EVERY PIECE CRUCIAL TO OMNI-CHANNEL SOLUTION DELIVERY

EDITORIAL

May, 2017

"Going forward an Omni-channel offering will be in a much better position to manage critical data, such as payment details and personally identifiable information (PII), in a single and secure area for the whole operation."

G3 stole time with Greentube's Chief Technology Officer, Thomas Kolbabek, to discuss the influence of Omni-channel on both the present direction and near-future of the gaming business.

Everyone seems to have a different take on Omni-channel right now - what does it mean to Greentube?

An Omni-channel offering delivers the same gaming experience across all distribution channels.

In its purest form, the player has one account, one balance and one tailored game selection, along with a consistent user experience.

The operator, in turn, can focus on the player rather than worrying about the availability of features, gaming content or other technicalities that are a challenge in today's "cross-channel" solution.

How is your role as CTO involved in delivering an Omni-channel solution to Greentube's customers and partners?

I have the privilege of leading our extremely capable technical teams towards providing the components that make up our Omni-channel solution. I have always had a deep appreciation for what happens "behind the scenes" – what is not visible to an end user. An Omni-channel solution takes this to an entirely new level as the purpose is to create a system that serves multiple channels appear as one.

What are the most important technology components/channels that comprise the Omni-channel solution from Greentube?

By definition, each component is equally crucial and important. If you take away any part, the Omni-channel solution would have a gap and not serve or be accessed by a certain customer group or operational team.

From a risk perspective, the common components that provide accounting and transaction functionality are more crucial than ever. Failure will affect not one or two channels but the whole operation.

How do you create a 'universal solution' that's also specific to the needs of individual operators?

Through configuration and custom-built extensions. Greentube has been developing multi-tenant applications since 2000 out of pure necessity.

The alternative, which is to provide completely independent software solutions, was never part of our strategy. While "custom development" sounds appealing at first the added effort of maintaining entirely segregated code bases is rarely worth the effort.

As we started to configure our solutions, we found that decoupling of functionality via messages and events is an extremely effective way to scale development and provide customized solutions with little need for duplicating code.

Why is it important right now to offer operators Omni-channel solutions when we're seeing only a handful going live across markets in Europe?

We are definitely at the early stages as just a few jurisdictions are even considering Omni-channel solutions. Established land-based regulations have rarely considered online in the past, and as such, the online offering has very often been regulated separately. New online offerings, however, are usually regulated differently.

I recently started to compare the situations to electric cars, even though I try to avoid explanations by analogy as much as possible for many reasons, but in this case the analogy fits: The charging infrastructure is not widely available yet, the range could be improved, but you still see them on our streets more and more – some as pure electric cars but the majority as hybrids.

The same is true for Omni-channel. Even though there are few applications for true Omni-channel solutions, parts can be launched in many markets to support either online or land-based operations.

Mastering those hybrid deployments, and testing Omni-channel offerings where possible, allows us to fully understand two industries that have historically been very different. Most teams or even companies have deep knowledge in one of these channels, but very few have excelled in both. It is an opportunity to learn exactly that.

Why is the player data derived from Omni-channel so valuable?

In an industry that has historically been segregated into online and land-based delivery channels, data is very often aggregated manually or with significant delays.

An Omni-channel approach, however, which is recording all gaming operations and transactions centrally, has unparalleled access to real-time data. The data itself has the additional dimension on how and, especially for land-based offerings, exactly where the player is accessing the gaming offering.

For operators used to land-based offerings, the speed and direct access to data will be interesting; for online operators the connection to the real end user is most likely an exciting new option far beyond the obvious marketing and loyalty features; and for the players and regulators, the key advantage is convenience, transparency and security.

A single wallet and gaming account allows responsible gaming limits to be set across all operations, augmented with automated and pro-active early warning systems, as well as protect online accounts

with two-factor authentication on request and have transaction records readily available to settle disputes. And these are just some the obvious examples of what is possible.

Going forward an Omni-channel offering will be in a much better position to manage critical data, such as payment details and personally identifiable information (PII), in a single and secure area for the whole operation. Segregating such data will be key to adequately cater to the requirements of various regulatory bodies as well as cross-cutting concerns like PCI-DSS and GDPR.

How do you gather and deliver this data to the operator, and how is the solution designed to enable operators to respond to the data?

Data is gathered centrally and in real-time. It is accessible to personnel via dashboards, reports, alerts and player management tools. The management tools allow the operator to act and intervene as required.

On top of that, we see it becomes more and more important to automate established processes as much as possible to keep an operation commercially interesting and allow experienced personnel to understand the less common aspects of the operation better.

Supporting automated and configurable actions in a system provides a huge edge to any operator. Where sensible, technically-able operators can listen to events and messages to implement functionality in any way they see fit. This is especially useful when the decision that should be taken is not clearly defined or frequently changes, for instance in marketing or even for risk management tools.

Where are we in terms of the full integration of Omni-channel with operators? Is this a process that will take many years, or are we close to seeing the market switch quite soon?

Based on how quickly markets have changed substantially in the past years I think that we have to be patient with that process. It may be faster in markets that have little or no existing regulation but will potentially take longer in well-established markets where an Omni-channel product may even require changes to existing law.

Does Omni-channel mean lack of variety of providers of games, or can Omni-channel be inclusive and offer the widest possible choice?

The content portfolio is not influenced by the delivery tool in our discussion of an Omni-channel platform.

While that is easy to say for the platform, the game portfolio usually depends on the game provider, integration method, the operator and available resources. What has been true for the move from Flash to HTML5 is also true for providing Omni-channel enabled game content.

The earlier the game design and development process, the easier it is to produce an Omni-channel game. Greentube is in a very fortunate position in that we are part of the NOVOMATIC Group, which designs games for land-based operations, and at the same time, have the in-house developed novoSDK (Novo Software Development Kit – www.novosdk.com) that already supports Omni-channel deployments and is used by a vast range of suppliers today.

What can operators do to prepare the groundwork for Omni-channel, even if they're not in the position to press the button and launch a solution right now?

I would recommend picturing how the operation and organization would change if an Omni-channel offering would launch tomorrow.

Even if it is not possible to launch a complete Omni-channel solution right now, could such a system solve a problem today by utilizing a part of the potential offering?

As a next step contact potential partners, like Greentube, or visit tradeshows to get more details regarding a potential solution.

What for you is the most exciting part of developing an Omni-channel solution?

As someone that has been involved mostly with online gaming, it is immensely exciting for me to add physical devices to our gaming offering. You cannot touch an online offering except the servers. Even simple components like ticket printers are an unusual component to see in our development department, let alone fully connected gaming machines.