

Playing the game the right way: what marketers can learn from the sports industry

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It's incredibly unusual to win without working for it, and that's something that the sports sector is only too aware of. While it's great to see revenues soar when teams are victorious, consistency is key. Successful **brands** are built over time and sports marketers have become pros at engaging with fans over these extended periods.

In this landscape, you could forgive sports marketers for just employing the same campaigns they always have done. After all, sport is such an emotive world. While fan enthusiasm might peak and trough with a team's win-loss record, the understanding is that well-established teams will always have support.

However, the smartest sports and entertainment marketers have refused to be left behind. Using the **digital** tools newly available to them, they have looked to harness the passion associated with sports and found ways to deepen their interaction with fans. Embracing a shift to **digital** engagement, these **brands** are able to drive fan loyalty, increase ticket sales and repeat engagement in an increasingly noisy world for consumers.

Coaching from the world's leading sports teams

By following the customer's journey from the stadium to online interaction, sports organisations can identify the most effective ways to engage with them as an individual. For example, if you know that a fan always attends a certain kind of match or has liked a specific player on **Facebook**, you are more likely to deliver the right content or offer at the right time, and ultimately, it's more likely that the customer will get to the next step of their journey.

Vincent Ircandia, SVP of Business Operations of American basketball team, the **Portland Trail Blazers**, recently [stated](#) that this approach has allowed his team to learn more about their customers in the past two years than they had in the previous twenty. Furthermore, with the help of **marketing** automation and closer focus on engagement **marketing**, they were able to better segment and communicate with audiences, leading to 96% of existing customers renewing their season tickets for the following year.

Making your customers part of your team

The most successful sports teams have already stepped up their game to create more engaging and personal experiences for fans. These teams are knowledgeable about their customers' individual preferences, from their history and relationship with the team, to their stage in the buying journey, and are using this information to speak to individuals on their own terms.

This was [noted](#) by **Charlie Metzger, CMO** of NBA team **The Detroit Pistons**, as an easy way to improve interaction with target audiences. Their marketers attract fans by first truly understanding their fans based on their lifestyles, before creating products and packages that match those lifestyles, and then creating a segmented approach in their communications. The team saw a 30% year on year growth in ticket sales by using this high-touch personalisation approach.

In today's **digital** era, there is a wealth of information and opportunity available to organisations, and as these success stories show, mastering an engagement **marketing** strategy with a **brand**-consumer relationship at its centre can create long-term results that are not dependent on unpredictable influences, such as a sporting team's success.

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