

Pandemic fatigue will heighten the demand for omnichannel



Tim Kennedy,
Vice President of Sales for Europe,
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Tim Kennedy is the Vice President of Sales for Europe at SUZOHAPP. He has over 30 years of sales and technology experience in the industry. Prior to joining SUZOHAPP, he held senior positions at both Bell Fruit Games and Barcrest Group before moving to the sports betting platform provider, OpenBet, where he ran the Retail and Omnichannel divisions. Most recently, he served as an advisor for the preeminent international gambling consultancy, Regulus Partners.



Offering his view on the immediate future for land-based sports betting, Tim Kennedy, Vice President of Sales for Europe at SUZOHAPP, believes demand for omnichannel solutions has heightened due to pandemic fatigue.

Where does SUZOHAPP sit within the land-based sports betting market?

As a primary supplier to casinos, operators, and OEMs in the gaming industry, our position in the sports betting market isn't much changed from where we sit for gaming. We want to be the only call customers need to make when it comes to their hardware solutions for sports betting whether that be in turnkey solutions and customised full-service designs, or peripheral components and replacement parts.

As the majority of players in this market are digital-centric, we take the burden of providing the hardware solution with seamless integration so those platform designers can keep their focus on their games and let us do what we've shown we excel at in the hardware space with our extensive experience in the gaming market.

SUZOHAPP caters to several verticals including gaming, amusement and vending. How significant is sports betting to SUZOHAPP's business model?

Sports betting was a natural vertical for us given our existing reputation and core competencies in gaming and hardware. We have partnered with a few of our existing suppliers to come up with high-quality solutions that we believe the sports betting market desperately needs as it continues to build momentum.

Our existing network with tried-and-true manufacturers from the gaming market is essential to helping get the sports betting market established in the retail space. In terms of our business model, we see a lot of potential

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growth in this market and are excited to see what the next few years bring.

Without going over exhaustively covered ground, it has clearly been a difficult 15 months or so for retail. How has SUZOHAPP's short and long-term strategies changed, if at all?

The pandemic was a challenge for everyone in our industry. We are very fortunate in that we have a rather diversified portfolio of customers and products that we were able to adapt and shift our focus on an as-needed basis and react to the constantly changing market during the pandemic. What we've most gained from the pandemic is to maintain that ability to stay flexible and adaptive so that we're ready and able to serve our customers continuously if and when the next crises arrive.

What is SUZOHAPP's view on the immediate future for land-based sports betting? Has customer interest in your sports betting product suite picked up in recent weeks and months?

Absolutely. With regulations in the United States being passed to allow for various forms of sports betting, there's a lot of interest and conversation about how best to move forward. We are moving fast to ensure we can be in the right place at the right time to assist our customers as these markets open up.

We also foresee a lot more interest in the coming months as we progress out of the pandemic and we begin to see what the future looks like with a little more predictability than we have over the past year and a half.

Omnichannel seems to no longer be the buzzword on everyone's lips. Longer term, is an omnichannel experience still the goal for operators, suppliers and players?

In our business, omnichannel is still very important and we think will be more important, especially as countries gradually come out of lockdown and pandemic measures. Pandemic fatigue was very real. People want to be out in the world with other people again.

While the digital sphere obviously saw huge success during those isolated, socially distanced months, now as we look towards bringing people back together what's important in from an omnichannel perspective, is how we integrate digital experiences with live experiences.

Insight

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It seems like every few months a new state opens its doors to regulated sports betting in the US. What is your view on the developing US sports betting scene?

For us, it is important to look at the whole picture of the United States and evaluate how we can pre-emptively cater our product portfolio to what will be applicable in the highest number of states. From a regulations perspective, that means getting the difficult certifications out of the way early so that we're covered for a greater majority of regions.

In terms of where we're looking to target our business, we're looking at a combination of where we have established relationships from our gaming business and where the opportunity makes sense. It's a delicate balance that is ever-changing as the regulations change.

As interested parties flock in their droves to the states, how is SUZOHAPP looking to stand out? What is your approach to the market?

What's unique about SUZOHAPP is the comprehensiveness and quality of our offering. We have decades of expertise in the gaming industry which will help service the sports betting market.

Additionally, as most players are focused digitally, our unique hardware focus allows us to partner with multiple platforms to give the end-user the best overall experience depending on what they're looking for.

It keeps us fairly agnostic and allows for greater flexibility in our customer base.

How significant are SUZOHAPP's existing partners to the company's roadmap? Going forwards, what qualities will you be looking for in future partners?

Our partners are essential to our business and we wouldn't be the company we are today without them. Partners like Elo, one of our primary suppliers of displays and touch screens has been pivotal in helping us stay relevant and innovative, have a high-quality offering, and getting product when worldwide we're seeing a global shortage of panels and electronics.

Our partnerships are based not only on mutual benefit, but mutual respect and we respect and truly appreciate the precision and dedication that partners like Elo put into their products and ensuring our customers are happy.

What type of retail products do US operators predominantly opt for?

America started the cashless gaming revolution with the adoption of IITO and they will continue to be at forefront of developments in this area. A current challenge is how to link cashless gaming and cashless sport betting systems together. At SUZOHAPP we will be introducing a range of products that bridge this gap, creating the very best player experience for seamless play.

Of course, we aim to support cash and cashless options as we believe that ultimately customers want to be able to keep their preferences and make their own decisions. As for terminals, we provide a full range of terminal types suitable for all operational environments from floor

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Are there other markets you would identify as being as important as the United States for SUZOHAPP going forwards?

SUZOHAPP is a global company. While the United States is certainly a key market for us, we do a significant amount of business in Europe and are looking at how we can expand our market share for the eventual bounce-back of Macau and the APAC market.

We also foresee a lot of opportunity in Latin America as that market develops as well. Really, the world is our oyster, so we keep our team diversified in order to make sure we have ears on the ground globally allowing us to seize on opportunities as we see them.