SOCIAL + MOBILE + CLOUD = RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?

Cozy Game's **Rob Wheeler** takes a critical look at the formula for Social Gaming success and questions the prescribed industry model

If only it were that easy! In order to be successful operators entering the Social Gambling market will need a specific strategy and the ability to provide leading games content online and on mobile with the ability to facilitate hundreds of thousands of concurrent players.

Let's break the above equation down and go through each ingredient in detail starting with "**SOCIAL**". First and foremost the operator has to have a specific strategy and audience in mind.

Whether it is a completely new brand detached from the operators' online real money gaming brand launched in order to generate a brand new revenue stream, or launching their existing real money brand into soon to be regulated markets to build player databases prior to regulation, or the trial of a brand new game mechanic in the social gambling space, or as a clear cross marketing tool to educate players on particular games and game play with a view to converting them to real money players over time, operators need to be specific. It is a competitive market and with umpteen casinos due to launch in facebook in the next six months you need a clear strategy and clear differentiation in order to be successful. A site that purports to be all things to all people will fail.

ROB WHEELER, Commercial Director, Cozy Games.

Having worked in the gaming industry for the last nine years, Rob has played an integral role at a number of highly respected gaming companies including IGT Interactive (formerly WagerWorks) and Virtue Fusion. He recently joined Cozy Games as commercial director and is primarily responsible for the development of commercial relationships with new and existing customers.

The successful social gambling game has to engage the player and be an exciting, interactive and fun experience with a certain "moorish" quality to it (think cashew nuts). It maybe stating the obvious but you want the player to come back for more, you want the player to have enjoyed the experience enough that they convert and purchase virtual currency in order to progress within the

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game structure and make their association with the game official. They are proud of the level they have achieved and want their newly found status to be recognised in the particular community they are playing in. Players want a rich playing experience, they want to be entertained, they want the gameplay to be interactive

and they want the ability to interact with other players within the community and within the game.

In a real money slot game: the theme, the game maths, the game speed, the second screen bonus features, the sound, the sound announcement devices, the win animation and the subtlety of this mix would define the success of that specific game in engaging and drawing the player in to the game play with a heavy weighting on the intricacies of the maths model as the players play more in search of winning hard cash.

In the social game the above facets are all still very important but there is no cashing out, therefore whilst there is an emotional thrill to winning, it is only one contributing factor. The players expect active interaction within the game, challenges within the game, reward in meeting the challenge and making the next level, increasing their status and progressing within the social hierarchy within that specific game and playing community.

OK, let's move on to "**MOBILE**". Social gambling or gaming is played on social networks, predominantly facebook currently. Therefore it follows that where ever a player can access facebook from you want them to be able to access your

game. This is key to maintaining and growing your player base - keeping the community alive and intact at all times in order to build player liquidity. There are a lot of statistics out there about the uptake of smartphones and tablet devices and the paradigm shift that is occurring as players migrate from traditional PCs and Laptops to iPads, iPhones and Androids: one in every two minutes of UK mobile internet is spent on facebook; mobile use of social networks is up 80 per cent on last year in the UK alone.

When provisioning the game on mobile the objective is to provide continuity of offering to the player; tablets and smartphones are getting better but there are still many constraining factors: device screen size, general usability, the quality of the 3G or 4G network (depending on location and territory)… The first thing to make sure is that you are provisioning the game correctly in order to deliver the best possible playing experience. Time on device on mobile is a lot shorter than online and therefore it is critical you reach the player effectively in that given time frame or you will lose them and they may well not come back. There has been an exponential increase in the number of social gambling players, now running at circa 60 Million, you need to able to capitalise on that. You also need to be able to reach your chosen audience across

> There has been an exponential increase in the number of social gambling players, now running at circa 60 Million, you need to able to capitalise on that. You also need to be able to reach your chosen audience across multiple device types, so make sure your chosen platform can provision for all popular mobile and tablet devices.

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Right, the third and final part; "**CLOUD TECHNOLOGY**". Quite simply if you want to compete with the likes of Zynga, who according to my phone right now currently have over 292,000 concurrent players enjoying Texas Hold'em Poker - then you are going to need a Cloud Based Technology solution. A scalable hardware infrastructure model that facilitates tens of thousands of concurrent players will no longer be sufficient. A Cloud Based solution that enables operators to scale in line with demand catering for hundreds

of thousands of concurrent players will be crucial to their success. It has the added benefit of substantially reducing capital expenditure and infrastructure costs. MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games) and the Video Games Industry (see XBOX Live for example) already make use of the Cloud Technology.

SUCCESS? With a specific strategy, compelling social games content and a scalable offering real money gaming operators will be well positioned to launch successful social gambling operations.

The marketing prowess of a top tier real money gaming operator coupled with a significant budget for marketing and game development makes for a powerful combination.

The much mooted convergence between gambling and social gaming is happening, it's now fact, take your pick of the multi-million dollar acquisitions this year for confirmation. Who are we to disagree with International Game Technology and Caesars Entertainment, there is business to be had. Now it is really going to get interesting, how the two industries actually interact with each other to drive gaming forwards will be fascinating, get involved and be a part of it.