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KEEPING GAMBLERS AND GAMERS KEEN: COLOCATION KEY TO THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Abstract

Once occupying separate spaces in our increasingly virtual world, gambling and gaming are coalescing quickly—both in terms of technology and functionality. The gaming segment has woken up to the growth limitations of hardware/software sales and realised that recurring revenues like in-game purchases, in-game betting and skills-based rewards have no ceiling on expansion. That's resulted in crossover effects such as the growth of esports.

Against that background, all sectors today talk about customer experience (CX) optimisation. With online gambling and gaming, great CX comes down to the originality and playability of the game and its virtual environment, and the performance and scalability of the supporting infrastructure. Now, the emergence of cloud-based gambling and gaming, which needs live streaming, introduces new factors into the CX equation.

What does that mean for online gambling and gaming operators? And what about those working in the physical world where most gambling still takes place? We'll discuss innovation for competitive edge and its effect on CX-affecting customer loyalty drivers. And we'll invite you to talk to Telehouse to make getting the basics right the proverbial dead cert.

Low latency and high reliability

In terms of consumption, the cloud is starting to lead the charge, with streaming to smartphones preferred. Already, 55% of UK online gamblers use a mobile or tablet (see gambling and gaming growth trends on Page 6). Gamblers and gamers expect commands and keystrokes to be processed virtually in real time.

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That means latency (delay) must be irreducible. The app must appear to respond instantaneously: 40ms is good while 200ms is bad. That's why collocating major infrastructure elements is crucial to achieving the required CX.

If the data centre is too far away excessive delay can lead not only to unacceptable CX but can also open the door to cheats. In cities the lower latency limit is generally achievable, but the internet doesn't always believe the fastest route between two points is a straight line. Data intended for a destination a few streets away can be tromboned via nodes hundreds or even thousands of miles distant.

> "While it's perfectly possible these days to locate app software in one place and storage in another, risks increase with every boundary crossed."

Reliability and stability depend on factors like closeness to the internet backbone and minimal network hops between compute and storage assets. For example, while it's perfectly possible these days to locate app software in one place and storage in another, risks increase with every boundary crossed. That's why hosting and dense internet interconnectivity nodes should always be in the same space.

Scalability and cybersecurity

Scalability in gambling and gaming is the art of dealing with the massive swings that have become part of the industry's day job. New games can literally go viral in less than a day. Downloads can rack up millions in months. Network and server resources must be able to be brought into service in minutes, hours at most, with pre-connectivity already in place. Again, astute choice of a colocation campus can make such instant responsiveness a CX reality. Alongside, the highest levels of 24/7 physical security including trained staff, foolproof access management and CCTV are minimum requirements.

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When it comes to cybersecurity, distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks are aimed at disrupting CX and can be devastating to a company's web presence. As more and more gambling and gaming action moves online and into the cloud, it becomes increasingly prone to DDoS threats. Class-leading DDoS protection is crucial at all levels. Meanwhile, network firewalls must protect against internet-borne threats and be able to stop malicious code dead in its tracks.

> "As more and more gambling and gaming action moves online and into the cloud, it becomes increasingly prone to DDoS threats."

"Arriving now are 3D images projected direct onto the retina. Coming down the track are full-body haptic suits and new holographic techniques."

"Full-motion holograms will probably need hundreds of gigabits per second compared to the megabits we've been used to."

Such creativity comes with a penalty. Its name is bandwidth. For example, even with compression, full-motion holograms will probably need hundreds of gigabits per second compared to the megabits we've been used to. That would stretch even the most optimistic 5G estimates.

There might be a danger this clever stuff may become self-limiting. That the massive bandwidths required might disenfranchise those who live where infrastructure is poor. The question might be: do you want to play? The answer might be move to the city.

One thing's certain: cross-connectivity is king and the closer to the source the better.

Digital meets physical

When it comes to the physical world of betting shops, sports events, stadia, racecourses, casinos and arcades, most have been slow to catch the digital wave. Their CX is largely dependent on the efforts of customer-facing people ranging from counter staff and croupiers to turf accountants and Tote assistants.

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Arguably, they must all make the digital transition, or many will fade. The infrastructure challenges are different to online, needing a highly connected ecosystem of service providers. In stadia, for example, the crowd can already use smartphones to place bets while games are in progress. Nevertheless, people will always want to leave their homes to go out and gamble. Good that venue-based CX interaction opportunities are only limited by operators' imaginations. But they, in turn, depend on understanding the digital possible. The advent of 5G may well change the dynamic.

Telehouse ticks all the boxes

Telehouse is well positioned to help gambling and gaming operators meet the demands of their online players. We have over 40 data centres worldwide in major cities and countries such as London, New York, Paris, Frankfurt, Singapore, Turkey, Russia, China and Singapore as well as a highly connected ecosystem of more than 750 service providers. That means we're the perfect launch pad for low-latency gambling and gaming CX, while we can help similarly serve adjacent territories with less-advanced infrastructures.

Based on over 30 years of experience we can provide end-to-end global solutions. The proximity of our Docklands data centre campus to the City of London and Canary Wharf makes us the optimum low-latency option for financial services, where AI and big data are rapidly making themselves felt. With over 530 carriers, ISPs and ASPs running services through the Telehouse London hub, and hosting the London Internet Exchange (LINX), Telehouse has reach in abundance. That includes private network interconnects.

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Contact a Telehouse expert

At Telehouse we can help. We own the space where internet service providers congregate to interconnect, and where enterprises come for technological horsepower. And it's where we can bring the finest minds to bear on helping you win the gaming and gambling CX race.

Harry Pyant, Sales Manager
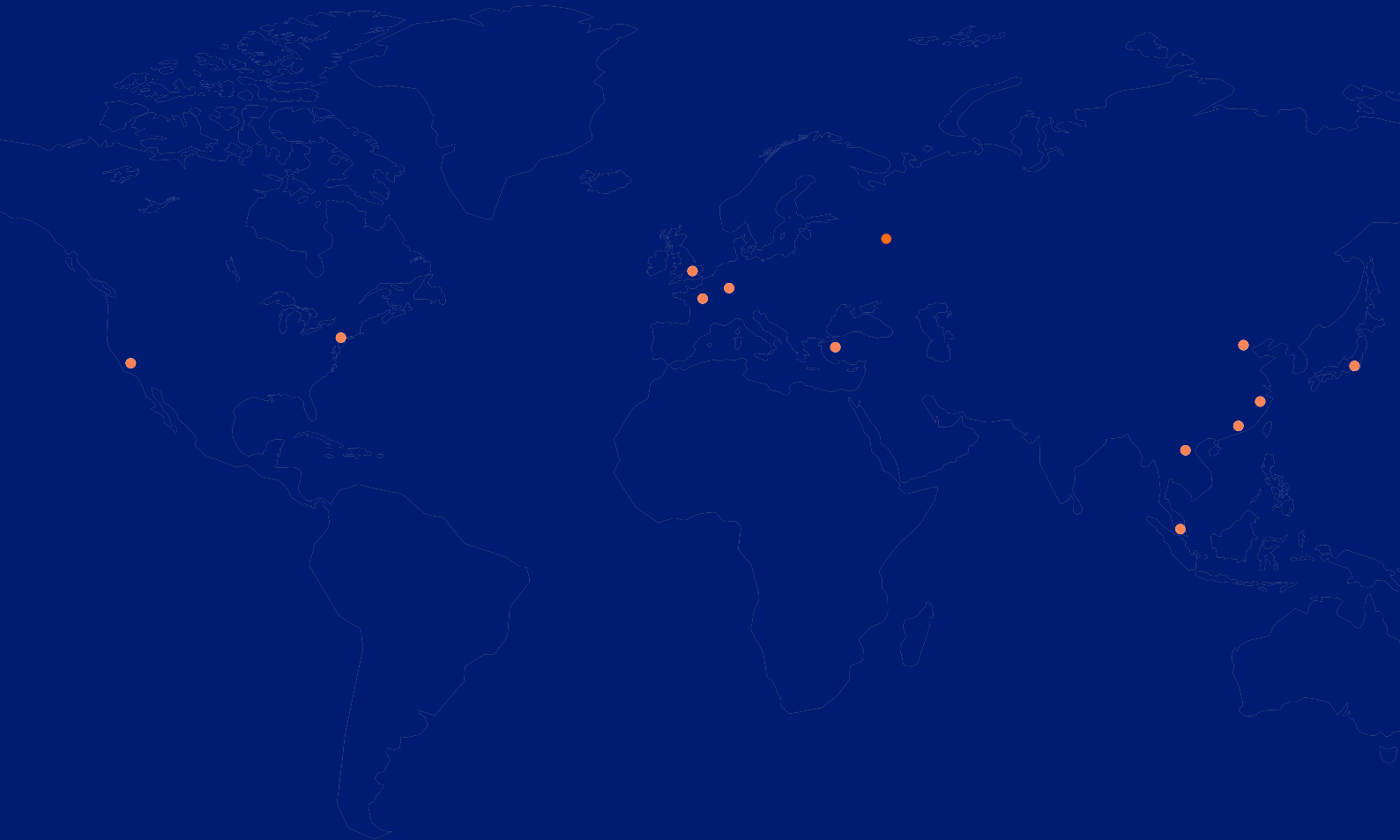**E: harry.pyant@uk.telehouse.net**
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