

EDITORIAL

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GREENTUBE'S GABRIEL CIANCHETTO ON THE REAL VALUE OF SOCIAL GAMING



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Gabriel Cianchetto, president of market development at Greentube North America, explains how social gaming provides the ultimate marketing tool for land-based casinos – and now their sportsbooks too.

iGAMING TIMES: Social gaming has expanded rapidly in the last few years. Why has it been so popular with players, particularly in the US?

GABRIEL CIANCHETTO: In the US market, there are two forms of social casino gaming available, B2C and B2B. In the B2C form, there are national brands such as Zynga, MyVegas, DoubleDown and Big Fish Casino etc. that market directly to the consumer. There are also B2B offerings from companies such as Greentube, which has pioneered in this market with its Greentube Pro platform, providing a private-label, customised solution for casinos.

With that said, I believe that social casino gaming is so popular with players as it provides a great gaming experience for their entertainment dollar. Players can purchase \$50 worth of virtual currency that can provide many hours of enjoying a wide array of exciting slot content. In addition, social casino gaming adds many fun and exciting features originating in the video game industry that keeps a player engaged, such as levelling up, quests, in-game offers and social interactions, to name a few, and which are not available on real money gaming sites in the US market.

iGT: What are the most common ways social gaming can be monetised by operators?

GC: Casino operators in the US have a great advantage over a pure play social casino brand. All the major operators have established brands they have been building for decades along with existing loyalty programs and customer databases – this is a great advantage in a local or regional market. Operators can monetise social casino gaming at the top level through the sale of virtual currency.

But the real value of a social casino is it becomes a valuable marketing tool that allows the casino to extend its brand online to keep players within its own ecosystem. The operator has the opportunity to engage players online with special offers to drive that player back into the casino. Each player that walks back through the casino doors has a significant monetary value.

iGT: How could the advent of sports betting in the US affect the social gaming sector, either in casino sportsbook promotion, or player education and acquisition?

GC: Casino operators could and should have been using social casino gaming for the past five years to build up their online database of players. Virtual sports betting options could be included in the social casino mix of slots and table games to give a wider appeal to a different demographic of players. Right now, casino operators have the possibility to run three separate interactive lines of business including social casino, real money and sports betting in states like New Jersey and soon in Pennsylvania. New Jersey will be a great case study to see how this plays out as real money and social casino gaming are already live with sports betting coming online shortly.

iGT: In several states, sports betting legislation appears to be “leapfrogging” online gaming. Do you see this as a trend? Or is the betting buzz ultimately more likely to carry online casino games along with it?

GC: Let’s look at it this way. New Jersey passed legislation authorising real money gaming in 2013, not long after Nevada and Delaware. In the last five years only one other state – Pennsylvania – has legalized real money gaming. With sports betting, within one year of the recent Supreme Court decision, there could be as many as 20 states with sports betting legislation passed. The speed of adoption between sports betting and online casino games is tremendous. I believe sports betting could be the locomotive that pulls real money gaming legislation at a faster pace than before. Many states could decide to write legislation for both sports betting and online casino games at the same time, carrying the industry forward.