

## FOREWORD

I love sports. I have not only been a sports fan for over 60 years - diehard New York Yankees, NY Giants, NY Knicks, NY Rangers - but I've been interested in the culture, the literature and the business of sports. In fact, the fascination I've had with not only the games themselves but the business led me, due to a fortuitous set of circumstances, to become the only non-sports business professional on the Global Board of Advisors of the largest, and I might add the best, sports business professionals organization – The SEAT Community (Sports Entertainment Alliance in Technology).

That's where I met Fiona Green. She called me out on the stage of one of SEAT annual conferences, we met, and I have been impressed ever since. You'll see why in a minute.

There is no question in my mind that someone – she – needed to write a book on CRM for the sports world. Sports has one unique trait that no other industry has, and every other industry would kill for. They have fans from the get go. I've been active in the CRM world for two plus decades and if someone asks me (as they often have) what would be the optimal customer strategy, I would tell them – aim at creating advocates, settle for loyal customers and know that, if done well, it will leave satisfied customers in its wake. But sports franchises don't have to create advocates – they have the most passionate advocates in the world – their fans. These are people who root for teams out of nostalgia, civic pride, heritage, reasons known only to them which could range from they were enthralled by a player when they were little on a particular team who wasn't in their hometown and thus rooted for that team their whole life, to perhaps they went to a stadium and just met their future spouse there. Who knows? The beauty of sports is that whatever the reason, the fans love, love, love their teams – and as often as not are students of their particular sport.

But, we often forget that sports are a business – and there are few franchises that are truly all that big. Sure, there is Real Madrid, Manchester United, Dallas Cowboys and (of course) the New York Yankees that meet what I would call in the business world an enterprise standard, but beyond that the vast majority of teams are mid-sized businesses with revenues to match. So for example, the largest three sports franchises in the world, according to the 2017 Forbes annual ranking are:

- (1) Dallas Cowboys (\$4.2 billion)
- (2) New York Yankees (\$3.7 billion)
- (3) Manchester United (\$3.69 billion)

The average value of a sports team by league according to Forbes in April 2017 is the following:

(1)	NFL	\$2,390,000,000
(2)	MLB	\$1,540,000,000
(3)	Soccer	\$1,470,000,000
(4)	NBA	\$1,360,000,000
(5)	NHL	\$520,000,000

This isn't change, but it is small by comparison to what fans think that these franchises are worth. A lot of that comes due to the outsized money that the teams give to their athletes, salaries that are beyond the imagination of even well-paid workers in a normal professional environment. Part of the inflated expectations that fans have is due to their own passion and commitment to the team, and in an age where social validation and communication and conversation about this passion is commonplace on social media, the fans expectations for the teams are far greater than the team can deliver.

If you get past the athletes and look at the business staff of any given team, large or small, you find a small number of employees devoted to large areas of the teams' business. So, for example, a typical team in a professional league in the U.S. has perhaps 3-5 people at the most devoted to marketing. Not a lot given the public visibility of any professional franchise and the need to be competitively visible. Yet we live in a digital age, and we live in an era of economic uncertainty, and sports is a not a required spend for our hard-earned dollars (or whatever currency you might use). It is discretionary and competes with not only other teams in our city but movies, dinners out, concerts and even staying at home and doing nothing.

So, here's the dilemma of professional and, in a different way, collegiate sports. You have companies that, when it comes to revenues, are mid-market sized. You have fans who are so passionate about the clubs that they have what I would call enterprise-level expectations of what the team needs to provide, and you have small business-sized staffs devoted to the business and operations side of the house. And the teams are competing with all discretionary income spending, including none at all. So, enterprise customer expectations, mid-sized company revenues, small business sized staff and insane competition for revenue. Not the most effective combinations when you are competing to keep your almost entitled fans happy.

This is where CRM comes in – and I say this without hesitation. The value of CRM whatever your definition of it, is as an enabler of capabilities that make your business operations and your interactions with fans not only work more effectively, but at the same time allow for timely communications with the fan base. Not only does that mean happier fans because you are showing them some active love, but happy employees (and management) because you have a way of organizing those interactions and transactions individually via storing them in an accessible customer record. Having that information allows sports teams to tailor what they offer those fans e.g. their season's ticket packages or merchandise (depending on the league) and to provide the kinds of automated processes and enabled systems that give the sales people a leg up on who to focus on so they don't waste their energy on long shots, the marketing people a reach that allows targeted campaigns to millions of people potentially that are in specific communications formats – email, social media, websites – that resonate with those same fans and customer service – meaning solving problems or dealing with real time issues that show up – usually on social media. CRM gives you as a team or league or other kind of franchise the means to handle all that efficiently and effectively.

But, because sports is a different creature than most other industries using CRM, Fiona Green is the one who needed to be writing this book. She has the experience, the insights and the writing chops to make sure that you not only understand CRM per se but understand how it applies to the world of sports in the way that it is supposed. A generic book on CRM (I wrote that one) won't do. What Fiona Green does here will. Pay attention to her because, while we know that winning teams bring in the cash from the fans, that doesn't happen every year and yet you have to be playing on the field and running your business every year. Fiona tells you not just how to think about it but what to do. Then it will be up to you to do it. But if you do, then you'll understand why a book on CRM in sports needed to be written – and was by someone insanely well qualified to write it – and you will be grateful.

Ciao.

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