SIS

communicate

bringing betting to life

spring 2011

Phil Siers: one year on

Reflecting on an ambitious first year at SIS

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Odds on for a Royal spectacle on 29 April

After nearly 25 years since the last big Royal Wedding, the country is dusting off the bunting and digging out the trestle tables ready to celebrate the imminent marriage of Prince William and Catherine (Kate) Middleton.

Meanwhile the less patriotic among us will have to turn off the radio and TV for the next few weeks and find an isolated spot away from the Union Jacks to enjoy the bank holiday.

I for one plan to enjoy the day and hope that it will be a boon for enterprising bookies, who will be able to take bets on everything from the length of best man Harry's speech, to the maker of the royal dress. One thing on which I'm sure we all agree is that the country could do with a good knees up!

In the last issue of *Communicate* I mentioned that we were off to the enormous ICE expo at Earl's Court in January. We were delighted that so many customers could join us there, either for a coffee or something stronger afterwards. To our surprise, we even walked away with Jim Cremin's prize for Best Stand, so we must be doing something right. Find out if you were one of our ICE competition winners on page 6.

Unbelievably, it's already a year since Phil Siers joined us from Turf TV as Managing Director. Phil's arrival marked the start of an incredibly busy but productive year for everyone at SIS. Find out what Phil thinks to his first year (right) and get in touch to let us know if you agree.

In fact, we'd love to hear from you about any issues you'd like to share or things you'd like to see in the next edition of *Communicate*.

In the meantime, I'm off to order my Kate and Wills commemorative tea towel!

Helen

Helen Scott
Customer Relations Manager

Phil's year one report card

One year on from taking up his position as Managing Director of SIS's LBO division, we caught up with Phil Siers to ask whether he had achieved what he set out to do and how his second year was shaping up.

In his first interview with *Communicate*, Phil said he had three immediate priorities: to resolve the instances of fractured video, audio and data feeds; to introduce new technologies and to keep abreast of new technologies so that SIS can remain the 'one stop shop' for bookmakers.

Phil's first comments, though, were about costs: "I was really pleased to be able to reduce some of our fees this year. We reduced the cost of our data fees, our text display service and introduced a 'winter fuel allowance'. We hope that they went a little way to getting our customers through a very bad period."

Asked how customers may view these reductions in light of increases elsewhere, Phil explains, "The cost of rights keep rising because we're now in a competitive market. It's unavoidable, but as costs rise, so we look

to new territories for existing content to help offset these increases, as we have done with BAGS greyhound rights."

"We are looking at every way we can reduce the media overheads, and with luck we should see these costs stabilising in the near future."

So let's take a look at how SIS has done against the priorities Phil set last year.

Priority 1: Tackling clashing audio

Phil wasted no time in introducing a system that effectively dealt with one of the industry's thorniest issues; clashing audio in customers' shops.

The SIScom solution allows betting shops to give the punters a cohesive audio service with every important race covered, irrespective of who owns the picture rights, easing the shop managers burden, and consigning remote controls to the bin. The good news for customers was that SIScom was supplied free of charge to all.

"As an ex betting shop manager, I know more than most how frustrating this issue was, and I was determined to sort it out. Judging by the take-up of SIScom and the comments we've had, it's been a major success."

Priority 2: Introducing new technologies

Delivering another of his pledges, SIS unveiled its new text display solution at the ICE exhibition in January 2011.

Called *Multivu*, the new system represents a vast improvement in flexibility and capability over SIS's existing legacy systems such as the teletext-style TDC and even the more recent iSIS (see page 6).

Multivu is the new service platform for all SIS customers, "*Multivu* made a phenomenal impact at ICE - virtually everyone we spoke to wanted it. Planning is almost complete and we intend to begin taking orders in the second quarter of 2011, with a view that all SIS display customers are rolled out within a year. We would also expect strong demand from non SIS customers with legacy display systems," says Phil.

"We know that capital investment is the last thing on the minds of many of our customers at the moment. That's why we will make sure it's a financially viable option.

According to Phil, the new system represents a win-win for both SIS and its customers, "There are significant advantages to being able to concentrate on developing just one system. It means better technology, better presentation and better management of data. In the future it'll also mean other benefits for all sides.

Priority 3: SIS as a 'one stop shop'

Phil's final priority was to keep abreast of technology – and content – so that SIS remains the only service that customers need to run their shops. There's good news here too, with reports of increasing numbers of customers opting for a SIS-only shop.

More content

SIS aims to provide quality content for punters, whenever they choose to bet, whether it's at lunchtime, in the afternoon, after work or in the evening.

As Phil explains, "We've been working hard to improve the quality of the racing throughout the schedule. We're particularly pleased to have secured horseracing from South Africa. It's excellent quality and the time difference works really well. It also means that if the weather is bad again this year, we'll have more options at our disposal."

New virtual channel

At ICE SIS also launched its new Virtual Betting Channel. Developed in conjunction with Inspired Gaming Group, the move demonstrates virtual betting's shift from being seen as a 'filler' between live races in bookmakers' shops to a popular form of betting in its own right.

"The VBC virtual betting channel isn't a wallpaper service," says Phil, "it's a full-blown channel in its own right, with dedicated commentary with lots of different forms of racing on offer through the day, from horses to dogs, football to IndyCar. The channel content will achieve good margin for bookmakers, and is expected to bolster gaming revenue in the shops."

The new channel will be available worldwide when the channel launches in the second quarter of the year.

> "If you've had a system for 15 years and I can provide a new, better one for little or no extra outlay, why wouldn't you?" Phil Siers on SIS's new text display service, Multivu.

The year ahead

Asked about the prospects for the rest of the year, Phil remains cautious, "The last quarter seems to suggest that we're over the worst, but we can't be complacent. The fiscal changes have yet to bite and we could yet see another dip. As they say, you've got to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst."

Final report

So how does Phil's report card read? "On scale of one to 10 I'd give the year a 9.5. We took on a lot this year and we've delivered everything we said we'd deliver. I'm very hopeful this second year will be even more successful and that we'll all continue to benefit from our endeavours."

With that, Phil explains he has to dash off - today is actually his birthday and he's going to enjoy what's left of the day over a quiet meal with his wife. Who are we to argue?

"If you've had a system for 15 years and I can provide a new, better one for little or no extra outlay, why wouldn't you?" Phil Siers on SIS's new text display service, *Multivu.*

Reigning Betting Shop Manager of the Year tells independents to "go for it!"

Closing date for entries is Friday 27 May

As the search begins for the Betting Shop Manager of the Year 2011, the present holder, Michael Demetriou of Choicebet in Herne Bay, says he hopes his success will encourage other independents to enter.

Michael became the first manager of an independent bookmaker to win the award in the past decade when he beat off competition from hundreds of the country's top managers, including many from the largest chains, to lift the trophy in November 2010.

Commenting on the nominations for the 2011 award, which are now open – closing date Friday 27 May – Michael said: "I hope that my win has given managers of other independents the confidence to go for it. My advice is 'do it' and give it your all – this is your chance to shine."

As the reigning title holder, Michael has enjoyed appearing on TV, joined us in our private box at Ascot and has just returned from a trip to Dubai to watch the World Cup (pictured). He adds "I can't believe how quickly this year's going. Once the new winner is announced, I'll have time to reflect on the year and enjoy the fact that my name is in the hall of fame."

How to enter

For details of how to enter, please visit www.racingpost.com and follow the link for Betting Shop Manager of the Year.

If you require any further information, please contact Charlotte Bracken on 01908 865845 or email cbracken@sis.tv. All entries must be submitted by Friday 27 May.

The judging process

Round I: Candidates selected from the first round entry paper for each of the eight regions

Round II: Candidates complete second entry paper, from which 48 are selected

Round III: All 48 nominees are mystery shopped, from which 24 go through to the next round

Round IV: 24 meet the judges at Doncaster racecourse and the eight regional champions are selected

Final round: Panel interviews with the regional finalists and their deputy managers

Award Ceremony: Glittering award ceremony at the sumptuous Jumeirah Carlton Tower Hotel in Mayfair, London on Monday 21 November 2011.

New greyhound tournament gets off to a flying start

BAGS/SIS 500 gives sport a much needed boost

It may only have been going since the end of January, but such is the success of the new BAGS/SIS 500 tournament among punters and trainers that it's already been extended to the end of the year.

The new competition, introduced by Bookmakers' Afternoon Greyhound Services (BAGS) and SIS, provides significantly more prize money for greyhounds that have previously raced for limited rewards.

Each competition consists of three heats, with the first two in each heat going through to the final. The grade of competition is determined by the racing managers.

As Brent Dolan, SIS's Commercial Director explains, "These weekly competitions are really aimed at owners and trainers of mid-grade dogs who race regularly at BAGS meetings. They're the lifeblood of the sport. Initial feedback from the industry has been really positive."

All 17 BAGS tracks have been invited to participate in the BAGS/SIS 500 series, the intention being that each track will stage one kennel sweepstake every four months.

As well as the prize money, a number of changes have been made to the coverage of the race meetings, including the introduction of interviews with owners and trainers before and after races to bring the sport more in line with others. It doesn't end there, as SIS is also looking to increase camera coverage at all BAGS tracks, with a view to providing more close up action shots.

Graham McLennan, general manager and company secretary of BAGS, said: "We and SIS have been discussing for some time various ways of helping the greyhound industry to weather the present economic storm. The BAGS/SIS 500 directly assists those owners and trainers whose greyhounds appear regularly on SIS and will, we hope, increase interest and turnover on BAGS racing."

The BAGS/SIS 500 now has its own slot within the greyhound section of the Racing Post, which is supporting this initiative with pictorial and editorial coverage.

The inaugural race took place on 4 February at Swindon, with Coolamber Honcho romping home to claim the £500 first prize in the A3 stakes (see picture below).

BAGS/SIS 500: Where the money goes

A £100,000 package of kennel sweepstakes:

Heats

- Winners of heats earn £150
- Five runners receive £35 each

Finals

- Winner of each competition receives £500
- Winning kennels receive an additional £100
- All beaten finalists earn £50

SIS receives a warm welcome at ICE

ICE is one of Europe's biggest betting expos, attended by hundreds of the industry's top companies and thousands of visitors.

It was the perfect opportunity for SIS to reveal its new text display system, *Multivu*, as well as announcing a new, dedicated Virtual Betting Channel and SIS's backing of a new greyhound tournament (see page 5).

The exhibition was as a resounding success, says Phil Siers, Managing Director of SIS: "ICE exceeded expectations on all fronts. There was a lot riding on the show and it's a big commitment, but we were delighted with the results.

"ICE was a superb way of getting immediate feedback about the new products we're launching and the new services we're introducing. The response from customers was excellent, particularly for the new text display system, *Multivu*.

"It was also an excellent opportunity to meet our customers in a more relaxed environment, away from day-to-day pressures."

"The big question at ICE was 'what does it cost?' That's the good news."

Nigel Boardman, National Sales Manager

Multivu text display proves bigger is better

SIS's big news at ICE was the announcement of its new text display system, *Multivu*, which will be available in the second quarter of 2011.

Multivu is SIS's successor to the existing teletext-style TDC and more recent iSIS systems.

Unlike existing systems that require one screen per monitor, *Multivu* can display multiple text pages on single, larger screens (pictured, right).

Multivu improves the presentation of information in bookmakers' shops and reduces significantly the number of screens needed. It also offers much greater flexibility, giving full control of layouts and the number of pages per screen.

According to Nigel Boardman, National Sales Manager, customers thought the system was great, but all had one question: "The big question was 'what does it cost?' The good news is that if you're currently renting a system from us, we'll provide *Multivu* at little or no extra cost other than a one off installation fee.

We want to move our customers onto this system as quickly as we can and we're making sure that price isn't an obstacle."

The SIS stand at ICE included a number of eye-catching static and animated panels, all of which can be driven by the *Multivu* system

sales@sis.tv 01908 865 865

Virtual content gets its own channel

Reflecting the rapid growth in the popularity of virtual content, SIS launched a new, dedicated Virtual Betting Channel at ICE.

SIS will be making the new channel available worldwide when the channel launches in the second quarter of the year.

SIS's content partners for the new channel are industry leaders, Inspired Gaming Group, whose cutting edge graphics and attention to detail has created an ultra-realistic gaming experience.

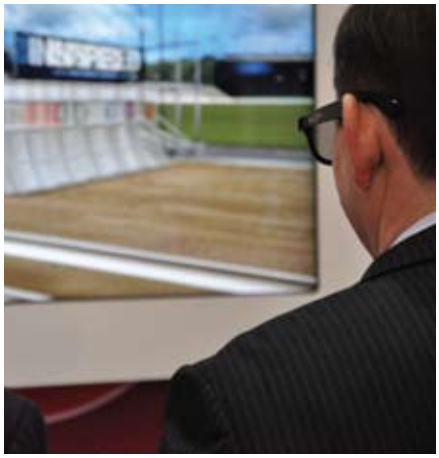
Horseracing, greyhound racing, football and IndyCar will be available from day one, with more sports being added once launched. Initially the service will contain more than 160 'live' events each day at 10-minute intervals, although this will reduce to every five minutes soon after launch.

The service includes a full, live commentary from SIS to promote each event. All data is included at no extra cost. The service will be available from 10.00am until 10.00pm (GMT) Monday to Saturday and 10.00am until 6.00pm on Sundays.

virtual BETTING CHANNEL

Grab your glasses, it's 3D greyhounds

SIS and Sony joined forces to offer visitors the unique opportunity to experience greyhound racing in 3D at the ICE expo. Shot track-side using the latest technology, the demonstration gave visitors a view of greyhound racing like they've never seen it before.



"We had an incredible response from the hundreds of people that donned the glasses, but bookies needn't worry – we don't see it coming to betting shops any time soon," says Jimmy Hanlon, SIS's Product Manager.

Competition Winners

Top Birdie Beaters

Dan Hague of Lincs Racing and Lee Holbrook of The Winning Post thought they were sitting pretty in our Wii 'Beat the Birdie' competition at this year's ICE expo.

That was until Andrew Croft of H Backhouse Ltd took up the challenge and ended up trouncing all-comers.

Tracey Watkins, Regional Sales Manager, is pictured presenting Andrew with his well-deserved bottle of champers (below). He also won two VIP tickets to the Community Shield at Wembley.

Talking about his win, Andrew said: "I was delighted to win the golf competition at ICE and look forward to the Community Shield at Wembley. Sadly the mighty Plymouth Argyle won't be there as this year's FA Cup Winners having gone down to a closely fought 4-0 defeat by Swindon in the first round!

"Still, I shall enjoy the champagne very much, as I will be toasting the opening of our new shop in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire."

The business card competition was won by Steve Fisher of Stan James Ltd, who also won a bottle of bubbly!

Tracey with Andrew

Beat the Birdie

Electronic invoicing takes the pain out of PANs

A simpler billing system to reduce paperwork for independent customers and make it easier to keep abreast of account changes is being introduced later this year.

The current annual Payment Advice Note (PAN) listing the monthly payment schedule in advance is being replaced with monthly e-billing which will reflect at a glance any changes in the customer subscription during the year.

Brent Dolan, Commercial Director said: "At the moment we issue a new PAN every time a customer takes advantage of a new offer, requests to trial a new service or has a price adjustment. For customers with one or a few sites, these can soon mount up and it's easy to lose track of which PAN is the most recent. The new e-billing system dispenses with the PAN and gives customers a rolling record of what they are subscribing to and paying for."

Being invoiced electronically is optional and any customers wishing to continue to be billed by post can do so, but we hope that this more environmentally friendly and simplified approach will appeal to the majority of customers. Watch out for a letter explaining all about the changes in the coming weeks.

Cricket match fixing debacle continues

As cricket fans around the world have been enjoying a lively and entertaining ICC Cricket World Cup the fall-out from the recent spot fixing allegations continue, to the dismay of punters and bookmakers alike.

Two of the Pakistan players banned by the ICC from international cricket for a minimum of five years, Salman Butt and Mohammad Aamer, have appealed against their bans to the Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS) in Switzerland ahead of criminal proceedings set to begin in the middle of March in London.

The pair, along with fellow player Mohammad Asif and their agent Mazhar Majeed have been charged by the Crown Prosecution Service with corruption and cheating in relation to the fourth test against England at Lords last August.

The ICC Cricket World Cup, meanwhile, has not been free from further controversy. The Australian team has already had to deny unconfirmed reports originating from the Indian media that their opening match in the World Cup against Zimbabwe had been the subject of close scrutiny from the ICC's anti-corruption and security unit because of the 'slow rate of scoring in the first two overs.'

Photo courtesy of Justin Sutcliffe

Ant and Dec drop in on SIS for Comic Relief

It's a hard life being a TV presenter. One minute you're minding your own business, presenting *This Morning* on *At The Races*, the next minute, chirpy Geordies Ant and Dec hijack your show for Comic Relief.

That's precisely what happened to presenter Bob Cooper as part of Ant and Dec's challenge to spread the word about Comic Relief to as many people in the UK as possible, while 'nicking' as many items as possible to auction.

Their unexpected visit to SIS's Corsham Street office in London (pictured above), was one of many surprises that day, which also saw them popping up on ITV's Daybreak, where they tried to take the sofa, before raiding kitchen items from This Morning and mugs and jewellery from the Loose Women presenters.

By the end of the day, Ant and Dec had broadcast to around 45 million TV viewers and radio listeners and bagged goods that went on to raise thousands of pounds for a great cause.

This year's Comic Relief raised a record-breaking £74 million on the night.

FACTS gets up earlier on Sundays

For some people, Sundays are a time to lay in, relax and unwind. Not for SIS FACTS.

From Sunday 10 April – the day after the Grand National – SIS FACTS will start at the earlier time of 10am, following requests from customers at recent SIS customer forum meetings.

Philip Siers, Managing Director, LBO Division explains: "Following bookmaker canvassing and completion of the latest series of customer forums, we have decided to provide a SIS service on Sundays from 10am that will include betting opportunities every six minutes through until the first BAGS race at 11.19am.

"This will give the bookmaker further opportunity to give their 'early bird' customers a complete service, and I am delighted to say in this instance, we will be able to provide this extended service free of charge."

The grass is greener at the Betview Awards

The Betview Awards have established themselves as one of industry's most coveted accolades, celebrating excellence and outstanding achievements in the UK and ROI betting and gaming industry.

Win or lose, the Awards are guaranteed to be a sumptuous, five-star affair, whatever the economic climate.

This year's event was held on 29 March at the grand Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London and was co-presented by Clare Balding and English rugby legend Will Greenwood.

The theme for the evening was rugby, with the giant ballroom decorated from floor to ceiling to make the 650 guests feel like they were sitting in the middle of a rugby stadium being watched by thousands of spectators.

The effect was completed with rugby posts and a floor made of real turf, which gave some ladies in high heels a slight sinking feeling!

The entertainment was provided by the superb Swingle Singers, the 'human orchestra', best known for their 'Welcome home' flashmob advert for T-Mobile and Siren, the dynamic female electric string quartet.

SIS was proud to sponsor three of this year's 13 awards again this year with SIS's Phil Siers, Brent Dolan and George Irvine doing the honours.

Chain of the year – 20 outlets or less went to G W Carrigill's (right, above). Chain of the year – More than 20 outlets went to Coral (right, below), while Paddy Power beat off tough competition to lift the Bookmaker of the Year title (above), finished off with a little Irish jig by a delighted Richie Meates.

For many, the night will be remembered for the Recognition for Industry Contribution, which was awarded posthumously to Chris O'Keeffe, who among many other achievements established the Independent Betting Arbitration Service (IBAS).

Chris's wife, Sandra was joined by their three children to accept the award, and a heart-felt standing ovation.

www.ibas-uk.com
www.swinglesingers.com
www.myspace.com/sirenstringquartet

How to get the most from your gaming machines

Part 2: Holding on to your machine customers

You've attracted customers to use your fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs), so how do you keep them coming back?

David Wallis, Sales and Operations Support Manager at Barcrest, returns to offer some easy and inexpensive tips for getting the most from your machines.

In the last issue of *Communicate* we covered the various ways in which you can potentially attract machine players into your shop.

Having attracted them, the next challenge is how to hold on to your machine customers. Here's how:

Tip 1: Location, location, location!

- Is the customer's eye automatically drawn to the machine(s) when they enter the shop? If the machines are not immediately obvious, you risk the customer going elsewhere.
- How far are the machines from the shop counter? Remember that certain customers may be less inclined to play machines if they feel that staff are 'spying' on them.
- Both CCTV and/or strategically-positioned mirrors can ensure you stay compliant without running the risk of customers feeling their privacy is being invaded.
- Do your machine customers have to walk past shop staff or other customers in order to play? Players tend not to like drawing attention to themselves in this way.
- Again, for reasons of privacy, avoid positioning machines in high traffic areas such as near to the front door, the toilets, drinks machines, screens, etc.
- Do you want to create a specific area for tour machines, or do you consider spreading the machines out (across the four corners of the shop) a better way of creating player privacy?
- Don't be afraid to regularly review your machine location and change it if necessary.

Tip 2: Think of your customers

- Machine stools provide extra comfort and may encourage customers to play for longer. Offering snacks and refreshments provides another reason to make them feel welcome.
- Ensure your shop is sufficiently ventilated whilst avoiding positioning the machines too close to potential drafts, such as open doors or air conditioning vents.
- The volume of the machines should be high enough to hear, but not so loud that players become self-conscious. If in doubt, why not ask your customers?
- If you have high rollers in your shop, you might want to consider providing them with their 'own' machine that is positioned away from the other players.
- Try before you buy: If a new game has recently arrived on the machine, allow customers to try it out in training mode first so that they get used to it.
- Think of competitions that can reward your more frequent players. Try to avoid one-day tournaments, as they tend to attract freeloaders which can upset your regulars.

Tip 3: Support your staff

- Your staff are your best selling point when it comes to the gaming machines, as they are in direct contact with your customers on a daily basis.
- By the same token, if they have a lack of understanding - sometimes leading to a negative opinion of FOBTs - then this can affect your customers' viewpoint.
- Ensure your staff understand how the machines operate, potential technical quick fixes, and the games and promotions on offer.
- Why not ask your machine supplier to provide face-to-face staff training? In this way staff can air their opinions to an expert, who can provide them with answers and tips/hints.
- Often players will raise points (both good and bad) in front of staff regarding the machines or games. By encouraging staff to relay these comments to you, you can attempt to address the issues raised and keep your customers happy - and coming back.

We hope you have found the first two in the 'SUS it with SIS' series useful. If there are any topics you'd like to see included in future editions of *Communicate*, please get in touch.

Towcester makes the most of its assets

Pushing the boundaries of the leisure entertainment sector, Kevin Ackerman, General Manager of Towcester Racecourse, gives us his views on the industry he loves and why he thinks Towcester could be the country's premier greyhound track.

What was your background before you joined Towcester?

I have always been into horse racing and I think it was very much from a slightly mis-spent youth: my Dad used to take me to all the local tracks. Funnily enough we never came to Towcester.

I remember my Dad used to give me a £1 a race and one day I won more than £30, which seemed like a fortune to me at the time. I think it was the buzz and the atmosphere involved in the whole day that captured me.

I studied Leisure and Tourism with Management at university but I didn't really know what I wanted to do but I liked the leisure side of things. Horse racing appealed to me so when I finished my degree I applied to the BHA Graduate Development Programme, however due to the demand of places I didn't get on the course.

When I moved back home, Towcester was my local track, so I contacted the course and hounded them for any opportunities. Fortunately there was and I joined as part of the ground staff to help me pay off my student debts during the summer. I was then drafted in to cover annual leave in the office and I think they saw I was more of an asset in that environment so I got involved in restaurant bookings, then sponsorship and hospitality and then I moved over to one of our sister companies, GG.com where I was charged with doing the commercial deals with all the bookmakers at the time, which included all the affiliated deals.

Then around six and half years ago I was offered the role of General Manager.

Free admission was introduced in 2002/03 was this something you pioneered?

It was Lord Hesketh's concept. I think there was a feeling at the time that we were a glorified point-to-point track, especially with the building work that was taking place. So we thought that rather than charge people to get in, we'd let them in for free to build up a following and introduce new people to the sport. We had planned to go back to charging but we found the level of people coming through the gates had increased five-fold.

Free admission increased turnover on all areas, but more importantly we were introducing a new clientele to the racecourse. Once the new stand was built it enabled us to market ourselves as a conferencing, wedding and a bespoke events location. It proved to be so successful that we decided to continue with free admission.

How did you think it was received by other racecourses?

I wouldn't say they would have been ecstatic by the move, but saying that they are probably trying to pull from a slightly different area to ours. I tend to find that there is a nucleus of race goers who will go from track to track that aren't particularly price sensitive when it comes to the smaller courses.

However I think with the people in the local area we are also competing with the local football and rugby clubs and other leisure pastimes rather then horse racing in general.

Why don't you think other racecourses have followed suit?

I can't speak for other racecourses, but I think they feel once they go free you can't go back to charging. I don't think it would work for everyone, but I genuinely believe that certain tracks on certain fixtures should go free. They could still charge for weekends and other key fixtures, but try free admission during the winter months when there is very low attendance.

Initially we didn't charge for any of our fixtures, but we've begun charging for certain meetings where the demand is less sensitive to price, for example, bank holiday fixtures, Boxing Day and Easter Sunday and so on.

We were getting in excess of 10,000, which was a struggle for our size of venue. So introducing a charge allowed us to get back to a manageable level of attendance of approximately 8,500 without losing turnover on other areas.

How do you feel the racecourse benefits the surrounding area?

I'd like to think we're a treasured part of Northamptonshire because of the level of facilities we offer. We're unique in the sense that we are the only racecourse in the UK to offer free admission and I think people enjoy coming.

I think the local government view us as the future for leisure opportunities for local people. Our aspiration is to exceed our customers' expectations, whether they come as a general punter, hospitality guest, VIP or owner and trainer.

Bookmakers both on and off course have stated that horse racing is losing punters' interest, how do you feel this can be counteracted?

Part of the problem is that people can spend their leisure pound in more ways than ever before. As an industry we need to move with

Kevin off duty

How do you relax?
Golf, watching horse racing & football
Three people you wouldn't mind being trapped in a lift with?
Muhammad Ali, Chris Rock (comedian) and Lance Armstrong (Tour de France champion)
Best advice you've ever had?
'You don't need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows' a lyric by Bob Dylan from Subterranean Homesick Blues
Favourite artist?
Arcade Fire, Kings of Leon
Favourite film?
Godfather I and II
Favourite book?
Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts or George Orwell's 1984
Favourite racecourse (excl. Towcester)?
Goodwood
Person you most admire?
Muhammad Ali

Dates for your diary

We don't wish to alarm you, but we're a third of the way through 2011. If we haven't seen you at one of our customer forums or an exhibition, here are some dates for your diary.

Where	Region	When
Chepstow	Wales/South West	Tuesday 24 May
Leicester	Midlands	Tuesday 6 September
Lingfield Park	South East	Tuesday 8 November

Contact Charlotte (01908 865845 or cbracken@sis.tv) to reserve your place now.

Service details for Easter 2011

Virtual product, 49s, and Rapido content as normal

All subject to alteration

Date	Early morning product	SIS main service	First race time on SIS main service	Last race time on SIS main service
Good Friday 22 April		10:00 – 18:00	11:03	17:47
Saturday 23 April	08:30 – 9:00	09:00 – 21:30	10:31	21:22
Easter Sunday 24 April		10:00 – 18:00	11:19	17:49
Easter Monday 25 April		10:00 – 21:30	11:00	21:22
Royal Wedding Friday 29 April	08:30 – 10:00	10:00 – 21:30	11:00	21:22
Bank Holiday Monday 2 May		10:00 – 21:30	11:00	21:22

Customer forums: two down, three to go

If you weren't able to join us at Doncaster or Kelso, don't worry, there are three more opportunities this year – but book your place soon as they are going fast.

The SIS customer forums are there for you. They are your opportunity to hear about the latest SIS developments, talk to us about our service and meet other bookmakers from across the country while enjoying the pleasant surroundings of some of the country's best known racecourses.

BOS Trade Fair

Following a very successful ICE exhibition at Earls' Court in January (see page 6), we have one more show booked in the autumn – the BOS Trade Fair on Thursday 6 October at Wolverhampton Racecourse.

We think that this is *the* exhibition to attend if you want to meet colleagues and suppliers (like us) on a more personal, informal basis. We've attended since it began in 2009 and are right behind BOS. If you are going, make sure you come and see us!

www.bosmag.co.uk/trade-show/show.php

Betting Shop Manager of the Year Awards

We were pleased that the 2010 Betting Shop Manager of the Year, Michael Demetriou of Choicebet, joined us on our stand at ICE. We've never seen such a broad smile; he's clearly having a great year, and deservedly so.

The search for Michael's successor has now begun as we open nominations for the Betting Shop Manager of the Year 2011. The deadline for entries is Friday 27 May, so don't miss this opportunity, whether you're nominating yourself or someone else.

This year's Awards will be on Monday 21 November. See page 4 for more information about how to enter.