



Yahoo to Launch Online Bingo Site

by Kevin Smith

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Yahoo will enter the Internet bingo space through a partnership among Parlay Entertainment Inc., St. Minver and Yahoo UK & Ireland.

St. Minver's network will host "Yahoo Bingo," which is to be powered by Parlay Entertainment's software. Yahoo UK & Ireland brings to the table millions of users and one of the world's strongest e-commerce brands.

It's the second online gambling venture in the last six months for Yahoo UK & Ireland, which unveiled plans in January for a Yahoo-branded betting exchange operated on Betfair's P2P platform. (The first phase of that project got off the ground in March.)

Like the betting exchange, which is tied into Betfair's well established network of customers, Yahoo Bingo will draw from the St. Minver network. The new Yahoo site will be based on an aggregated model, enabling partners on the network to benefit from the shared critical mass of players and large jackpots.

David Kicks, St. Minver's business development director, said Yahoo Bingo should establish his company as the industry leader.

"The addition of what is arguably the world's No. 1 online brand and portal as a partner in the St. Minver bingo network confirms us as the leading online bingo network in Europe," Kicks said. "Millions of potential players will now be exposed to bingo."

Kicks added that the Yahoo deal will create a domino effect among other operators and brands looking to get on board.

"Enhanced liquidity on the network will include Gala Bingo and additional brand-name partners that will be announced shortly, now that the network has been successfully launched," he said.

Andrew Branscombe, vice president of sales for Parlay, said that bingo could be the next craze to fuel the online gambling industry.

"Online bingo in the U.K. has experienced explosive growth over the past six months," Branscombe said. "The addition of Yahoo! UK & Ireland, as the first of the major brands to tap into the online bingo market, heralds an exciting acceleration of that trend. . . . Bingo has the largest and most loyal player base of any game worldwide. With the entrance of major brands, we expect the much anticipated online bingo market to finally burst out into the recently regulated U.K. market."

St. Minver, a Gibraltar-based company, controls a master license under which Yahoo Bingo will operate. Similar to Yahoo Betting, Yahoo Bingo won't accept real-money play from U.S. residents or from anyone else located in a jurisdiction where the legality of online gambling is in doubt.



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According to research cited by St. Minver, online bingo is a Â£100 million business fed by more than 5 million players worldwide. The new Yahoo site will be hosted on the Yahoo gaming channel, which welcomes over 1 million monthly visitors.

Yahoo hasn't commented publicly on the new venture. While the UK & Ireland division has embraced gambling, the parent company has kept its distance from the industry. Yahoo's U.S. division was one of many media outlets to pull all Internet gambling advertising in 2004 in the midst of a grand jury investigation that has put the legality of carrying such ads in question.