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## Thought piece – COVID-19: A reason to think digital first

The 1966 World Cup marked a low point for Brazilian soccer. Although the winner of the previous two tournaments, the team was eliminated in the first round, and its star player, Pelé, failed to perform. Fouled frequently and flagrantly, he threatened never to return to the World Cup. Many wondered if Brazil's glory days were over. Four years later, however, Brazil won again, with such grace and style that the 1970 team is not only widely regarded as the best team ever to take the pitch but also as the most beautiful. And Pelé was named the player of the tournament.

Making this turnaround required innovation, in particular, the creation of a unique attacking style of soccer. It required building a cohesive team, even as most of the roster changed. And it required leadership, both in management and on the field. The result: by reimagining everything, Brazil came back stronger.

As bookmakers consider how to return from the torment inflicted by coronavirus, Brazil's journey from failure to triumph provides food for thought. Analysts call out four necessary actions – recovering revenue, rebuilding operations, rethinking the organisation, and accelerating the adoption of digital solutions.

In this blog post, we want to focus on your digital fitness to navigate COVID-19.

Australian bookmakers have experienced the march of the digital economy since the mid-2000's. It is as much an e-commerce story as anything else. From land-based to online. From racing to sports. From pre-game to in-play<sup>1</sup>.

As a result of COVID-19 we have already seen early digital moves, for example:

- Media reports that the Victorian Bookmakers Association is considering a proposal to move all its on-course bookmakers in the state online<sup>2</sup>
- ASX announcements that two prominent rails bookmakers – Rob Waterhouse and Mark Sampieri – will launch online wagering products for their respective brands for the first time<sup>3</sup>

We have three considerations for our clients to assess the digital fitness of bookmaking operations<sup>4</sup>:

Channels – Innovating ways to deliver your book, or aspects of it, online.

### *Usability*

Right now punters have little choice but to access you through your digital offerings. Their options will expand as we move beyond coronavirus.

Who are your most valuable punters? How well will your offerings stand up when those punters have greater (or simply different) choices?

### *Enablement*

COVID-19 has exposed the need to be able to enable all aspects of your business model which may have been 'freshly' digitised.

Have you realised value from your business model (think changes to support work from anywhere infrastructure, outsourcing of non-core processes or the supply chain of the digital parts of your business)?

Messages – Promoting apps and other mobile tools and services.

### *Content*

More people will be spending time at home over the coming months. Even as you turn on digital options, some punters will always want to hear an empathetic human voice. You can provide lighthearted and uplifting content to drive interest and connections with punters perhaps looking for support. This logic extends to your phone-based services not becoming laggards either.

So ask, is this content right, given the current context in a local market?

### *Creative*

Make sure your updated offerings show up in your creative

Are all of the creative elements – tone, copy, visuals, keywords, placements – appropriate and relevant to this new reality?

Platforms – Ramping up capacity for online transactions, safely.

### *Data security*

Are you experiencing breaches as you move to remote working and data sharing?

### *Scalability*

Where are the breaks and crashes happening as 100 percent of your interactions with punters, employees, and business partners go virtual?

#### Notes:

1. Australian Offshore Interactive Wagering Report (November 2015) H2 Gambling Capital prepared for the Australian Wagering Council
2. Accessed via <https://www.racing.com/news/2020-04-28/news-sampieri-fears-for-bookie-peers>
3. Accessed via <https://www.asx.com.au/asxpdf/20200427/pdf/44h8fjl6pf4bzb.pdf>
4. Proprietary analysis by AWC

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