ASIAN GAMING ETHIC – CONVENIENT, CLEAN AND FAST ACTION

INTERVIEW WITH JASON CHAN

Finding the right combination of elements to meet Asian player demand need not be a major stumbling block to commercial growth. While being there may provide some significant advantages, demonstrating an understanding of player preferences and local interests goes a long way to opening up the huge gaming development potential. And that is gradually creating worldwide Asian expansion plans.

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CGI: When Entertasia was established in 2005 what circumstances persuaded you that would be the right time to begin operations in Asia?

JC: The idea came up in 2005 but we realised much earlier that there wasn't a gaming software company out there focused 100 percent on developing online casino games for Asian players. We started to address that opportunity in 2005 because we had finally raised sufficient capital to initiate this project.

CGI: Did you have a particular 'Asian business model' in mind or was it the everyday process and experience that provided the edge?

JC: In the beginning it was very important to decide how we would build our casino games. Our primary focus was on local player experience; and to transfer land-based casino games to online formats, retaining as far as possible the real casino environment in the process. It was not our business model as such that provided our edge, it was our actual casino game design that took us forward.

CGI: Your strategy will have matured from many previous years of experience before Entertasia. How has that been important to becoming a market leader?

JC: Yes, our previous experience as a marketing agency serving the gaming industry way back in 2000 gave us a lot of advantages. We have since gained considerable player behaviour knowledge and consequently understand their product preferences. Of course, actually being present in

Macau is a great plus since we can keep track of local market trends.

CGI: After the US anti-online gaming law (UIGEA) online operators focused on Asia, but gaining cultural access has presumably meant learning a number of lessons?

JC: It really is unnecessary for operators to go through any of that pain. We have served many well known international operators in the past and some of them entered Asia for the first time. As long as they are well prepared – set with the right expectations – they will begin to see very positive results in just one or two years. Of course, working with an experienced marketing partner does speed you along the learning curve a lot quicker.

CGI: Is that concern to make new entrant operators aware of cultural differences a benefit to Entertasia's software gaming platform?

JC: Most of the operators are fully aware of tuning into cultural factors today, but it is also true that even now not all of them realise that specifically localised products are very effective, making a huge difference to company performance.

CGI: How crucial has been the research, development and design basis to your local product success?

JC: Very crucial. We have a seriously strong R&D team. Each game, before entering our production cycle, has gone through at least three months research and data collection. We do not create games of our own; our primary focus is on transforming land-based casino games to the online environment, as I mentioned earlier, but that means taking great care to accurately retain content transference.

CGI: The Asian attitude historically is one of dedication to gaming and presumably that means you must pay a great deal of attention to customer interests and expectations?

JC: Yes, Asian players are not very patient: it is almost as though they want to start betting without learning how to play! Simplicity is the key to satisfying all Asian players' expectations.

CGI: What is it about the Asian mindset that makes gaming software applications so successful in this region today and will that have global reach?

JC: Asian players are more results oriented and tend to look for convenient, clean and fast action that gaming software makes possible; whereas global players usually look for a more entertaining and sophisticated atmosphere in which to operate and interact. Even so, most casino game content is essentially the same all over the world, we just have to fine tune our software to prepare for our future market expansion.

CGI: Where are the hotspots in Asia for gaming software development at this time that you are targeting?

JC: We don't have a very specific country as such to target. Our preference is to make sure our software is fully adopted as widely as possible throughout Asia.

CGI: Is the global financial crisis having a negative impact or providing new opportunities through greater competition?

JC: I am very positive about the future growth of our business even amid the global financial crisis. I do see more competition in 2009 which could translate into better opportunities for industry consolidation in the future.

CGI: 'Live gaming' is a significant mid-way step toward the real casino. How does this work and what are the advantages over non-live games?

JC: Live gaming has two distinct advantages over non-live games. Live games offer video streaming real time; all actions are happening right in front of the players and they can interact with the dealer and other players. Live games are truly random games and not with results generated by machines. That convinces players that results are true and fair and the experience is real enough.

CGI: However, do you think the lack of real human interaction will ultimately limit the value and appeal of 'live games'?

JC: This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Live gaming on the Internet can closely simulate the real betting experience, but it can never actually replace it. Some players prefer actual human interaction, while others prefer to remain private and have no inclination to enter a casino floor.

CGI: Do you expect 'live gaming' to continue to evolve to enhance its realism with new technologies coming into play?

JC: Yes, this is definitely the case. It is not just live gaming, but lots of technologies are being used to build the virtual world in such a way that it becomes as real as possible. I think in the future the differences will gradually be narrowed to a fine line between online live gaming and land-based gaming.

CGI: Earlier this year you introduced an evolved blackjack game. Can you explain what is new about this and how it has since been received?

JC: That was an innovation: trying to deliver the game of Blackjack without having multiple dealers and tables. We got both positive and negative comments and we shall make further improvements on this game in 2009 while launching many new games in tandem.

CGI: Player feedback – is there more innovation and are there more products in the pipeline?

JC: Yes, we are committed to introducing new games or make enhancements to our existing games, every quarter. This approach will continue. In the first quarter of 2009, you will see a very impressive new baccarat game from Entertasia.

CGI: Bringing Cryptologic and 888.com into the Entertasia fold has enhanced your capabilities. How valuable are such partnerships?

JC: Working with large and professional companies has given us the opportunity to prove that the quality of our products can meet even the highest standards in the industry. That has made us very confident in further introducing our products on the world market.

CGI: Adopting social responsibility policies is becoming a normal expectation in the industry. What do you do in this respect?

JC: Besides the standard of age verification from each operator, we have built features into the software where the operator can pinpoint a particular player to set a bet limit or table limi and even restrict the player from betting on certain games.

CGI: In your view, are there any significant changes in the Asian market you want to see?

JC: I would like to see the Asian market follow in the footsteps of the European market and introduce regulations and policies to protect the industry so that it grows in a healthy manner.

CGI: Do you plan to diversify into other product ranges, perhaps beyond Asian market locations?

JC: Yes, it is part of development plan in 2009. We would like to create a new R&D and development team primarily focused on global product lines.

CGI: What priorities do you see for Entertasia in the immediate future?

JC: Further strengthen our product offering with new and enhanced games, constantly expand our market share in Asia and begin to tap the global market place. CGI

JASON CHAN

Jason Chan has been actively involved in the Asian online gambling industry since 1999 and in 2000 founded G-Master Technology Limited, specialising in online gaming marketing services. He also founded MACOM GROUP which is now serving the industry as the 'online gaming hub for Asia', with complete marketing, technology and web content publishing solutions. Jason invented a unique real time live video stream casino playing experience that is now being used by many major operators as a big attraction to Asian players. He and his team members served many of the World Top 50 online gambling companies over the past seven years including Bet365, Victor Chandler and Easybets – all dominant players in the Asian gaming markets now. Jason was also the founder of an Asian-based online payment company in 2003 which was earlier acquired by Neteller for $12.5m in 2005.