blueconic

Customer Case Ajax

BlueConic realizes loyal fans and more profit

"We're really pleased with BlueConic. This software gives real form to our FRM strategy. Our aim is to invest in sustainable relations with fans through forming relevant dialogues. BlueConic is ideal in enabling us to put this into practice."

Mark van Leest
Media Manager, Ajax

Amsterdam soccer club Ajax is working hard to form the best possible relationship with its fans. That is why Ajax started BlueConic. BlueConic has enabled the soccer club to increase the loyalty of individual fans by offering customized content on all online channels. This has resulted in more loyal fans and increased the online sales of tickets and merchandising.

Introduction

AFC Ajax is one of the Netherlands's top clubs. Since its formation in 1900, Ajax has been national champion 32 times and has won 25 important international competitions. The club is known for its training program for international star players. As well as the first team, youth and women's soccer also receive a lot of attention.

Soccer is not the only thing in which Ajax is involved. They are also very active online. They sell tickets for matches, maintain a webshop and offer exposure space for sponsors on their online channels.
For all these online activities, Ajax is using all kinds of platforms, such as the www.ajax.nl website, apps for smartphones and tablets, the digital Ajax iMagazine and Ajax Club TV that can be watched in no fewer than 85 countries. The soccer club also reaches over 2 million fans via social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. With 800,000 likes, Ajax is the largest Dutch sports brand on Facebook.

Situation

A soccer club's success depends on having a large fan base. After all, as 'twelfth man' fans can have a positive influence on the club's sporting achievements.
And of course fans also supply income. This again helps Ajax to better contend with the large clubs in international competitions. Luckily, Ajax has a large group of loyal fans. But how can you facilitate these ultimate brand ambassadors and improve the relationship with them even more?

The answer lies in getting to know your fans well. And on that point, Ajax wanted to make improvements. The club did have a

large database with details of club and season ticket holders, but could not link these data to its online visitors.

In other words: it wasn't possible to determine whether a website visitor was a ticket holder and use this information to identify other content relevant for this visitor. So Ajax had a valuable database, but was unable to use this to make communication on online channels more relevant.

Solution

Ajax sought a solution to conduct relevant dialogues with fans on online channels. This proved to be possible with BlueConic. Ajax is using the platform to build rich customer profiles by registering fans' online behavior.
At the same time, the software helps to use these profiles to deter- mine which relevant content should be offered. The richer the profile, the more relevant the communication.

Ajax is succesfully applying the above mechanism to all its online communications. First of all, Ajax uses BlueConic to determine whether each online visitor is a ticket holder. If so, BlueConic retrieves known customer data, combines these with data regarding the visitor's online behavior and then offers personal relevant content. This is, for example, extremely handy when Ajax wishes to offer tickets to its most loyal fans. BlueConic gives Ajax precise insight into who they are dealing with.

Ajax also uses BlueConic to facilitate fans better on mobile devices. Ajax had already registered fans' app behavior, but only stored these data. With BlueConic, Ajax is now starting real interactions with fans. For instance, Ajax can refer some-one who previously purchased the home kit via the app to an away kit offer. Soon Ajax will also be able to offer relevant messages to app users based on their location. If they are in the stadium Ajax can better inform, facilitate and entertain them with relevant content and focused banners.

What's more, Ajax is using BlueConic to obtain a better picture of those still fairly unknown target groups, such as fans of Jong Ajax (youth soccer) and Ajax Vrouwen (women's soccer). Relatively little is known about them (particularly because women's soccer has only existed since 2012). Meticulous analysis of these target groups' content consumption enables Ajax to gain better insight into their identity. A next step is to offer customized content.

Results

Ajax has developed a special strategy to improve its relation-ship with its fans: Fan Relationship Management (FRM). BlueConic plays an important role in this. Daily, some four departments (Fan Relations, Business Relations, Ajax Media, Ticketing) work together closely to achieve the central goal: increasing individual fan involvement through offering customized experiences.

The FRM strategy is bearing fruit. The best evidence until now is the profitable campaign that Ajax started with BlueConic to sell tickets for the Champions League (a soccer competition for top clubs in Europe). Never before were so many tickets sold online in the so-called 'blind' sales period, the phase prior to Ajax's opposing teams in the Champions League being known. In just one month, Ajax generated 30% more turnover from ticket sales than the previous year. The key to success was offering personal relevant messages. For instance, all club ticket holders and previous Champions League match visitors received a personalized e-mail offer. This mentioned which seat they had at the match they visited last and the main message was formulated personally ('book your seat') instead of the commercial ('buy a ticket now'). Following the purchase of a ticket, Ajax coach Frank de Boer thanked them via Facebook. This Facebook post also encouraged friends of the ticket buyer to purchase tickets. Each post was clicked no fewer than five to six times (544%).

Benefits:

- A 417% higher return on their campaign compare to one year earlier
- A clear and complete image of individual prospects and customers
- Customer loyalty improved significantly
- online ticket sales grown considerably

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