



# IN PLAY ON DEMAND

MARTIN DE KNIJFF, FOUNDER AND HEAD OF BUSINESS AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AT METRIC GAMING, DISCUSSES WHAT OPERATORS CAN DO TO ENSURE THEY GET IN-PLAY BETTING RIGHT ON MOBILE

BY MARTIN DE KNIJFF

**W**hen you create an in-play product that works on mobile, it needs to deeply resonate with the user. With mobile you have less real estate to work with, and from that standpoint it's a much bigger challenge to get a product that really works for in-play.

We've seen sportsbook operators getting almost two thirds of their business from in-play markets, and

I think on average the industry is on course for about 50% in-play at the moment. What's interesting is that companies are spending a lot of money on customer retention, but I think mobile can potentially resonate with an entirely new demographic of user. Not only is in-play going to grow within the existing sports betting business, I also think it will add incremental revenue opportunities with new users that are not in the sports betting landscape today. I think there's substantial growth with in-play on mobile to come.

A lot of companies have taken their existing desktop versions and crammed that into a mobile solution, but that just doesn't work for in-play as there's a lot of latency, and latency is a huge issue for mobile betting. The fact that some of these products are still tremendously successful is a huge testament to how coveted the ability to bet in-play on mobile is.

We took a mobile-first approach, and looked at how people are using their mobile phones today and how to get a good user experience. We've completely separated the web layer and all the information that customers are being pushed to is cached on a web server at all times. There's no need to refresh the page and everything is pushed to the user.

The only time we go down to the database is actually when people are trying to make a wager. There's minimum navigation required to do anything.



On the desktop, people don't mind a lot of noise, but on mobile the main event is still the game that the customer is watching on TV. People want the phone to not take too much attention away from that experience, and that's critical. Placing of in-play markets at the top of the app is also critical. The fewer clicks and the fewer things customers need to do, the more successful you're going to be.

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### THE KEYS FOR MOBILE IN-PLAY BETTING

- **You have to go for more granulation.** Everyone today has an app for their whole package, but why have one app for all sports? If I'm a golf fan, I want a golf betting app. If I'm using my mobile, I can't multi-task. I can only use one app at any one time so what's the point of having everything packaged into one app? It's too generic and there's no ability to build a user experience for a particular sports fan as everything looks the same. With a dedicated sports app the customer can be just one click away from what they want to do, instead of clicking through an entire sportsbook app and navigating themselves around the app. It might take them 30 or 40 seconds before they're where they want to be, so the user experience isn't going to be as customised or optimised for one sport.
- **Think about how people use their phones.** It's about customising and optimising the experience and making it as intuitive as possible, and I think companies are way behind in that way of thinking.
- **Transact in real time.** We do debit and credit transactions in real-time through our own account system. We're integrated into the Playtech wallet because to achieve the micro-transactions we have to be able to debit accounts while they're making the bet and credit them immediately, kind of like how a slot machine works in recycling customer finances. There are few in-play markets today that offer that instant gratification. All of our markets are completely dependent on being able to credit 15-20 seconds after the event has been settled. To be able to do so, we heavily rely on Perform Media Group's Running Ball data for football. We have scouting of our own on some sports, but we'll rely



- 01** Engage the user, make sure they can find the markets they want to as soon as possible and make in-play markets more visible.
- 02** Address any latency issues quickly and refrain from repurposing desktop products. If a market settles in 15 or 20 seconds, any delay or lag will only prevent further bets.
- 03** Transact in, or as close to as possible, real-time and get customers recycling winnings in additional markets as if they were slot machines.
- 04** Go for granulation and tailor apps, where possible, to specific users who might only be interested in a select few markets.
- 05** Make apps as 'light' to run as possible and stay away from feature-rich apps that might be slow to open or load.

heavily on Sport Radar's instant data on tennis and some American sports. That's how we keep up with the instantaneousness of the product, and it's a critical part of making an adapted product for the user.

- **Lighten the workload.** Separating the web layer from the database has also made the product less 'heavy' to run. We can essentially do 10,000 transactions today running on a laptop as a server, and it's about getting the product as streamlined as possible for mobile devices. As an example, we have NFL markets on what the next play will be - whether it's a run or a pass - and that market might only be open for 15 seconds. Obviously there can be no latency, we can't afford that. Fortunately smartphones are getting so good - and it's only going to get better from here as far as networks go - that they're miles ahead of what we could do even six months ago and now WiFi isn't a necessity to have a good experience. Tablets have even more capacity to do this. ◆