

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS

SBTECH'S ITAI ZAK DISCUSSES MOBILE SPORTS BETTING TRENDS FOR 2014



With mobile phones now the web access device of choice over PCs, it's no surprise that leading bookmakers such as William Hill, Paddy Power, BetVictor and Bet365 all report that a larger portion of their revenue comes from mobile, in many cases exceeding 40% of their gross gaming revenue. Here, award-winning sports betting solutions provider SBTech's CEO, Itai Zak, gives his take on what lies ahead for mobile sports betting in 2014.

"At the moment, the challenge is to develop a mobile sports betting platform that's not only compatible, but optimal, for all types of mobile devices. Through 2014, improved JavaScript performance will begin to push HTML5 and the browser as the primary application development environment. As HTML5 capabilities improve, we'll see a shift away from native apps in favour of web-based apps. Native apps, however, will always offer a more sophisticated user experience, so it'll be down to individual bookmakers to decide what's more important: full compatibility or a more sophisticated experience. The aim, of course, will be to offer both, something SBTech has worked hard to bring our clients: HTML5 based speed and high performance in combination with intuitive design and full compatibility with all leading smartphones. But it's not just mobile phones that we need to look at. Global tablet sales will overtake PCs and laptops by 2015 so it would be wise to develop mobile sports betting software that's designed specifically for tablets for an optimal user experience.

Another growing mobile trend is live mobile betting, where an increasing number of punters want to place their bets while the action is unfolding. Bookmakers must provide live betting through their mobile apps as standard and give punters more reasons to choose them. Offering more live coverage with increased bet types and markets on live events will help to achieve this, but live content could also be personalised to present region-specific betting opportunities to the punter by default, straight from the mobile site's home page.

Since many sports bettors also enjoy poker and casino gameplay, a single sign-in is essential in achieving a seamless mobile experience. Bookmakers with casino and games products must ensure smooth and easy navigation between their products, with a single login and wallet. This is something SBTech provides for clients such as 10Bet (UK and global),

ComeOn (Europe), Ganabet (Mexico), BetFinal (Asia) and others with impressive results.

Additionally, punters should not be expected to access their account from a PC or laptop in order to complete certain actions that their mobile sports betting app is incapable of handling, such as depositing, withdrawing or simply checking certain account details, such as betting history. This defeats the purpose entirely, so we need to make sure that punters can carry out any action they choose from their mobile device alone.

Regulation is an important issue when developing mobile betting platforms, with the approved use of GPS and geolocation technology essential in determining bettors' jurisdiction location in order to comply with various guidelines. Some jurisdictions

are stricter than others, as we discovered when seeking approval for SBTech's mobile sports betting platform in Belgium, Denmark, the Bahamas, Serbia, Albania and the UK, but it's a necessary element in providing a quality mobile product.

Mobile betting is not solely an issue for the online marketplace. Existing land-based operations, sports betting shops, can take advantage of these emerging trends and offer their walk-in customers the chance to bet on all their favourite events even when they're not at their local shop. SBTech has had the unique experience of helping land-based operators bridge the gap between betting shops and online and mobile services and we've seen an increase in our clients' customer loyalty and retention as a result.

The possibilities are endless when it comes to mobile sports betting, and success will be

achieved by those who are capable of keeping up with emerging trends and giving the customers what they want, with a view to bringing exciting new innovations to the market and, ideally, setting new trends. It's something we strongly believe here at SBTech and I think our unique experience and state of the art mobile platform will enable us to keep pace with these trends."

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ITAI ZAK, CEO AT SBTECH

Itai Zak is the CEO at SBTech. An online gaming veteran, Zak previously served as an executive vice president of egaming products at Spiral Solutions and as the general manager and executive vice president of egaming products at Spin3, the mobile division of Microgaming.