

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY:
ARSENAL FOOTBALL CLUB

Arsenal Football Club safeguards competitive advantage by using IT to improve match experience for fans.



Customer Profile

Industry: Sport and entertainment
Company: Arsenal Football Club
Revenue: c. £160m
Employees: 350

Business Impact Summary

Business:

Arsenal has finished first or second in the English FA Premier League eight times in the last ten seasons. It recently built a new 60,000-seat stadium in London that will transform the hospitality and entertainment services available to fans.

Challenge:

Maximise the revenue-generation potential of premium customers by guaranteeing availability and performance of customer-based systems in the stadium on match day.

Solution:

Implement an integrated business service management solution that will enable the club to simplify the management of its customer-facing system and minimise the risk of downtime on match days.

Result:

By improving the availability of its stadium systems, Arsenal can ensure that fans enjoy an excellent match experience and maximise the revenue potential of every game.

Business

Matching fans' expectations

Many organisations describe themselves as competitive, but in the case of Arsenal Football Club, there's no doubt. The North London football club has finished first or second in the FA Premier League eight times in the last ten seasons.

It's a performance that has helped make Arsenal one of England's most popular football clubs, with capacity crowds of 38,500 regularly filling Arsenal's Highbury stadium through the 1990s. Sustaining this popularity by ensuring that fans enjoy every game is essential for the future of the club and its brand.

Football has become much more than just a sport. It is also an expanding and lucrative business, with millions of people regularly paying to support their favourite team both through match and season tickets and branded merchandise, such as team kits, cuddly toys, watches and even home insurance.

As a result, competing for fans – and their buying power – has become nearly important to football clubs as scoring goals. “Arsenal has over a hundred years of footballing tradition combined with very modern ambitions to build the club into a financial powerhouse,” explains Adrian Ford, Commercial Director for Arsenal Football Club. “Football is still very much about what happens on the pitch but the modern football ecosystem also requires commercial success to enable sustained sporting achievement.”

“Arsenal is now a global brand, and we want to offer services that match up to our reputation.”

Adrian Ford

Commercial Director for Arsenal Football Club

Challenge

Playing the commercial game

For Arsenal, the ultimate objective is to meet the needs of its premium customers with a range of high quality facilities including: entertainment services, a range of dining options and multimedia screens feeding real-time match statistics and information. “It's all about improving the match experience for fans, whether they're in the main stand or an executive box,” explains Adrian Ford, Commercial Director for Arsenal Football Club. “Arsenal is now a global brand, and we want to offer services that match up to our reputation.”

To meet these goals Arsenal needed a bigger and improved stadium, which would not only allow the club to accommodate more supporters and offer a greater variety of services to fans but also increase the facilities for its premium customers.

With that in mind, Arsenal embarked on an ambitious project to create a new home for the club – the Emirates Stadium. This ultra-modern facility, which opened at the start of the 2006/2007 season, seats 60,000 supporters, including 9,000 premium customers who generate almost as much revenue as the whole of Highbury was able to do.

Arsenal needed an integrated IT management solution that would provide constant visibility and control of its enterprise systems.

Solution

Aligning IT to business strategy

The new stadium is a radical departure from Highbury, offering a wide variety of services that rely on a range of new IT solutions designed to improve and streamline every aspect of the club's business. "To achieve commercial success we need to put the infrastructure in place to support our ambitions, which includes IT," comments Ford. "Clubs need to maximise revenues so that they can invest in the best players, and continue to perform at the highest levels."

For IT to facilitate the modernisation and transformation of a football club, it must be aligned to business objectives and integrated with core operational processes.

At the heart of the Emirates Stadium is a suite of new hospitality and entertainment systems that control everything from the entrance turnstiles to the video replays in the executive box. The performance and reliability of these systems is absolutely vital. As Paul Farmer, head of IT at Arsenal FC, explains, "The new systems are more complex and more sophisticated than anything we had at Highbury, and we need to manage them proactively and address any performance issues before they become apparent to the customer. We can't afford for a turnstile to stop working on a Saturday afternoon a couple of hours before kick-off."

Optimised service management

To ensure that the club's core operations were not impacted by technology performance problems, Arsenal needed an integrated IT management solution that would provide constant visibility and control of its enterprise systems.

This solution is founded on a range of technologies, including CA's Network and Systems Management, Service Level Management and Management Portal. By combining these with its existing CA software, Arsenal has been able to reduce the complexity of managing its IT infrastructure and in particular the applications that underpin core customer services at the stadium.

"If there's a problem with an electronic point of sale (EPOS) till on a catering outlet, for example, we know about it before the user does — and we can fix it before business continuity is affected," says Farmer. "Without CA's solution, I can't think of any other way we could be confident of 500 tills all working perfectly on match day."

If a system failure is unavoidable, then the club can fallback on CA's server management solution. This solution allows Arsenal to seamlessly switch over to a back-up system if a failure is detected on a production server. As a result, the club can safeguard the availability of critical applications and the seamless operation of the stadium.

Thanks to its improved IT management capabilities, Arsenal can now administer a much larger IT infrastructure without needing to invest in new IT support personnel. The Emirates stadium boasts more than 500 highly specialised hospitality EPOS devices and 100 entertainment screens — double the number used at Highbury — all of which can be managed through a single centralised CA management console.

The new management solution also allows Arsenal to measure its IT performance according to key business priorities, which aids investment and resource allocation.

“Thanks to CA’s technology, we’ve got what we consider to be a Rolls Royce system underpinning all our IT-based customer services. And we’re planning to go out and maximise every opportunity we can to continue to drive the business forward.”

Adrian Ford

Commercial Director, Arsenal Football Club

Result

Creating a global business

By enabling Arsenal to proactively monitor IT performance, CA’s solution has substantially reduced the risk of unplanned downtime. “The great thing is that there haven’t really been any hiccups, which as a football team we can’t afford. A club like Arsenal only gets 30 opportunities to reach our customers every year, and we can’t afford to miss a single one,” comments Farmer.

As a result of the new IT management solution, Arsenal has been able to:

- Improve match experience for fans by reducing downtime of critical hospitality, entertainment and facilities management systems
- Safeguard competitive advantage and strengthen the brand
- Enable business transformation

Thanks to this success, Arsenal’s commercial team can now focus on expanding further its hospitality and entertainment offerings. “Thanks to CA’s technology, we’ve got what we consider to be a Rolls Royce system underpinning all our IT-based customer services. And we’re planning to go out and maximise every opportunity we can to continue to drive the business forward,” says Ford.

To learn more and see how CA software solutions enable other organizations to unify and simplify IT management for better business results, visit ca.com/customers.