

A HELPING HAND

iGB Affiliate magazine talks to **Fabrice Drouin Ristori**, Founder and President of Gambling-affiliation.com, about its new project to assist affiliates in improving their conversion rates.

Before we discuss your new project, let's talk about the current affiliate market. Are these particularly hard times for affiliates?

Well, we haven't yet seen any drop in the CPA commissions paid by gambling operators to affiliates, so this is a good indicator that the affiliate sector is not suffering from the financial crisis. I'm only talking about CPA deals here and think that this ongoing trend is due to the competition between all the gambling operators; big players want to attract affiliates (and, therefore, players) no matter what.

Presently, I'm in discussions with a lot of gambling operators and most of them are experiencing a small drop in their revenue; people are playing a bit less and accordingly, losing less as well, especially in the casino.

So if you consider revenue share deals, affiliates are impacted but I wouldn't say it's hard times for affiliates.

What about those entering the affiliate market for the first time – bad timing or a good opportunity?

Today's affiliate market is very competitive, so it's very hard to step into this market and do well without having at least a year of hard work and experience behind you. Previously, you had ways to make money in this sector with no big investment, but the fact is that today, you won't be able to compete with the top affiliates without serious and significant cash/time investment. The M&A (mergers and acquisition) trend we can see in the affiliate sector proves that big players are prevailing, and new entrants into the market won't be able to compete with them easily. So, whether there is a financial crisis or not, it's more the background of this affiliate sector that's not in favour of newcomers, except for those who develop in niche countries where competition is not important.

Is the affiliate market a good barometer as to the health of the industry as a whole (if affiliates are doing well, people

are still signing up to gaming sites)?

Yes and no. There is a slight difference between the two (affiliate/operator) sectors. Gambling operators pay big CPA to affiliates thinking that they are going to make a profit on the players in the long run, but it's not guaranteed at all. So a gambling operator might be at risk when the affiliates are not. So again, affiliates take advantage of the huge number of gambling operators trying to take steps in the gambling market, and the competition is pulling the commission high. That said, overall it's a good barometer – not perfect but quite good.

What do you feel are the biggest dangers/challenges that affiliates and programs face or may face in the future?

Legal issues (URL blocking, online transaction blocking), Google dependence and offline advertising opportunity for operators that might divert part of marketing budget from the affiliate sector.

You've developed a new project at Gambling-affiliation – talk us through the specifics of its design and what it is aiming to do...

The project works in two ways:

1) **Giving our affiliates access to the many affiliate tools we have created to enable them raise their conversion rate: odds comparators (with affiliate links incorporated directly), multi bookmaker banners which stick to the sport events (we have created "event banners" that show the future big sport events to bet on, but including links to different bookmakers we have affiliate campaign with) free content (sport statistics, tips, bookmaker reviews) and so on.**

We are entering into partnerships with different companies who are able to provide us with top content/tools that we can then give for free to our affiliates to help them improve their conversion rate.

2) **We are launching a white label affiliate solution (a turnkey affiliate website solution for people who don't know how to develop a website). These websites will have regular updated content, tips as well as the ability**

to publish Google optimized news and multiple affiliate links. Anybody will be able to step in this industry by promoting his white label website.

You can find more information on this specific product on www.gambling-affiliation.com/whitelabel.

For us the idea is to be able to enlarge our network of affiliates by potentially working with millions of people with no knowledge in web programming, but it's also a way for us to promote our clients (gambling operators) on these thousands of new affiliate websites worldwide.

What types of affiliates and webmasters will benefit most?

These tools are for existing affiliates who don't have the financial backing to develop odds comparators or pay for content feeds. It's also for newcomers who want to have an online activity but no understanding on how to do it.

Is there a danger that you'll be removing the advantage held by the more tech-savvy webmasters?

Yes and no, because we are signing up deals with these "tech-savvy" webmasters to provide content to our affiliates. So anybody with a good content/technical solution that might be useful to our affiliates can contact us to set up a deal they will benefit from as well.

Even if you are, is it for the good of the wider industry that more people are able to become quality affiliates?

Exactly – we need more people to become affiliates, especially in emerging markets where people don't have the financial means to develop affiliate websites.



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