



Sports Industry

# The Power of Fan Data

## Using Fan Data to Win the Engagement Game





To elevate fan engagement, it's imperative that sports organizations fully leverage fan data, their most important asset.

We don't go to games to kick our feet up. We go to get our hearts racing. We go to pump our fists and cheer with strangers, to feel the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat, and the awesome drama of athletic competition. We go to *engage*. (And maybe, grab a hot dog and a beer.)

That's why we watch. That's why we care! And our digital footprints — our data — hold the key to engage us deeply. Sports organizations can leverage everything from our purchasing patterns to our in-game interactions to heighten our experience and keep us coming back for more.

So why are so many teams leaving our fan data on the field?

## Why Fan Data Matters

To elevate fan engagement, it's imperative that sports organizations fully leverage fan data, their most important asset. Comprising various metrics like viewership, attendance, merchandise sales, and social media engagement, fan data helps teams and sports organizations understand their fan base's behaviors and preferences, enabling them to personalize experiences and connect with fans on a deeper level.


These data-driven experiences offer fans greater value by enhancing convenience, fostering participation,

and amplifying enjoyment. The more value we feel, the more inclined we are to share our data, which fuels even richer experiences.

This is why fan data is essential to winning the engagement game. It creates a self-perpetuating cycle of value creation where data-driven experiences breed heightened engagement, prompting us to share more data, and so on. Indeed, Statista even reported that nearly 80% of sports industry leaders believe [fan data will deepen fan engagement and loyalty](#).

But that data means nothing if you can't analyze and act on it.

To build a powerful data foundation to uncover valuable fan insights, sports organizations must:

 **Build a data strategy that clearly defines business goals and data needs**

 **Unify fan data to make it actionable**

## Charting a Course with a Data Strategy

True value lies in solving problems. If a sports team tackles the issues hindering enjoyment, that's where value shines. To heighten fan engagement, organizations must prioritize solving real problems, and fan data is the key to unlocking those solutions.

But without a clear problem to solve, collecting and unifying fan data offers little value. Just consider the numerous potential data sources — ticketing, merchandise, concessions, even parking lots — all generating relevant information. Simply amassing this data is not enough.

**Sports organizations need to strategically piece it together to understand which information is truly useful in solving problems and shaping our fan journey.**

A strong, intentional data strategy connects these dots and provides a long-term roadmap outlining people, processes, and tools you need to overcome data challenges and achieve your business objectives.

### Here's a quick approach to get started



#### STEP 1: DETERMINE PAIN POINTS

What problems do you want to solve? Late arrivals? Long lines? Lack of in-game entertainment?

#### STEP 2: DEFINE OUTCOMES

What impact do you want to achieve by solving these problems? Maximize average transaction value? Enhance customer sentiment? Increase attendance?

#### STEP 3: TAKE INVENTORY

What's working and what isn't in your existing data ecosystem? Is your data siloed? Are there untapped data sources? Are the right people and processes in place to govern your data effectively?

#### STEP 4: MAP THE GAPS

What data do you need to solve the problems and achieve your desired outcomes? Social media analytics to better connect with younger fans? Point-of-sale metrics to address limited concession sales?



## Data Strategy in Action

Imagine a team struggling with fan engagement. Their data strategy reveals a surprising culprit: late arrivals. This presents a golden opportunity — get fans in the seats faster so the team can engage with them longer.

Now the team knows what to do with all their data: pinpoint the reasons why fans are late and develop solutions to get fans there on time.

Are traffic jams holding fans back? With a data-driven strategy, the team can send personalized traffic alerts to fans with estimated arrival times and suggested alternative routes.

Are fans spending more time tailgating than watching the game? The team could offer tailgaters time-sensitive discounts on food and drinks to encourage them to enter the stadium earlier.

Without a coherent data strategy outlining the problem and the data needed to solve it, developing targeted solutions to overcome hurdles like late arrivals would not have been possible.

## Unifying Data for a Single Source of Truth

Teamwork wins games. So why don't more sports organizations let their data work together as a team?

**Organizations that still silo their data are severely limiting their ability to understand fan behavior and unlock the full potential of their data strategy.**

To win the engagement game, you must dismantle these silos and unify the wealth of fan data at your disposal. This creates a single source of truth, empowering you to generate actionable insights that solve problems and elevate experiences.



## Unified Data in Action

To fully grasp how unified data can impact fan understanding, imagine two sports organizations tracking fan activity. Organization A hasn't unified their data, so when a fan named Gemma Jenkins buys a piece of merchandise, then a beer, the systems might record them as separate people. One system might list the merchandise buyer as "Gemma Jenkins" and another system might list the concession buyer as "Gemma J."

Now extrapolate this issue to the hundreds of thousands of purchases made every year. Instead of tracking individual fans through their interaction journey, these systems are recording every interaction as a separate person.

Organization B, however, has a unified data system, so all of Gemma's purchases and interactions are linked to one profile, Gemma Jenkins. This lets them see the complete picture: Gemma's favorite beer, preferred merchandise, and more. With this comprehensive understanding, Organization B can tailor experiences that cater directly to Gemma's preferences, fostering a deeper connection.

To follow Organization B's lead and unify your fan data, organizations need a singular integrated platform that connects all data sources. A unified data platform can be built through cloud computing services like Amazon's AWS, and utilize add-on storage, integration, and ML services to enrich the platform's capabilities.

That's how teams can gain complete control and ownership of their fan data, enabling them to build a truly holistic view of their fans and forge deeper engagement.



*To help the PGA of America boost their membership, CapTech developed a consolidated consumer data platform to orchestrate player and coach interactions across PGA channels. This single source of truth gave us the insights we needed to create detailed personas, then build personalized pathways for each persona to increase engagement and conversions.*

## Setting the Stage for Next-Level Engagement

If you walk into a stadium today, chances are the team won't know if you're their best or worst customer. In fact, other entities like broadcasters and vendors may know a team's fans better than the actual team.

Unifying that data under an intentional data strategy is a game changer. Instead of wandering in the dark, you have clear goals to pursue and a framework to guide you. Instead of disconnected interactions with unidentified fans, you gain a comprehensive view, revealing the complete fan journey.

It's only once these pieces are in place that you can truly own your data, know your fans, and engage with them in a meaningful way.

*This article is part one of our comprehensive series delving into the transformative power of fan data. Stay tuned for more insights and actionable strategies to harness the full potential of your fan data and become an industry leader in data-driven innovation.*



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