is not so easy to do. Suddenly you will find yourself faced with a never-ending list of matters to deal with such as: company registration, company tax registration, VAT registration, bank account application, credit card application, Anti-Money-Laundering Regulations, recurring KYC matters from banks, social security declaration, income tax declaration, salary pay-outs, annual accounts, annual returns, and more, depending on how you chose to set up your business.

In fact, it is easier to punch a nail through your nose than to navigate in this jungle of laws and regulations!

What you should ask yourself then is: How do I get this right? How do I nail it as an affiliate?

NAILING IT RIGHT

There are only two ways to get it right; either you set up your own company (there are various types) and go through the process with registrations and all the rest as mentioned above. Or you turn to a “Managed Service Company” that will take care of these matters for you.

Setting up your own company is the right way to go if you plan to employ other people and want to build an organisation and long term value. You may choose to do a lot of the work yourself in the beginning, but eventually you will find that you need people helping you with accounting and many other administrative issues. Most of these services can be purchased from local suppliers, if you don’t want to employ people for it yourself.

Working via a Managed Service Company is the right way to go if you plan to work solo or maybe co-operate with a few like-minded people. Each one of you can then work via the managed service company. A good Managed Service Company will handle all administrative matters for you and guide you in legal issues and tax minimisation while at the same time making sure that all is in line with regulations and relevant tax laws. You can focus on finding new players and guiding them to the right gaming company. The service company handles all the rest.

“In fact, it is easier to punch a nail through your nose than to navigate in this jungle of laws and regulations!”

- Patrik Alfvegren

Stop waiting for “later”. Do it right! Make sure to have a smart and legal structure of your affiliate business. And good luck out there.

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It is an undisputable fact that the only constant thing is change. Cliché as this may sound, it has proven to be true, time and time again and unless this credo is embraced wholeheartedly by individuals and companies alike, their future is sure to be doomed.

Taking the perspective of the business world, the changes wrought over the past few years have been significant – technological advances, the shifting economic and political landscapes, to name but a couple. Locally the effects are felt too, even if they are somewhat muted.

And whilst the business may appear to be geared and tooled up to cater for such changes from an operational perspective, the human resource is the key to success and repeated delivery of the desired results. This calls for employing individuals who have both the right skills and personality but also the right knowledge. The buck however does not stop there, as the acquisition of knowledge is not sufficient for an individual to gain employment but more importantly to retain it.

While it is widely acknowledged that learning on the job is part of one’s career development path, certain knowledge and skills can only be imparted via specifically designed training courses.

The business needs should dictate the type and level of training courses offered. Undoubtedly the number of training services providers and the variety of courses offered both by the state and private institutions has increased substantially over the years. The question lies as to how aligned are the business requirements and the training offerings. Even more important is how proactive is the training industry in designing and offering courses proactively to cater for the future needs of the business.

For an industry such as the iGaming industry which is relatively new to our islands, this is especially important, as it is a well-known fact that the sector has rapidly grown into one of the larger employers and invariably attracts those individuals aspiring for a successful career.

In this scenario, one cannot deny that for high-flying individuals who want to keep abreast or rather ahead of the game, being adequately trained and in possession of the required knowledge, is sure to come in handy.

In an increasingly globalised world, various training opportunities may be easily found via distance-learning, but one cannot underestimate the value of a home-grown course delivered on home-turf with local tutors who are more attuned to the local scenarios and environment. Such courses, more often than not, would also be presenting delegates with the local practical view.

The local NCFHE (National Commission for Further and Higher Education) gives further value to both home-grown and other courses as these are accredited and aligned to an internationally recognised accreditation system.

Whatever the training needs, whether generic or specialised and specific, it is of utmost important that trainees choose courses which meet their needs and which are delivered by reputable and reliable training providers as this enhances the value and weighting of the knowledge acquired.

If Malta truly wants to brand itself as the ‘Silicon Valley’ of the iGaming industry, it needs to ensure that it can provide a skilled workforce. James Grech sheds light on the importance of having specialised training courses that feed industry’s increasing demands in Malta.
Is your Business READY?
Technology has changed the way we live, work and communicate. "Technology is changing the way we do business" Vittorio Colao, Chief Executive of Vodafone has remarked. Indeed, our world is continually changing and it is becoming impossible to predict the future.

Our businesses are constantly being challenged by this rapid change. Our business models can become outdated if we do not constantly seek to embrace this change and adapt to it. Whilst greater efficiency and a mobilised workforce together with selective investments are still a priority, businesses can find it hard to keep up with systems that are forever improving and changing the way we work. The truth is that continuous transformation is today the new normal.

With 50% of decision makers considering making a flexible workforce a high priority and 75% stating that data security will be a high priority within the next three years, 82% are already searching for solutions that prioritise data security for remote workers.

The reality is that whilst a flexible workforce is crucial for survival in today’s transforming business environment, security of company data is becoming an increasing concern. Suffice it to note that 62% of all smartphone users do not password their phones. As a smartphone user you are 53% more likely to be the victim of identity theft than non-smartphone users. According to recent studies in the 21-32 age bracket 51% of employees would contravene company policies restricting the use of their own devices, cloud storage and wearable technologies for work.

The realisation of this transformation is a reality check that businesses today need to face in order to get their business ready for the challenges of today’s market place. Those unforeseen changes that all those businesses face in a future impossible to predict, is a question most businesses are asking today.

Vodafone has faced this transformation and has ensured its workforce is not only connected and flexible but also secure. The hot-desking, flexible arrangements as well as ensuring all employees can work from wherever and whenever have ensured the organisation brings the very best from its employees who are able to manage their family lives and work in an organisation that is demanding yet flexible.

The technologies that have been implemented company-wide have allowed for not only operational agility but better connected employees resulting in an overall better customer experience across the board. The Internet speeds reached on 4G together with the right security systems have allowed for such a flexible and secure working space.

Through its own experience, Vodafone has set up a new site www.readybusiness.com.mt that provides business the opportunity to transform their business into one that is ready to face the challenges that new technologies provide allowing for a flexible workforce which is not only connected but also adaptable to change.

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TALENT THAT WHISPERS AND TALENT THAT SHOUTS

CATHY FARLAM ASHTON

The rules for someone wanting a career in gaming are still under construction. Unlike careers where people learn by taking a degree, people tend to succeed in gaming by learning on the job. When a gaming business needs a new senior role, individuals tend to be hired either from within or from a competitor. With external hires, the costs are steep, and there is always the risk of a mis-hire. This creates a strong business case for growing and hiring talent from within.

Defining and understanding what talent looks like in your business is the first place to start. What’s your definition of talent? You need a model that fits your specific function, business ethics and goals. A useful definition of talent is someone who has the capacity to add extraordinary value from the same resources that are given to everyone else. But, as Anders says in *The Rare Find, Spotting Exceptional Talent Before Everyone Else*, some talent shouts, while other talent whispers.

Talent that shouts is visible and in-your-face, and you need to be cautious of it because whilst some of these people are truly talented, many of them are just good shouters. Talent that whispers is less visible because people are quieter and just getting on with it. These are the people who power away quietly and to whom teams often turn when the boss is away, but who may be little known outside their teams.

Talent can show up as mavericks, rockets or furnaces, but you need to know how to identify, deploy and manage them to do what’s needed.

Mavericks are creative risk-takers who spot opportunities and come up with clever ideas. It’s as if they are racing with a different map; they see what others don’t see and can find and drive solutions to new or unexpected problems. They are particularly useful for roles where you want people to see around corners, but they are often not good team players and can be hard to manage.

Rockets have supersonic energy. Point them in a direction and their drive and power outstrips others. The benefit is that they give you mileage; the danger is that rockets tend to burn the things and people around them. The other thing about rockets is that they struggle with consistency and it’s the manager’s job to help them burn perhaps slightly slower, but more steadily.

Furnaces can be overlooked in the talent conversation because their style is not brazen. It takes a listening manager to recognise and promote the value that a furnace brings, and one of the challenges is to help the furnace to avoid becoming obsolete. These are people with energy and supreme competence who are often the anchors in their teams, and it’s very tempting to leave them to churn. The challenge is to help them to remain current, open-minded towards change and focused on the bigger picture rather than only the task at hand.

By definition, talent can also be frustrating, needy and high maintenance, particularly in the early career stage although there are often periods in people’s careers where they go through the cycle again.

The level of skill that you and your managers need in order to have these talent conversations is not common, and there is great value in prioritising how to nurture the talent in your business.
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