



communicate

bringing betting to life

winter 2010/11

Herne Bay Hero

Independent scoops industry's top prize

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Welcome to the last Communicate of 2010 as we count down to Christmas, a New Year and a new decade!



Like the Grand National, Christmas seems to bring out people's inner punter, so we

can expect the usual bets on everything from whether it'll be a white Christmas (currently 4/1) to whether X-Factor's Mary Byrne will be voted one of the top 10 most influential people by Time Magazine (40/1)!

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It was great to see so many SIS customers at the BOS Magazine Trade Fair in Wolverhampton in October. The event was a resounding success again this year. We love the fact that it's one of the smaller, more intimate shows, hence we've already booked our place for next year.

On a personal note, I'd like to say thank you to everyone who has made it to one of our forums this year. They are such a great way to meet our customers and hear what you think to our service and the issues that matter to you. Our 2011 dates are on page 16 and we hope that you'll be able to join us at one of them.

One final date for your diary; ICE will be at Earls Court on 25-27 January. We hope to see you there.

In the meantime, on behalf of everyone at SIS, may I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Helen Scott

Helen Scott
Customer Relations Manager



Manager of independent scoops industry's top prize

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A stunned Michael Demetriou was crowned Betting Shop Manager of the Year 2010 at a glittering awards ceremony at London's sumptuous Jumeirah Carlton Tower Hotel on 22 November.





Michael is the judges' choice

Michael Demetriou of Choicebet's Herne Bay shop in Kent was taken completely by surprise when his name was announced by the Racing Post's Lee Mottershead.

After being presented with the award by former snooker star and racing fan John Parrott, an emotional Michael said "I'm absolutely gobsmacked! I don't think of this award as just mine as I have an amazing team around me who deserve to share this. I have to pay particular tribute to my marvellous deputy John Young and my cashier [and partner] Jo Brown."

"Jo has lived every second of this with me and she never had any doubt that I would win. I also have to thank Choicebet owner Julian Head for giving me the job in the first place. I'm really looking forward to the next 12 months but it's business as usual tomorrow because I'm still a betting shop manager!"

Michael can look forward to a fantastic year ahead, starting with a day out at Ascot in the SIS private box overlooking the Royal Enclosure, an all expenses paid VIP trip to the Dubai World Cup next March, along with

a busy diary of other commitments as he spends the year as an ambassador for the industry.

Handing over her crown, last year's winner Angie Bowers said "I'm absolutely delighted for Michael and he certainly seems to be a popular choice." Angie said that although the highlight of her year had been her trip to Dubai, she was also really happy to have had the opportunity to have met so many lovely people over the last 12 months, with whom she will remain firm friends.

Asked what advice Angie would give to Michael to cope with the busy year ahead, Angie said: "Enjoy every minute of it, but keep your feet firmly on the ground."

Attending the event for the first time, John Parrott said: "This really is an amazing day for the betting industry and the atmosphere in the room was incredible. All eight finalists truly deserved their place here today and it's so nice to see that they seem genuinely thrilled for Michael."


All eight finalists were presented with a specially customised front cover of the Racing Post.

The finalists

Kathleen Power (Ladbrokes, Tramore, Ireland) Jane Noble (William Hill, Cockerton) Irene Robertson (Coral, Edinburgh) Gareth Wolstenhulme (Jenningsbet, Birmingham) Michael Demetriou (Choicebet, Herne Bay) Mark Strefford (Coral, Liverpool) Liz McClafferty (Joe Jennings, St Helier, Jersey) Ajay Kumar Akkineni (Paddy Power, Wembley).



John Parrott and Michael Demetriou



“We’ll do whatever we can to help keep our customers afloat” says SIS.

CEO David Holdgate reflects on a tough 2010 for the industry and the steps SIS is taking to ease the pressure on its independent bookmakers.

Sitting in his Milton Keynes office, SIS CEO David Holdgate is in no doubt about what is occupying the minds of independent bookmakers; the state of the economy.

2010 has been a dire year for many bookmakers and the impact of the Government’s spending review and impending VAT increase is likely to make matters worse by taking a significant amount of discretionary spend out of the market.

David is quick to recognise the apparent irony of his concern for bookmakers, “Some customers may find it difficult to believe that we’re concerned about their finances when we’ve recently put our prices up by 7.8 per cent. I believe that our actions demonstrate just how genuine our concern is.

“Our price increases are a direct result of the increase in the cost of acquiring the rights, which is due to competition. It’s not something we like doing, particularly now, but it’s unavoidable. We hope that holding the price until 2012 will help.

Despite the price increases, according to David SIS is going to great lengths to ease

the financial pressure on its customers in other ways, “We know that our customers are always very focused on their overheads and the cost of our service is a big chunk of that.

“That’s why we have gone through a long process of analysing our own costs. Where we can take cost out of our business or earn more from what we’ve got, we’re committed to passing the benefit on to our customers.”

SIS cuts costs

Asked what that means in practise, David explains, “Take BAGS’ greyhound racing: we’ve recently introduced a new international service, which is generating more revenue from the same content. This revenue is being shared with BAGS, which can then be used to reduce the cost of the service for UK customers.”

SIS also recently announced a ‘winter fuel allowance’ (see page 7) for customers that pay an individual site charge for its data service. Nearly 97 per cent of customers will qualify for the allowance, which is in addition to the eight per cent reduction in data fees earlier in the year.

A brighter outlook for 2011

This year may have been tough, but David is more upbeat about 2011, “I think we’re reaching the bottom of the curve and that 2011 will be a better year.

“We’re looking forward to providing horseracing from South Africa again in the spring, and our co-mingling channel will give punters the opportunity to bet on great races from around the world. And the good news is that because it’s pool betting rather than fixed odds, it’s virtually risk-free to bookies.”

Next year will see the launch of a new technology platform that will significantly improve the quality of presentation for many independent bookmakers. Watch out for more details in the next issue of *SIS Communicate*.

Looking further ahead

SIS has one eye firmly fixed on the future, “We’re focusing on what our industry will look like in not one or two years, but a decade from now. Who is betting and what they are betting on is changing rapidly, so we need to be looking to deliver a service that drives betting for the new generation of customer, which may look very different to what’s available now.

“What we do know is that football is growing rapidly in importance. We’ve responded to that quickly by securing exclusive contracts for football data from the top leagues throughout Europe. We’re also creating a football data super feed. It’s very exciting to think where this may lead.”

Ten things you didn't know about David

He's a proud Yorkshireman

Born in Wakefield, David calls Yorkshire "the best place in the country."

He loves sport, but can't watch it

David supports Leeds Utd and the Leeds Rhinos (rugby league), but can't receive Sky!



He knew from the age of 13 what he wanted to be

But later realised that business was his calling rather than accountancy.

He's pretty handy in the kitchen

He makes a 'pretty lethal sherry trifle' and a 'mean cheesecake'. His style is 'traditional but with a twist'.

He'd love to do a 'Come Dine With Me'

His fellow diners would be Margaret Thatcher, Shane Warne (or any other sporting legends) and Jennifer Aniston.



He's a great collector of sports memorabilia

Favourites include a signed England rugby shirt from the 2003 World Cup squad and a signed picture from the 1966 England football team.

Simon Cowell presented him with a platinum disk

David worked with Simon during his time at Yorkshire Television. Simon produced the Heartbeat album while at BMG.

He's a voracious reader

David loves detective novels and showbusiness and sports biographies.

His most treasured possession is a book

Nelson Mandela's biography, *The Long Walk to Freedom*.

Tom Wilkinson would play him in a film

As everyone says he looks like him. He's also been mistaken for Terry Wogan.



SIScom switching is a hit with customers

SIS's free clashbusting device "a vast improvement" says Scotbet

Developed specifically for the independent bookmaker, SIScom is proving to be a big hit, with some 500 shops already using it and dozens more signing up each week.

But don't just take our word for it. Paul McClair, Technical Manager of Scotbet, said: "SIScom has made a vast improvement in shop now that both the SIS and Turf audio is combined without clashes. Punters are happier that the official course audio matches live Turf pictures.

"This is definitely a step in the right direction. Now that the audio is combined, what independent bookmakers require is for all racing to be combined on to the one channel."

Bill Hennessey, Operations Manager, Taylormade Betting said: "The SIScom unit has had an immediate impact on the service we can offer customers. Branch staff are no longer having to fumble with remote controls each time a TurfTV event is broadcast. The unit provides a seamless switch between audio commentaries and has been well received by our customers."

Installation of the small SIScom unit that drives the service is quick and easy. The equipment is connected to the SIS and TurfTV decoders and is controlled centrally from the SIS studio, where the voiceover team switches audio between SIS and TurfTV in line with the day's racing schedule. The result is that betting shop customers will be able to hear the live commentaries from all races.

Have you got yours yet?

The SIScom service is free of charge. A one-off installation fee of £75 (€81.98) plus VAT applies.

For further information please call 01908 865865 (UK) or 01 7783500 (ROI).



In the meantime, SIS is responding to today's challenges: "Our success depends on our customers' success. We know some bookies are struggling; it's always a sad day when anyone throws in the towel. That's why we're working so hard to keep our costs down and why we will do whatever we can to help keep our customers afloat."

Curriculum vitae

Age: 60

Born: Wakefield

Lives: York

Married to Kath with four children and three grandchildren

1968-1975

Yorkshire Copper Works, Management Accountant

1975-1978

Wharfedale/Rank HiFi, Finance Director

1978-1998

Yorkshire Television, Managing Director, Programmes

1999-date

SIS, Chief Executive

SIS backs Betview Awards 2011

SIS will be backing the best in the industry again in 2011 by sponsoring three award categories in the Betview Awards.

The awards, which have become a firm fixture in the industry's calendar, reward and recognise outstanding achievement, ingenuity and innovation.

SIS is sponsoring Chain of the Year (less than 20 outlets), Chain of the Year (20 or more outlets) and Bookmaker of the Year.

This year's awards will be taking place on 29 March 2011 at the Grosvenor House Hotel on London's Park Lane. Tickets are available from www.betviewmagazine.com/awards.

As always the night will be filled with quality entertainment, fine dining, a chance to industry network, as well as the awards ceremony itself.

Phil Siers, MD of SIS LBO Services, said: "In the current environment, it's more important than ever to innovate and focus on customer service. These awards recognise and celebrate excellence and provide a bright spot for everyone to focus on in the first quarter of the New Year."

Betview Awards 2011



FIRST
P



Football 'invades' FACTS and SIS+ screens

SIS Sports News takes over where Sky leaves off

Punters can now keep a track of football scores without taking their eyes off their SIS FACTS and SIS+ screens, thanks to the new SIS Sports News football service.

The service, which went live in August, sees the introduction of a football score 'videoprinter' along the bottom of the main SIS FACTS screen, while there's even more data on the SIS+ service, including pre-match statistics.

With Sky Sports News becoming a pay channel in June, the new service couldn't have come at a better time. Nigel Boardman, National Sales Manager, says it offers more: "SIS Sports News is specifically designed to maximise betting opportunities, so it offers more statistics than the Sky service did, such as red and yellow cards, half time scores and so on. And because it's included in the SIS service, we're helping our customers save money."

Mark Winder of Winbet likes what he's seen: "Sky moving its Sports News really affected me as I have Games Zones in my shops, so it was a godsend when the SIS service started. I think it makes SIS+ even better value and it's already proving a talking point with my customers."



Chris Clarke-McCabe from Total Sports is happy with the focus on football, saying: "I'm finding that football is pretty much taking over; a lot of younger customers are coming in solely for football, so this is a major plus. It's early days, but I'm expecting it to be better."

Betting on football has increased dramatically in recent years and attracts a younger demographic than horse and greyhound racing. By cross-promoting football on the SIS FACTS service, SIS believes that it will achieve the best of both worlds; horseracing fans will be drawn into a 'side-bet' on football and football fans can watch horseracing without missing a thing.

"SIS Sports News is specifically designed to maximise betting opportunities"

What next for cricket?

Pakistan's now infamous fourth test at Lords has left a trail of allegations, investigations, lawsuits and even death threats.

The match fixing allegations have shattered the reputations of those involved, their country and their beloved sport.

The saga rumbles on; in November Pakistani wicket keeper Zulqarnain Haider fled to London claiming asylum and went public about threats to his family and his fears for international cricket.

As investigations continue into the summer's events, questions hang over the sport: how widespread is this practise? Can cricket repair the damage done to its reputation and what does this mean for other sports?

The implications for our industry are potentially enormous. Technology may even exacerbate the problem as in-running betting

becomes increasingly sophisticated, with punters able to bet on ever more discrete aspects of a match, whether it's a particular 'no ball' or who'll get the next yellow card.

For customers to place a bet with their hard-earned cash, trust is everything. Scandals are nothing new in our industry, but rarely have they been so high profile or damaging.

What do you think to what has happened? Has it affected your business? Is it yesterday's news, or will it have long-term implications? What do your customers say about it? Let us know what you think.



SIS FACTS to start earlier on Saturdays

Lots of customers have told us that they start earlier on Saturdays and asked whether the SIS FACTS service can too.

We're delighted to say that it can. As of 30 October the SIS FACTS service now starts at the earlier time of 9am on Saturdays for no extra charge.

The change in times is a direct result of the feedback from the first ever SIS LBO User Group meeting, which was held at the BOS Trade Fair in October.

Brent Dolan, Commercial Director, SIS LBO Services said: "We're always looking for ways to improve our service and this was a great suggestion, which we're more than happy to implement. It's another good example of the tangible changes that happen as a result of our user groups and forums. We'd love to hear how customers find having SIS FACTS available earlier."

The earlier service will include top quality Australian thoroughbred racing, which is exclusive to SIS, as well as supporting virtual content. Drop us a line to tell us what you think to the new time and you could even win a bottle of champagne; email Charlotte on CBracken@sis.tv or call 01908 865845

Allowance offers some winter warmth

Here's some news that should offer some winter cheer: SIS is offering independent customers that take its data service a one-off rebate worth £200 this year only.

to cancellations due to bad weather, as we saw last year.

Commenting on the new allowance, Phil Siers, Managing Director of SIS's LBO division, said, "We're working hard to find ways to alleviate the financial pressures on our customers, particularly during the quietest months of the year.

"We know that in the big scheme of things it's a drop in the ocean, but it's a way of demonstrating that we're on our customers' side. Around 97 per cent of our customers will qualify for the rebate and I hope that it'll be warmly received."

Eligible customers will receive the allowance automatically, which will be applied in three instalments between December 2010 and February 2011.

Aside from a peak in betting around Christmas, December to February is traditionally a quiet period for bookmakers. To add to the frustration, domestic horseracing is particularly vulnerable

“Whatever you tell us you want, we’ll try to achieve.”

Phil Siers, MD of SIS’s LBO division, set the scene at the first SIS User Group Committee, telling the dozen committee members representing a wide spectrum of the bookmaking industry, that he would do whatever he could to deliver what they ask him to do.

SIS chose the BOS Trade Fair at the Wolverhampton racecourse on 7 October for the inaugural User Group Committee Meeting and plans to hold them on a six monthly basis.

The User Group meetings complement the existing forums, providing a more formal dialogue between SIS with the specific goal of discussing the service and finding ways in which it can be improved.

Let’s bring you up to speed on what has happened since:

Question: Could a third BAGS greyhound meeting be added to the Winter Evening Service (WES) on nights when there is only one UK horseracing meeting scheduled?

Response: Yes. We have agreed with BAGS to include five additional fixtures leading up to the New Year (see below) at no extra cost. At its Council meeting, BAGS has also agreed to do the same in January-February and November-December 2011.

Additional BAGS races, 6.33pm - 9.12pm

November 11, 18, 25	Monmore
December 2	Monmore
December 17	Poole

Question: Could a review of the Breeders’ Cup be shown on Sunday mornings?

Response: This year we secured exclusive rights to broadcast the Breeders’ Cup meeting from the USA on the evening of Friday 5 and Saturday 6 November. We also provided a review program, which was transmitted to all customers on Sunday 7 November at 10.30am.

It is worth noting that when Turf secured these rights last year they chose to charge customers on a ‘pay-per-view’ basis.

Question: Can any more be done to improve scheduling in order to reduce clashing times for races?

Response: We met TTV again on 19 October to discuss this issue and see how we can work together to improve the situation. It has been agreed to continue dialogue, which will hopefully lead to proposals that will be forwarded to the BHA Council. It is also hoped we can involve Racing for Change in this process.

Question: Is there a demand for SIS FACTS to start earlier in the morning?

Response: Brent Dolan, SIS Commercial Director, suggested that the SIS FACTS service could start earlier on Saturdays – at no extra cost - using racing from Australia plus virtual content, if there was an appetite for it.

Several bookmakers, as well as Sharon Byrne, Chair of the Irish Bookmakers Association, and Will Roseff, Director ABB, said that 9.30 would be an acceptable start time on weekdays, and 9.00am on Saturdays. As of 30 October, SIS FACTS began at the earlier time of 9am on a Saturday.

Question: Can we improve the quality and presentation of greyhound racing?

Response: Phil Siers said that efforts to improve overall picture quality are underway and that in particular, SIS wants to improve the quality and presentation of BAGS racing, the presence of which is growing in Europe. SIS is working with BAGS and the greyhound tracks to review camera angles and introduce new ones, replace hardware where required and look at ways to enhance the general presentation of greyhound meetings to encourage more interest and betting.

Next User Group Committee meeting:

The next User Group is planned for March 2011. If you have a question that you would like raised, please contact Brent Dolan on bdolan@sis.tv.



RACING POST BETTING SHOP DISPLAY

£1.90 inc VAT
Can only be purchased with
the Racing Post newspaper

TODAY'S RUNNERS - MARKER SHEET

KEMPTON	LUDLOW	FFOS LAS	HORSES
12:30 KEM	12:40 LUD	12:50 Ffo	A Bridge Too Far - Lad 3.55
1 Back To Back	1 Jay J	1 First Fandango	Accolium - Lad 1.10
2 Red Star	2 Natures Rebel	2 Kalcimore	Adajal - Lad 2.15
3 Beau C	3 Badgers C	3 Kilhusty Fancy	Admiral Dundee - Kem 2.35
4 Bobo V	4 ...	4 Direct Flo	Alyane Breeze - Flo 1.20
5 Calusa	5 ...	5 ...	Amber Brook - Kem 1.30
6 Captain	6 ...	6 ...	Archer - Kem 2.85
7 George	7 ...	7 ...	Backlog Gale - Flo 3.35
8 Patrick Dec	8 ...	8 ...	Back To Back - Kem 12.30
9 Pere Blanc	9 ...	9 ...	Baron - Lad 12.48
10 ...	10 ...	10 ...	Be My Deputy - Flo 2.25
11 ...	11 ...	11 ...	Betabob - Kem 12.30
12 ...	12 ...	12 ...	Bets Worth - Kem 12.30
13 ...	13 ...	13 ...	Blade - Lad 1.45
14 ...	14 ...	14 ...	Blade - Lad 1.45
15 ...	15 ...	15 ...	Blade - Lad 1.45
16 ...	16 ...	16 ...	Blade - Lad 1.45
17 ...	17 ...	17 ...	Blade - Lad 1.45

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Marker sheet wins reprieve

Customer power forces Racing Post re-think

The marker sheet will continue to be a feature of many independent shops around the country thanks to demand from customers for its reinstatement. Although the majority of customers now have EPOS till systems, the marker sheet remains a vital tool from which many bets are settled. The sheet, which is published in the Racing Post, is effectively a manual results page. It

provides a template for the day's racing, which bookmakers complete as the day unfolds. It includes space for the winner as well as the placed horses. It also allows space for the starting prices. Opinions about the value of the marker sheet and the amount of space dedicated to it in the Racing Post were divided. With the enormous growth in the volume of racing and the increasing use of EPOS systems, the Racing Post decided to stop its production. SIS was against the decision, as Brent Dolan, Commercial Director, explains: "We sit on the Racing Post Betting Shop Display committee with the Post and lobbied them at the time not to withdraw the marker sheet." The results were as predicted, "There

was uproar. We had lots of calls and emails about it and it was raised at our forums. I think the Post's decision will be warmly welcomed." As Jim Cremin at the Racing Post explains, the marker sheet will stay, but in a new format: "We have decided to give more space to the horses element of the marker by reverting, where possible, to the previous style. A runners' index will be carried if there is space on this page, if not, included somewhere else within the Betting Shop Display and noted in the index. The balance of opinion from managers was that the principal role of a marker sheet revolved around UK and Irish horses, so we have adopted that as our core philosophy. Our thanks to everybody who contacted us."

Charity of the year SIS helps Gecko dig deeper for pioneering tissue research



SIS's nominated charity is Gecko, which raises funds for an independent medical institution that carries out ground-breaking research into tissue engineering.

The research also has application in the sporting world, helping Olympic athletes and racehorses alike - hence SIS's involvement. The charity was started in 2004 by former England Football and Tottenham manager, Terry Venables (pictured with Phil Siers). Initially called TEAM research, it adopted the name Gecko last year. With Terry as its chairman, Gecko has raised £434,415 to date, principally through dinner dances, golf days and donations. Philip Siers, who attended the dinner, said: "We are delighted to be associated with such a great cause. In these difficult economic times, it is essential we all do our best to support pioneering organisations like Gecko, and we are delighted to do so. Tissue research saves lives and we hope this evening was highly successful in the fund raising process" Commenting on SIS's support, Terry said: "We are very grateful to SIS for their continued support of our campaign. NPIMR

receive no government funding whatsoever and without the generosity of companies like SIS, vital research into diseases that affect us all could not continue." The charity looked on target to exceed last year's total of £35,000 on the night, which was raised towards vital research into children's burns.



www.gecko-campaign.org



BOS trade fair Wolverhampton

When BOS gallantly stepped in to the breach following the cancellation of the 2009 Betting Show, few could have predicted what a success it would be.

Commenting on the day, Richard said, "It was good to meet other bookmakers from all over the country, and the evening meal was a great opportunity to relax and talk more informally over a drink. We're chuffed to bits about winning and shall enjoy our champagne on Christmas day."

Nigel Boardman, SIS's National Sales Manager, said: "We were delighted that so many independent bookmakers took the time and trouble to attend the event. It proved a valuable opportunity to network and discuss the state of the industry. Good on BOS for organising such a worthwhile event – we'll definitely be there next year."

Fine forum feedback

One of our most recent customer forums at Perth racecourse proved very successful, with 100 per cent attendance.

Brent Dolan and Nigel Boardman were on hand to respond to customers' concerns, which ranged from the reasons for the recent price increase to football data services.

The forums continue to be popular with our customers, as Benny and Annette Cohen from B & A Cohen Bookmakers in Glasgow say: "We've attended the forums since they were introduced and find them stimulating and interesting. SIS really does listen to views and exchanges between customers and it is an excellent platform to air and discuss regional and local differences which continue to be met with an excellent range of service options."

If you would like to receive the minutes from the Perth forum, or any previous forums, please contact Charlotte Bracken on 01908 865845 or email cbracken@sis.tv

Our last forum was held at Kempton Racecourse on Wednesday 24 November. The calendar for 2011 is on page 16.

A year on and the fair, again at Wolverhampton's Dunstall Park, proved even more popular.

Attendance was up nearly 50 per cent, with lots of major suppliers attending with some special 'show deals'. There was also twilight racing, which everyone agreed added a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the proceedings.

SIS Managing Director LBO Services, Phil Siers and Commercial Director Brent Dolan took the opportunity to host the inaugural LBO User Group committee meeting during the day, which they say proved very useful.

"It was an extremely productive meeting, with a large turnout," said Brent, "We took away several action points which, by the time customers read this, will have been implemented or be available shortly. Customer feedback was great and we'll certainly be holding another one next spring."

SIS treated some of its early bird customers who snapped up tickets to a buffet supper to run alongside the racing. Stuart and Richard Boundy from Camelford Racing not only got lucky on the tipster competition but Stuart also won the 'Spot the Rugby Ball' competition earlier in the day to win two tickets to see England v Samoa at Twickenham.

At the LBO committee meeting SIS committed to:

Starting at 9am on Saturdays

More BAGS meetings on nights when UK horse racing finishes before 7.30pm

Broadcast a Breeders' Cup review on Sunday 7 November from 10.30am

See page 8 for full details



Tracey Watkins, Regional Sales Manager South and double winner Richard Boundy of Camelford Racing



Left to right: Helen Scott, Brent Dolan, Pam Sharrock, Charlotte Bracken

How to get the most from your gaming machines

Part 1: Attracting players into your shop

Love them or hate them, gaming machines have become an important part of a bookmaker's business.

To help you get the most from your machines, we've teamed up with David Wallis (pictured), Sales and Operations Support Manager at Barcrest, to offer some easy and inexpensive tips for these flashing beasts!

Tip 1: Advertise, advertise, advertise!

- With so much competition on the high street, it is vital that you make customers aware that there are gaming machines in your shop. Don't assume they'll know.
- Ask your machine supplier for advertising posters and window displays for your shop.
- Ensure that your poster designs are bright and have an immediate 'call to action'.
- Advertising messages should be bold, simple and clear; don't clutter your messages with unnecessary wording and colours.
- Promote new games in the run-up to their launch to raise awareness and anticipation.

- Don't be afraid to suggest to your supplier any potential changes to a poster or wording they have sent you.
- Hit the streets. Consider incentivising your staff to hand out flyers, particularly if you're in an isolated location; it's great promotion and gives your shop a personality.

Tip 2: Watch the competition

- Do your research: who is your local competition? What are they offering in their shop window that you are not? What games or promotions are they advertising?
- Pay a visit - or send a member of staff along - to your nearest competitors every now and then in order to investigate any new content or features they may have on their machines. Of course, you will need to employ your own degree of judgement on this point!
- If a particular game or promotion is advertised in a neighbouring bookmakers, you may want to consider something similar, based on the fact that there is a ready-made market for it
- Alternatively, you may want to think of advertising something different from the competition in order to provide your own point of differentiation
- If you are in competition with a national operator, remember it may sometimes be more beneficial to push your own unique selling points instead of attempting to go "head-to-head" with them on the same types of games or promotions

Tip 3: Create a local buzz

- Refresh your window advertising regularly. This prevents posters from becoming dog-eared or faded and gives the impression that there is always something "new" happening in your shop
- Look at other local businesses in the area. Where are the best opportunities to advertise? What other shops nearby are machine players most likely to frequent?
- If your existing machine players have enjoyed a particular game or promotion recently, why not invite them to spread the word to their friends or colleagues? The best recommendation a potential new customer can possibly receive is from a fellow machine player they trust!

The above tips should be more than enough to encourage customers into your shop. The next challenge is how to hold on to your machine customers, which we'll be covering in the next issue of SIS Communicate.



Howells vs Howells

Flying the Welsh independent flag in Ammanford, Swansea and on the rails at Ffos Las racecourse, Grant and Joanne Howells discuss shop life, competing against each other on-course and share their views on the industry they love.

Ken Howells was established in 1967, when did you both join the business?

GH: My Father ran the business from its beginning with betting shops in and around South Wales. I came into it once I left school after my A-levels in 1982.

JH: I joined in 1994/95 when there were two shops. I ran one while Grant ran the other.

How involved are you both now?

JH: For the shop I'm strictly on a cover basis, purely because it isn't really practical with home life due to the hours. As we develop our on-course pitches I can commit to once a week or once month when I'm needed, whereas Grant is full time.

GH: Yes, I'm either in the shop or on the pitch. We have a team of seven including ourselves, so it's quite small but it works.

What do you feel sets you above your competition?

GH: We know all our customers and the atmosphere in our shop is great.

JH: Where Grant is based it's not a huge city and the customers like to know who they are betting with. They are quite patriotic in a sense.

GH: We have always been there and it's only been us and a Ladbrokes' shop in the town and we seem to be able to trade on an equal footing with them. Our customers seem to like being in our shop, possibly because it's family run and all of our staff speak Welsh. It's just something that has built up over time. I have grown up and know the customers personally; I perhaps went to school with them or with their children. We are now developing these kinds of relationships with the racecourse punters as well.

You now allow customers to place bets over the phone using their debit cards. Do you feel the way punters are betting is changing?

GH: We have a loyal base of customers who bet over-the-counter, so while the cash turnover hasn't grown, we haven't seen a

decline either. We have perhaps gained a few customers who like to bet over the phone.

JH: There still seems to be customers who prefer to bet and win in cash as they like the thrill of winning it in an instant and see it in their hands there and then.

GH: The majority of our customers have been with us 20 years and this is how they have always bet with us.

What SIS services do you have installed at your shop?

GH: We have the SIS FACTS full service and the Winter Evening Service on Wednesday to Saturday nights up until 9:30pm.

What is the interest like in the evenings?

GH: If there are two conventional meetings available either two British meetings or a British and an Irish meeting, the evening can be quite popular. If there's only one UK fixture it tends to be quieter.

What improvements would you like to see to our products?

GH: I think you cover all the options a bookmaker could need, for instance you don't have to have Sundays or the winter evenings. It's there for the bookmaker to decide.

JH: Perhaps the fee would be something you would change?

GH: I would prefer to have one supplier at a fair price. It's costing every bookmaker more now that there are two suppliers and this is one of the major increases in our expenditure. Our turnover is unable to match it. I wouldn't want to be a new business looking to enter the industry, as you would need a huge amount of capital to cover the expenditure.

What is the breakdown on betting across all sports?

GH: Over the counter betting is probably two thirds of the business and a third is taken on the FOBTs (Fixed Odds Betting Terminals). Of the two thirds the breakdown would approximately be 30 per cent sports and 70 per cent horseracing.

FOBTs have actually had a negative effect on us as a few customers have had to complete self-exclusion forms so they don't play them any more. These customers also used to bet on horseracing and therefore can't any more, until they have completed the exclusion period.

Ffos Las had its first meeting in June 2009, what do you think it has brought to Wales and you?

GH: Twenty years ago my Father used to work the racecourses and I thought it would be a great opportunity to go back on-course and we absolutely love it!

JH: It was a big shock initially.

GH: We pitched up with an old joint and chalkboard, so we have had to purchase updated equipment and now have two joints. Ffos Las has taken off quite well and it will be interesting to see how it does over the next few years. For us it's local and a lot of our customers attend.

It's been a great PR exercise for us. We push the fact we are a Welsh bookmaker and speak Welsh to the customers. At the bigger meetings we use the two joints, I work one and Joanne works on the other and she perhaps does better than me on most occasions! It's a huge learning curve for us and we're really enjoying it.

How do you rate the course compared to other racecourses?

GH: I like it, it's small compared to others but it's terrific for its locality and I have found the staff really friendly.

How do you feel horseracing can combat the declining interest in the younger generation?

GH: Youngsters will come in to bet on sports so you could promote horse racing during these times to try and create interest. We don't have an active policy to try and convert

them as I would prefer them to come in and bet in our shop rather than lose them to a competitor through trying.

JH: People only have so much to spend whether they want to bet it on football or horseracing, at least they have come in to bet with us.

What are your thoughts on the industry as a whole?

GH: I'm quite happy; I'm probably one of the few. I would hate to be starting off in this business today. We are lucky we have an established shop with loyal customers. The only thing that bothers me is that the expenses are so high.

What do you enjoy most about being a bookmaker?

GH: I love being in the shop as we have a wide range of customers. On the one hand we have a lady who bets with us every day who is 100 years old and bets either a 50p or 20p patent on the day's horses and then the next customer could be a £50 bet to win on an evening's match. The nice thing about it is the diversity.

On the racecourse it's the hustle and bustle and we are learning a lot every time. The one thing that I am disappointed about is the amount of bookmakers who offer unfair trading terms on the place. We have signed up to the Customer Service Charter for On-Course Bookmakers and adhere to industry terms. Since the first day we started we have offered the same terms on the pitch as you would get in our shop.

What do you think the new decade will bring for bookmakers and the industry?

JH: I can't imagine it will improve dramatically, I think to maintain for the next 10 years would be great. However it could be like fashion, perhaps in the next 10 years the industry gets a bright new character that boosts the sport to a new popularity, you just don't know.

GH: I think maintaining our loyal customer base and level of business would be a great achievement.

What do you both do to take your mind off work?

GH: We are both keen sports people. Joanne was a triathlete for Wales and I have also competed for Wales at veteran international level in the triathlon.

JH: Anyone who knows Grant will know he likes his holidays, especially to Majorca.

You organise regular races in Swansea, what does this involve?

GH: For the last 11 years we have organised the LC Swansea 5K, which is a series of 5K races for adults and fun runs for kids along the promenade. All proceeds go to the local charities.

JH: It's a way of giving something back and encouraging kids into sport.

GH: This year we had 600 kids enter the series!

Interview by Charlotte Bracken.



Question	Joanne's answer for Grant	Grant's Answer	
Favourite racecourse?	Ffos Las	Ffos Las	✓
Favourite sport?	Triathlon	Triathlon	✓
Techie or Technophobe?	Technophobe	Technophobe	✓
Best runner?	Grant	Me	✓
Worst habit?	Coughing	Sniffing	✗
Best cook?	Me	Joanne	✓
Favourite place?	Majorca	Majorca	✓
Where would your partner most like to go in the world?	Dubai	Majorca	✗
Off-course or on-course?	On-Course	On-Course	✓
Most likely to win an argument?	Me	Joanne	✓
Anniversary date?	9th May	Correct	✓
Who remembers Birthdays?	Me	Joanne	✓

Question	Grant's answer for Joanne	Joanne's Answer	
Favourite racecourse?	Ascot	Cheltenham	✗
Favourite sport?	Netball	Netball	✓
Techie or Technophobe?	Technophobe	Technophobe	✓
Best runner?	Me	Grant	✓
Worst habit?	OCD (Tidying)	OCD (Tidying)	✓
Best cook?	Joanne	Me	✓
Favourite place?	Caribbean	Caribbean	✓
Where would your partner most like to go in the world?	Mauritius	Dubai	✗
Off-course or on-course?	On-Course	On-Course	✓
Most likely to win an argument?	Joanne	Me	✓
Anniversary date?	9th May	Correct	✓
Who remembers Birthdays?	Joanne	Me	✓

60 seconds with... James Hanlon

James Hanlon, Product Manager, started working for SIS just over a year ago. Before joining the company, James was IT Manager at Stan James UK.

What's the best and worst thing about your job?

Best: Most definitely working with such a great team of people.

Worst: Not being able to please everyone all the time and meet everyone's needs.

Best advice you've ever had?

To always be a team player. You can be a star in your team but you need to work as a team.

What traits do you most admire in others?

Honesty and intelligence.

What have been the three happiest days of your life so far?

My divorce from my first wife, my marriage to my second wife and my 40th birthday when I was surrounded by everyone I love.

Who would you like to play you in a movie of your life?

Who else - George Clooney! We've got similar hair!

What's on your iPod?

Everything from Beethoven to the Tings Tings, along with my guilty pleasure, The Carpenters. I have very eclectic taste!

If you could have dinner with three people (alive or not), who would they be?

Stephen Fry for his wit and intelligence, Kylie Minogue – do I really need to say why?! – and Peter Kay for the laughs.

Favourite hobby?

Walking my dogs – Jack, Poppy and Bubbles.

Who do you think is going to win X Factor?

Well I'd like it to be Rebecca or Matt, but with all the fixing allegations going on, it's anyone's guess!

Loudhailer

We know you're never short of an opinion or two, so here's an opportunity to have your say to hundreds of other bookies across the country.

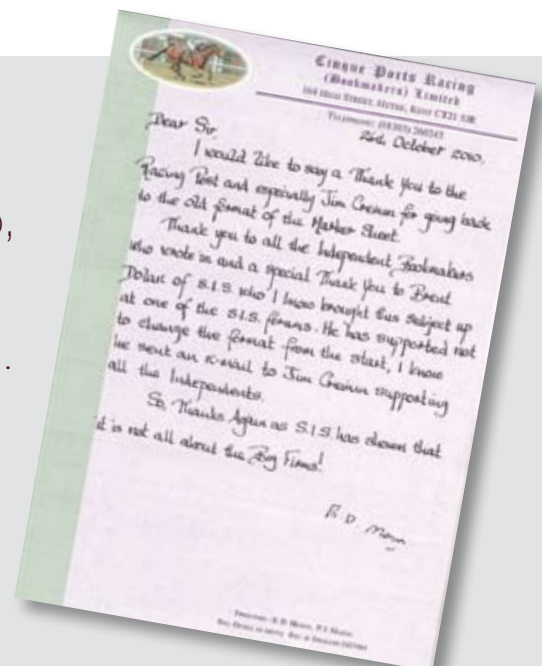
Of course we'd love to hear your thoughts on our service and what we can do to improve it, but if that all sounds a bit too much like work, why not brighten someone's day with an anecdote from your shop, a pearl of wisdom or just let off steam.

Every issue of *SIS Communicate* is read by thousands of people like you across the country – what would you like to read?

We promise to be brave and print whatever you said (gulp) – within the limits of the law and common decency of course!

And the best letter (or email) each issue will get a bottle of fizz for your trouble. A bottle is winging its way to Brian for his letter pictured.

We look forward to hearing from you!
Helen



Service details for Christmas & New Year service 2010/2011

Date	Early Morning Product	SIS main service	WES
Thursday 23 December	08:30 – 10:00	10:00 – 18:30	18:30 – 21:30
	Includes: two morning, two afternoon and three evening BAGS meetings, plus four morning and up to eight afternoon Deauville thoroughbred races (all weather)		
Friday 24 December		10:00 – 17:00	
	Includes: two morning and two afternoon BAGS meetings		
Christmas Day	No Service		
Boxing Day		10:00 – 16:30	
Monday 27 December		10:00 – 18:30	18:30 – 21:30
Tuesday 28 December		10:00 – 18:30	18:30 – 21:30
Wednesday 29 December	08:30 – 10:00	10:00 – 18:30	18:30 – 21:30
Thursday 30 December	08:30 – 10:00	10:00 – 18:30	18:30 – 21:30
New Year's Eve	08:30 – 10:00	10:00 – 17:00	
New Year's Day		09:00 – 17:00	
Sunday 2 January		11:00 – 18:00	
Monday 3 January		10:00 – 18:30	18:30 – 21:30

Virtual product, 49s, and Rapido content as normal
Please note that these times are subject to change.

Lookie-likies

For years Brent Dolan has been telling us that he is a dead ringer for Colin Montgomerie - personally we think he looks more like Roy Walker! Let us know what you think.



Do you know any 'Lookie-likies' in the industry? There's a prize for every entry printed.

Dates for your diary

Here are some dates for your shiny new 2011 diary. Can it really be 2011? Whatever happened to the 'naughties'?

Have your say at a customer forum

The SIS team will be on tour again in 2011. We're hosting another five forums next year, from Kelso in Scotland to Lingfield Park.

As you can see from page 7 ('SIS FACTS to start earlier on Saturdays'), what you say at the forums can really make a difference. They're also an excellent opportunity to visit some of the country's best courses and meet the SIS team informally over a glass or two.

Where	Region	When
Doncaster	Northern	Wednesday 23 February
Kelso	Scotland	Monday 21 March
Chepstow	Wales/South West	Tuesday 24 May
Leicester	Midlands	Tuesday 6 September
Lingfield Park	South East	Tuesday 8 November

The forums tend to book up quickly, so contact **Charlotte (cbracken@sis.tv)** now to reserve your place.

Join us on our stand at...

From the many events and exhibitions on offer, we've picked two that we think stand head and shoulders above the others as being the most valuable, the best value and – we hope – the most enjoyable. They are:

ICE (International Casino Exhibition) 25-27 January, Earls' Court

As the blurb says: "ICE exists for the entire gaming industry and is here to serve everyone, helping your business prosper and grow. It is the world's leading showcase for gaming technology and new product innovation. It also serves to help inform and educate with a comprehensive series of seminars and conferences." Sounds good to us! It's a monster of an exhibition, but well worth attending – if only to appreciate the breadth and scale of our industry.

www.icetotallygaming.com

BOS Trade Fair 2011 Thursday 6 October, Wolverhampton Racecourse

A minnow compared to ICE but all the better for it, 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. See page 10 for more about this year's show.

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

Dinner jackets at the ready

We'll be at two Awards ceremonies in 2011, both of which we sponsor. We'll see you there – hopefully watching you accepting an award!

Betview Awards

The Awards season kicks off for SIS in March with the Betview Awards, which are on the 29th at the glorious Grosvenor House Hotel in 2011. Best bib and tucker if you're going along!

www.betviewmagazine.com/awards

Betting Shop Manager of the Year Awards

If you want to get noticed in our industry, these are the awards to enter – just ask Angie Bowers, the 2009 winner, or the new betting shop king, Michael Demetriou, who succeeded her recently (see page 3).

As well as the satisfaction of knowing that you're the best, becoming Manager of the Year is the start to a whirlwind year of interviews and appearances, with a well-earned trip to the Dubai World Cup.

The competition gets hotter every year, but that's what makes it such an accolade. Your colleagues can even bet on the winner – of course! Watch out for details of how to enter the 2011 competition in the next edition of *SIS Communicate*.



All will be revealed

ICE Stand number 6224
IGE 2011, Earls' Court
January 25th-27th 2011

SIS
www.sis.tv