

# IN-PLAY INNOVATORS

ROUNDTABLE >>



**ITAI ZAK**

- CEO
- SBTECH

Itai Zak is the CEO at SBTech, responsible for the overall strategy and ongoing operational management of the company. An egaming veteran, Zak previously served as vice president of egaming products at Spiral Solutions and as the general manager and executive vice president for gaming products at Spin3, the mobile gaming division of Microgaming.



**SUREN KHACHATRYAN**

- CEO
- BETCONSTRUCT

Suren Khachatryan joined BetConstruct as CEO in 2011 after leading sales organisations in a number of countries. Since then the company has grown into one of the industry's leading providers of gaming technology and data. He has a BSc degree in commerce & business administration from the University of Birmingham.



**ERIK LOGDBERG**

- CHIEF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
- KAMBI

Erik Logdberg started working for Kambi in 2005 (then Unibet Sportsbook), after he had finished his degree in electrical engineering at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. Before taking on the position as chief business development officer at Kambi, Logdberg headed up the in-play department and closely follows the sector's development.



**ERIK LORENZ**

- MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SALES
- SPORTRADAR GROUP

Erik Lorenz joined the Sportradar Group in October 2008 after time spent working at the German Football League (DFL). As managing director of sales, Lorenz is responsible for the operational and strategic sales and marketing activities for Sportradar's core brands – Betradar and Scoreradar.

► AS THE IN-PLAY REVOLUTION CONTINUES, THOSE IN THE EGAMING INDUSTRY CONTINUE TO INNOVATE AND EVOLVE THE SECTOR. WE TALK TO FOUR KEY FIGURES ABOUT ITS INCREASING APPEAL, THE IMPORTANCE OF MOBILE AND HOW IN-PLAY WILL WIN BIG AT THIS SUMMER'S WORLD CUP

**eGaming Review (eGR): What has the impact of in-play had on the business and how do operators need to adapt to this growing market?**

**Itai Zak:** In-play's largest impact has been on players' preferences. The excitement of live betting means players who used to bet pre-match now log in when the match is already in session, then bet dynamically, driven by game analysis and their instincts. As bets are continuously settled during the game, punters enjoy several betting sessions during one event instead of having to wait for the finish to see bets completed. Plus, they enjoy the variety of rapidly changing odds.

The prevalence of mobile betting is dramatically increasing live betting turnover;

easy accessibility means customers can bet while watching the match. SBTech's live platform presents one of the richest selections of markets with 30 types of sports, over 200 bet types and 12,000 live events per month where customers can bet anytime, anywhere.

**Erik Logdberg:** Given the dynamic nature of in-play, specialised risk management and customer intelligence capabilities are required to make this product sustainable, as well as front end development to ensure a cutting edge in-play user experience. The fast-paced nature of in-play, combined with an increasing demand for sports coverage throughout the day, is a very different product to pre-match.

**IN-PLAY BETTING IN PARTICULAR REQUIRES AN INCREASED INVESTMENT IN THE BOOKMAKER'S TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO STAY AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION**

● ERIK LORENZ  
● SPORTRADAR GROUP



**Suren Khachatryan:** In-play accounts for 70-80% of turnover for many operators with customers now enjoying live sport through several channels such as terrestrial and satellite television, mobiles and tablets and online live streaming. It is now the most popular form of sports betting and operators need to ensure that they are equipped for this growth by having reliable data, a good variety of sports/markets and efficient price modelling. Operators are demanding a fresh and dynamic approach. Our advanced, market-leading online, retail and mobile sportsbook platform and odds feed products cover more than 15,000 live matches and more than 50 sports per month, and offer a long-term solution for any type of sporting event from the World Cup to the Premier League to La Liga, Serie A, the Bundesliga and many more.

**Erik Lorenz:** In-play betting in particular requires an increased investment in the bookmaker's technological infrastructure to stay ahead of the competition. For this reason, we have introduced our Betradar Certification Program, which is designed to enable independent software providers to ensure the compatibility of their services with our solutions. Together with these certified partners, we can ensure the rapid deployment and implementation of our innovative solutions and therefore provide an extensive betting experience for players.

**eGR: How important is it for operators to be able to offer a wide range of sports and markets in-play?**

**Erik Logdberg:** The amount of live events and markets has proved crucial for customer acquisition since the introduction of in-play. Customers now expect to be able to bet on any live sports event they follow. The Winter Olympics was a great example of this, with end users of the Kambi product being able to place a bet on every event during the games. It is also important that operators have a constant supply of different events and markets to satisfy the more casino-style end user, and these events and markets must be offered through a product that can optimise this user experience.

**Erik Lorenz:** The challenge for bookmakers to further increase the number of sports and markets with live coverage will continue to be of importance. However, there is much beyond offering a wide range of sports and odds types. Consumers are demanding a multi-channel sportsbook experience, mobile access, rapid pay-outs, lots of choice and minimal fuss. A further challenge for online bookmakers is the

visualisation of in-play offerings in a user-friendly way.

**Suren Khachatryan:** To remain competitive it is extremely important for operators to have a good variety of sports and markets. Companies are now also visualising statistical data that is, in turn, further stimulating client interest for events where availability of live pictures is problematic and therefore opening up more opportunities. Customers are also increasingly demanding data from events in real-time and we help operators deliver that service effectively and profitably with one of the best technical and trading resources in the gaming industry. We offer the most competitive and comprehensive data odds feed for operators to maximise the capability of their own trading resource, while offering customers the best range of events, sports and markets.

**Itai Zak:** Offering a wide range of sports, leagues and bet types in-play is key; players won't register if they can't find favoured betting options. If they register but face limited markets, they'll generate less turnover or go elsewhere. With high acquisition costs, a certain turnover level is crucial to generate return investment. SBTech's offering is generating high value from players worldwide under different brands and verticals with increasing player values every month. Once a wide variety of events and bets are offered, with quick settlements made during the game, players place more bets, enjoy a more exciting betting experience and display increased brand loyalty. Amazingly, we're already generating higher margins on single bets in-play than pre-match single bets. Through continuously developing our live betting, SBTech guarantees the rapid growth of live turnover for any type of operator in any target market.

**eGR: How much has the emergence of mobile and tablet betting altered the in-play sector?**

**Suren Khachatryan:** The accessibility of sports betting via mobile and tablet has dramatically increased business across the online gaming sector as a whole and is a huge factor in the increase in popularity of in-play betting.

**Itai Zak:** Players want to bet while watching the match on TV or even at the stadium. SBTech constantly strives to improve user experience; enhancing mobile and live betting are part of the same goal. Of SBTech operators' turnover, 35% is generated on mobile, with double-figured growth month on month since January 2014.

Tablets present a specific market deserving their

**CUSTOMERS ARE ALSO INCREASINGLY DEMANDING DATA FROM EVENTS IN REAL-TIME AND WE HELP OPERATORS DELIVER THAT SERVICE**

● SUREN KHACHATRYAN  
● BETCONSTRUCT



**GOING FROM DESKTOP, TO TABLET, TO MOBILE, THERE IS A GENERAL INCREASE IN SPONTANEITY, SHORTER BUT MORE FOCUSED SESSIONS AND A HIGHER DESIRE FOR INSTANT ACTION**

◆ ERIK LOGDBERG  
◆ KAMBI



own dedicated solution. According to industry-leading researches, tablet sales are set to outstrip PCs by 2015.

**Erik Lorenz:** As competition intensifies and mobile betting and gaming continues to grow, the ability to provide high quality mobile in-play betting products is becoming vital to business success. Therefore, providing an engaging and interactive second screen experience on a mobile device is an essential tool for the modern sportsbook to increase the revenue potential, particularly for in-play betting.

But there are also other ways to make in-play offerings entertaining and user-friendly. We offer features such as in-play attack visualisation, ball spotting features and live statistics combined with integrated betting offers.

**Erik Logdberg:** With revenue increasing towards in-play on these platforms, operators need a product that can give the customers both the action betting experience they want and a huge array of markets per event, presented in a user-friendly way on a small screen.

The Kambi approach is to promote the most popular and dynamic markets, while ensuring there is little or no scrolling to expand any more unusual options that the customer may want, and all presented in the same layout as web-based play.

**eGR: How does in-play betting vary between specific devices?**

**Erik Logdberg:** Going from desktop, to tablet, to mobile, there is a general increase in spontaneity, shorter but more focused sessions and a higher desire for instant action and quick decisions. Specific tablet behaviour is quite interesting. While mobile and desktop may be used at any time of the day (accessible for players at home as well as in the office) and mobile emerging as players' main device of choice, the tablet is typically an evening and weekend device used predominantly as a second screen. From a design perspective, this helps us define the tablet user experience with the main ambition of being the device for big in-play events.

**Itai Zak:** SBTech offers all events and all markets on all devices, and betting by mobile and tablet is as easy as by web. SBTech tackles the limited size/resolution of smartphones with a state of the art user experience and intuitive navigation to present the betting offering.

Players can bet in a few clicks from any device; by mobile, that's just two clicks. Our

focus on localisation means a UK player opening his mobile sees England Premiership matches made accessible first. Plus, there's various personalisation options; highlighting favourite bets, matches and more.

**Erik Lorenz:** Today's bettors want to be a part of the action and demand real-time products at their fingertips. According to Deloitte's 'The future of the British remote betting and gaming industry report', almost a third of betting and gaming consumers have used smartphones and 16% have used a tablet to gamble online. However, there are still many opportunities for operators to develop even more engaging and innovative approaches.

**eGR: Has competition in the online betting industry increased with the emergence of more in-play markets?**

**Itai Zak:** Competition has definitely increased. Operators are racing to deliver more in-play markets and more intuitive interfaces. Everyone wants to offer a premium, unified user experience across all verticals at full speed. Providing a cutting-edge live betting experience means increased costs; more markets mean more feeds and better algorithms; a better user experience means developing ever smarter interfaces supported by multiple devices.

Operators find it harder and more expensive to keep up, let alone compete with market leaders. SBTech's comprehensive live betting solution solves this with both a premium offering and betting experience, and for football, SBTech is now the leading provider. Plus, we're regularly launching new bet types on live betting; very soon SBTech is about to release 'five-minute' bets on football. These rapidly settled, highly exciting bets will be a huge hit and should generate higher turnover per player.

**Erik Lorenz:** The online sportsbook market has become more competitive and the continued rise of in-play betting via smartphones and mobile devices has dramatically increased the technological demands and standards operators have to meet today. Therefore, operators are looking for suppliers that can help them grow their business by providing constant innovation and the highest possible reliability. At Betradar we enable bookmakers to succeed in an increasingly competitive market, while reducing operational costs and the risk of running a labour-intensive in-house operation.

**Suren Khachatryan:** The race to become the

**SBTECH OFFERS ALL EVENTS AND ALL MARKETS ON ALL DEVICES, AND BETTING BY MOBILE AND TABLET IS AS EASY AS BY WEB**

◆ ITAI ZAK  
◆ SBTECH



**A HIGH PROPORTION OF NEW BETTORS ARE OFTEN YOUNGER THAN REGULAR PLAYERS, AND MANY OF THOSE PLACE BETS ONLINE OR ON A MOBILE DEVICE**

◆ ERIK LORENZ  
◆ SPORTRADAR GROUP



leading contender is ongoing with several large brands vying for more market share and the number one spot across a number of regulated markets.

**Erik Logdberg:** The barriers to entry to the sports betting market have increased significantly; primarily driven by online, end-user demands on the in-play product. The in-play sector has been dominated by companies with the capacity to make big in-play investments taking market share, as it often proves too expensive or too complex for others to compete; not just in marketing terms, but specifically at the product delivery level.

Therefore, in order to be competitive, drive retention and deliver an exceptional UX, the only viable option is to outsource the sportsbook. This enables the operator to buy time and know-how and cuts operational costs to a fraction of those incurred building the technology and trading in-house.

**eGR: Has in-play betting attracted a different type of bettor?**

**Erik Logdberg:** Of course, there are many pre-match customers who also enjoy betting in-play, but Kambi has also seen the emergence of a new punter behaviour that is purely driven by the action-bet products. They expect a 24-hour sports bet where they are right in the middle of the action and able to keep turning over their profits when they win.

**Suren Khachatryan:** It has attracted sharper, smarter and increasingly savvy bettors, those looking for an edge and, more recently, cash-out players seeking to trade out a pre-match position.

**Erik Lorenz:** As betting and gaming has become a culturally more accepted leisure activity, especially in-play markets, the industry has greater opportunities to widen its customer base. A high proportion of new bettors are often younger than regular players, and many of those place bets online or on a mobile device, and are increasingly engaged via a second screen application or social media. This means successful bookmakers will need to develop the right campaigns and provide consumers with a new level of entertainment value – utilising all channels and media platforms.

**Itai Zak:** The excitement of in-play betting, plus the explosion of smartphone and tablets, has created new player segments. In-play has made online betting more widely acceptable and accessible to regular sports fans who find the whole experience friendlier and easier.

The fact that punters bet throughout the event with rapidly changing odds, has opened the door for new customers. These aren't sports betting's typical customers, but a younger generation drawn in by the dynamism of live betting and how it augments their experience of watching sports.

**eGR: How important will this summer's World Cup be for in-play markets?**

**Erik Lorenz:** Historical betting patterns show that the World Cup provides a major boost to all bookmakers, and therefore represents the perfect opportunity to take a new approach to drive more revenues through interactive in-play betting services.

Four years is a long time in technology and the changes that have taken place since the last tournament in South Africa have been immense. Therefore, one thing is for sure: the 2014 World Cup in Brazil will be the most social, interactive and shareable sporting event there has ever been. Mobile services providing live entertainment – such as Betradar's recently released WC2014 Live Match Centre – combined with fun elements offered by our soccer roulette or in-play minigames, can hopefully help to entertain a new generation of gamblers.

**Erik Logdberg:** The World Cup will be huge for in-play. For lower profile events, each Kambi trader handles many matches. For the World Cup, the opposite will apply; up to six experts per event will be pushing the boundaries of what can be offered in-play, from throw-ins to offsides, and keeping tournament bets such as golden boot and qualifying per group open during the matches.

**Suren Khachatryan:** The World Cup is hugely important. There is a far greater variety of markets compared to the last World Cup, many more mobile and tablet players and far greater accessibility to viewing the games live globally via TV and live streams. I would expect it to be the biggest tournament for the betting and gaming industry to date in terms of turnover.

**Itai Zak:** In-play betting will be everything in the World Cup. A huge surge in demand can be expected, as football fans all over the world place a constant stream of in-play bets. SBTech has prepared a special offering for the event with more in-play markets offered, a full set of 100+ live markets plus some entirely new markets being offered for the first time. This global event will truly showcase SBTech's product capabilities and potential growth offered for operators of any sector and type. ♦

**THERE IS A FAR GREATER VARIETY OF MARKETS COMPARED TO THE LAST WORLD CUP, MANY MORE MOBILE AND TABLET PLAYERS AND FAR GREATER ACCESSIBILITY**

◆ SUREN KHACHATRYAN  
◆ BETCONSTRUCT

