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Case Study

Using live data and social amplification to drive fan engagement

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Abstract

2014 was IBM's 25th year sponsoring the Wimbledon Tennis Championships. As the technology partner to the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, IBM wanted to support the Club's ambition to extend the visitor experience across digital channels. This case study examines how a small group of marketers and sales and agency staff were convened in 'The Punnet' to create visitor personas, map the customer journey and support that journey end-to-end by applying real-time sports analytics data to deliver benchmark-beating results.

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**Extending fan
experience beyond
physical environments**

The problem

In June 2014, IBM celebrated its 25th year sponsoring the Wimbledon Tennis Championships. As the technology partner to the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, IBM wanted to support the Club's ambition to extend the visitor experience for fans at the grounds to fans anywhere in the world using digital channels. IBM knew that it would need to approach the challenge using new marketing tools and techniques in order to win the hearts and minds not only of the Wimbledon fans but also of employees to drive advocacy and help amplify the content that the team would develop and share.

The approach

A team of 14 employees was convened comprising all marketing disciplines — events, external relations, advertising, employee engagement, analytics and digital. Importantly, the team also included IBM sellers and agency partners to create an approach that would span from creative concept right through to balance sheet. Equally importantly, the group was physically co-located in one office for workshops and meetings leading up to the Championships and then full-time for the two weeks of the Championships. The team called itself 'The Punnet' to reflect the small pieces of delicious, bite-sized content it planned to co-create and share on a large scale and as a nod to Wimbledon's traditional strawberries.

**Co-located, multi-
disciplinary teams**

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Persona development and journey mapping

Two workshops equipped the team with new skills around persona development and journey mapping. The team built two personas for its key constituents and crafted journey maps to cover each persona's goals and to consider not only the tasks that each persona might be looking to complete, but also how each would feel along the journey, endeavouring to put the customer at the very heart of its work in every way.

Considering audience emotions

The team also created a 'mood board' to encapsulate the emotional outcome it wanted its audiences to feel about IBM and the Championships and three succinct objectives to keep it focused that would be used as a 'litmus test' on every piece of work the team undertook:

- Win more fans;
- Impress the market;
- Drive revenue.

'Brand journalism' approach

In terms of skills, the team embraced some new sets of analytics for 'social listening' as a backbone for the work and took a novel 'brand journalism' approach — having an editorial meeting each day with the whole team, encompassing those in the office and those on-site at the Championships (as members of the team rotated on-site and off-site roles).

Leveraging cognitive computing

The 'social listeners' of the team used new technologies, including IBM Watson (IBM's cognitive computing capability), to examine how the content created during the event was received, shared and discussed, and then aligned subject matter experts armed with additional materials to continue conversations with the people engaging with the content the most.

Real-time data and behavioural economics by design

The content itself was developed using two new approaches. The first applied real-time data captured courtside to animations that had been created pre-event to add relevance; the second created content that embedded behavioural economics (sometimes referred to as 'nudges') into the materials, one example of which saw a six-fold increase year-on-year in sellers attending a briefing event.

The results

Facilitating sharing drove amplification

'The Punnet' delivered 13,625 social mentions and 44.4 million impressions — driving the balance of conversation to 71 per cent external mentions (the highest IBM had seen to date). The content exceeded the average for any IBM content previously developed on key platforms, including Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Tumblr. Each of the 98 assets created was shared in 'The Punnet Stall', each with one-click-to-share buttons for the social platforms most appropriate to each piece of content in order to make sharing by employees throughout the company as easy as possible. The team also ate its way through 3 kg of strawberry-flavoured sweets — provision of sweets and internal competitions were among the techniques used to bring the team together and encourage participation. A 'leader board' of social engagement was also used to bring visibility to the work and the results and to encourage participation.

Real-time data drove record-beating results

Engagement exceeded all global IBM social site averages. A combination of the amusing, real-time, data-driven animations and

photography from behind the scenes saw a significant differentiation in results, with engagement levels up 62 per cent on official IBM channels on Twitter, 57 per cent on LinkedIn, 39 per cent on IBMblr (IBM's site within Tumblr) and 14 per cent on Facebook.

Apps and maps

The team also supported the first IBM-developed app launch in an Apple flagship store, while two 'Wimbledon in a Box' demonstration points relayed the story in physical locations, travelling 1,553 miles and visiting 44 client and IBM locations sharing the Wimbledon story from June through July 2014. Two new approaches saw the team map each touchpoint result to the customer journey, which helped the team to review where its work was having the most impact, and the creation of an infographic to share its results, rather than a spreadsheet or presentation, which continued the skills development approach.

'Working out loud' shared learning

To share the knowledge and skills that the team learned, 'The Punnet' pioneered a 'work out loud' approach, each day writing a blog with materials, results, learnings and thoughts for everyone in IBM to share and to become a 'living reference' for the work. This also helped to drive internal engagement around Wimbledon through 'The Punnet story', the launch pad for competitions and social commentary leader boards, which the team also used. This approach garnered praise from internal stakeholders and created 'earned' editorial features in worldwide marketing team internal communications.

Multi-format, sharable results

When the Championships were over and the results were finalised, the team created a video where each team member talked through the part that they played and shared the materials they'd used in 'The Punnet'. The project leaders co-presented the work on two global calls that covered 400-plus IBMers and on a UK and Ireland marketing and communications team 'all hands' call. The content creation approach was workshopped with 120 marketers and, finally, an enablement pack was created and made available to any IBMers eager to take a similar approach in their work.

Best practice becomes a global toolkit

'The Punnet' team felt that it had not only won hearts and minds to create fans and impress the market, but also enabled and equipped its colleagues to do the same anywhere in the world. The approach has now become part of the toolkit for large IBM events around the United Kingdom and helped drive the social media team approach around the IBM flagship 'Business Connect' event held in November 2014, resulting in a 50 per cent increase in client engagement levels year-on-year.