

OnCash? That'll do nicely

Spin3 plans to bridge the gap between the real and virtual worlds with its OnCash smartcard. It believes the concept could unlock the potential of the mobile gambling sector, as **ME** explores...

THREE YEARS ago a small Israeli start-up called Ki-bi got a lot of attention and quite a few awards with its self-titled smartcard concept. The card seemed to promise a revolutionary and pain-free means to deliver rich content (games, ringtones etc): users simply dialled a number, waited for a tone and held the card to the device. The tone initiated the transfer of content locked inside the Ki-bi. The concept bypassed expensive and complicated download processes – and the cards could be branded in snazzy colours by games publishers and so on.

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Like so many good ideas, this one tanked. Retail failed (and still fails) to fully engage with mobile. But, for mobile gambling specialist Spin3, Ki-bi was on to something. It bought the technology last year. Just weeks ago, it re-launched the format as OnCash.

What Spin3 quickly realised, after the purchase, was that Ki-bi was selling itself short as a delivery tool. Matti Zinder, Spin3's CEO, explains: “We saw that the concept could be adapted to become the gateway to an entire back office management system – and that this had fantastic potential in the mobile gambling space, where so much effort has traditionally been on the games themselves and not on the business ecosystem used to deliver them.”

Zinder's vision was this: OnCash cards would not be sold to the public but issued



Zinder sees great potential for OnCash in the mobile gambling space

to retailers. These ‘master’ cards could then be used to register new players on to the Spin3 gambling platform, push casino games to their phones and top up their accounts in cash. Bingo! This system eliminates the need to use shortcodes for downloading, bypasses a complex registration process and demolishes the need for credit or debit card payments.

According to Zinder, these are three of the stiffest barriers to the growth of the gambling sector. “There's so much potential in the space and so many barriers. People want to play, but don't know how – or don't have the means of payment. With OnCash they can be up and running within two minutes of entering their local shop.”

Zinder is excited about the prospects for OnCash in developing markets like South East Asia. Indeed, the first trial run is already under way with 50 stores in the region. Spin3 hopes to have around ten retail partners within the next few months – and says less than 15 by the end of 2007 ‘would be very disappointing’. Zinder adds: “Credit card ownership is very limited in these areas, as is PC ownership. With our system, the retailer just needs a GPRS connection.”

Although the gambling application is the priority for Spin3 now, Zinder acknowledges that the system could equally be licensed by third parties (in a twist in its original use) to deliver and pay for games/music/video etc.

