

The New Age of Sports Partnerships

Using Marketing Automation to Get Measurable Results



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About the Author

Tom Huggins has more than 10 years of experience in digital marketing, with a skillset ranging from operations to product and strategy. His approach focuses on explaining digital marketing in simpler terms and using technology to drive higher engagement and more measurable results for clients. Tom co-founded Greenroom Digital in 2011 with his business partner, Nick Biggin.



Successful brands are adopting a more measurable approach to sports partnerships.

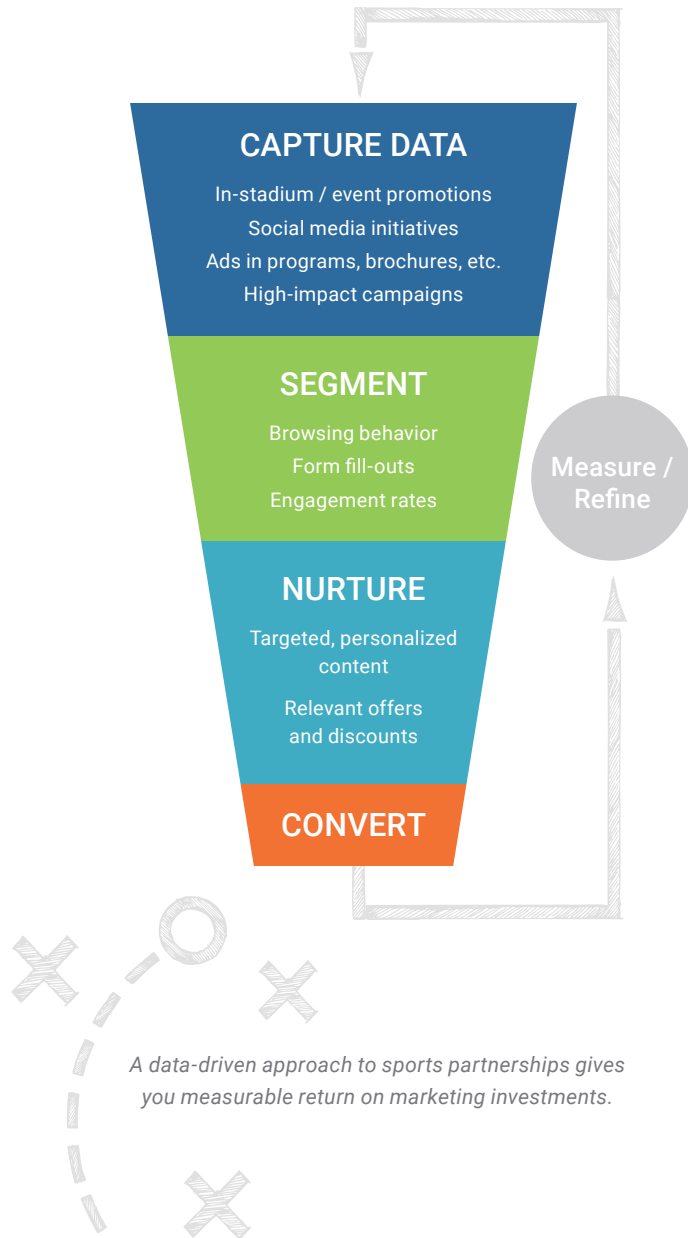
OUT WITH THE OLD 	IN WITH THE NEW 
<i>Sponsorships that deliver value unequally among stakeholders</i>	<i>Partnerships that deliver genuine value to all stakeholders</i>
<i>Lack of clear objectives for the relationship</i>	<i>Clearly defined commercial objectives for the partnership</i>
<i>Too much focus on traditional sponsorship assets</i>	<i>All entitlements aligned to drive measurable returns</i>
<i>Resources stretched due to competing priorities and lack of supporting technology</i>	<i>Highly focused initiatives supported by scalable technology such as marketing automation</i>
<i>High barriers to entry for majority of brands</i>	<i>Accessible to any brand with a strategic focus on ROI</i>

For decades, major brands have partnered with sports organizations as a way to get their names up in lights and boost their reputations. Sports are universally understood and loved, and many companies have discovered that tapping into that passion and avidity is a sure-fire way to boost engagement.

Sports partnerships have traditionally focused on general “brand exposure” metrics as a primary measurement of success. But brands that continue focusing on loose metrics like these will soon begin to suffer, as sports consumption has largely shifted from watching full 2-hour games to catching highlights and snippets on social media, where exposure metrics are adversely impacted.

Brands that want to drive greater returns from their sports partnerships need to quickly shift away from the one-size-fits-all messaging strategy they’ve always used. Instead, they must adopt a more personalized approach that allows them to connect with various consumer demographics in a meaningful way – and to do this, they need **marketing automation**.

THE STRATEGY



With an effective marketing automation strategy, brands can gather lead data – at sporting events and from promotions around the events – and then leverage that data to create highly targeted lead nurturing campaigns that will convert fans into customers.

Furthermore, these campaigns are trackable, which allows marketers to quantify the results of their initiatives and determine whether their sports partnerships are justified.

Until recently, the issue with this approach was the high cost barrier to entry for relevant supporting technology like marketing automation. But this is no longer the case, as more cost-effective marketing technologies are becoming available.

Revising the Playbook – A Strategic Approach

Our agency, Greenroom Digital, is a sports marketing business that provides digital sponsorship activation services to some of the largest brands and industries in Australia. These brands have always understood the value of data, but until recently had no way to effectively utilize the information and insights they had about fans.

The approach we've implemented and managed for our clients aims to bring transparency and accountability to the marketing efforts surrounding

The insights we are able to deliver with platforms like SharpSpring have helped us get major industries to re-think the way they classify success and unlock previously missed opportunities.

their sports partnerships. Marketing automation is the backbone of this approach, allowing us to deliver measurable results through data capture, lead profiling, and a highly targeted content and communications strategy.

The brands that engage our services now have a clear line of sight on the power of their sports partnerships. The insights we are able to deliver with platforms like SharpSpring have helped us get major industries to re-think the way they classify success and unlock previously missed opportunities.

For example, our automotive partners that were engaged in sports partnerships had a strict interpretation of a “lead” until we uncovered that **59% of respondents displayed strong purchase intent despite indicating they were not looking for a vehicle for 12+ months.**

Armed with a clearer picture of what their leads looked like, these brands were better able to understand the value of their investments. And once our agency began to help these partners accurately attribute leads and sales to their sports partnerships, they saw a sharp increase from the number of conversions they had estimated were coming from their sports partnerships.

Basically, with the help of data-driven insights, they were now unlocking a large group of leads that they had previously been ignoring. Additionally, they discovered that compared with other initiatives and programs, their sports partnerships were generating more bookings and bringing in far-higher revenues.



SharpSpring marketing automation can help gather useful types of lead data including interests, social activity, demographics, mobile and desktop interactions, and more.

Every aspect of a sports partnership should be focused on capturing data about fans, profiling those fans, and then using exclusive content to engage and convert them. Multiple digital touch points and the proliferation of mobile devices to consume sports has given brands the opportunity to connect with fans anywhere at any time.

Our clients have seen their open and click-through rates increase tremendously as a result of adopting data-driven, automated strategies. We pulled some aggregate statistics to see how using data-driven tactics has set our clients ahead of competitors. We found that after implementing a data-driven strategy, our clients' average open rate rose to **72% above industry average**, and their click-through rate rose to **33% above industry average**.

Unlock New Opportunities With Marketing Automation

Sports partnerships have traditionally been a resource-intensive practice, with internal resources stretched to breaking point with event activation planning, brand activities and wider marketing efforts. With all resources being hyper-focused on these activities, many unique sports partnership opportunities were being missed.

With marketing automation and a data-driven strategy, brands can distribute their resources more efficiently, so the benefits they reap from their partnerships can go way beyond just form fill-outs.

Here are some examples of data-driven initiatives that are made possible by marketing automation:

1. **Events:** Set up digital touch-points at games and collect contact info. Then track online traffic to your site and/or foot traffic to stores to measure the effectiveness of event activities.
2. **Content:** Send targeted email campaigns and then leverage engagement rates and other insights to further personalize your content.
3. **Digital & Social:** Encourage fans to engage with you over social channels so you can gather more info on their personal activities and preferences.
4. **Profiling:** Reward high engagement with personalized offers on tickets, merchandise, etc.
5. **Attribution:** Monitor all lead sources and activities so you can identify what's working and what's not, and attribute ROI to the correct initiatives.

Brands have the opportunity to optimize their partnership initiatives by using marketing technology to reduce stress on internal resources, increase engagement with fans, and attribute more tangible results directly to the partnership.





Score! A data-driven approach to sports partnerships gives you a measurable return on your marketing investments and a leg up on the competition.

Those Who Do vs. Those Who Do Not

Technology is evolving quickly, and businesses need to adapt in order to generate a competitive edge in their industries. Brands that are involved in sports partnerships already have the advantage of having a passionate and engaged audience, a range of interactive platforms through which to communicate, and exclusive, targeted content as the vehicle.

Add marketing automation into the mix, and you've got all you need improve process efficiency, measure results, and prove the ROI of your partnership initiatives.

There has never been a better time to implement a data-driven approach to sports partnerships. It gives you a measurable return on your marketing investments, a leg up on the competition, and a real-life business case for how a data-driven approach can benefit your entire business if applied across the board.

It's up to you to decide if you're getting what you want out of your partnerships strategy. Maybe what you're already using data to drive optimal results from your partnerships.

But if you're not using data and you're having trouble meeting goals and proving ROI, check out the following points to see if you could be getting more out of your efforts.

Does your brand need a revised approach to sports partnerships?



Does your brand need a revised approach to sports partnerships?

1. **Objectives:** We're more focused on brand awareness; data isn't overly valuable to us at this point. Y / N
2. **Return on Investment:** We're unsure about the ROI we're generating from our partnership(s). Y / N
3. **Attribution:** We have little to no visibility of how many conversions are being generated from our partnership(s). Y / N
4. **Resources:** We don't have sufficient internal resources to implement a data-driven approach. Y / N
5. **Cost:** We can't afford to invest in a data-driven approach to our partnership(s). Y / N

If you answered 'yes' to any of the above questions, you probably want to take some time to review your current partnerships strategy.

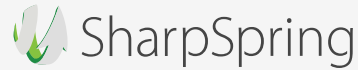
Those who **do not** will continue to burn valuable time and resources on outdated strategies.

Those who **do** will develop engaging partnerships, a diehard following, and the ability to measure the increased engagement and ROI that sports partnerships can deliver.



See how adding marketing automation to your agency's services can drive revenue from existing clients and help you add new ones. Schedule a demo with a partnerships specialist to chat about your specific needs.

Get a Demo



SharpSpring is the marketing automation platform of choice for more than 1,200 digital marketing agencies and their 6,000+ clients. Since 2014, SharpSpring has provided its powerful marketing automation solution to businesses around the globe. In the short time since its inception, the company has gained significant market share from industry leaders with its competitive pricing, agency-focused business model, and robust platform.

Visit www.sharpspring.com for more information.



Greenroom Digital is a sports marketing business that provides digital sponsorship activation strategies to some of the largest brands and rights-holders in the sports and entertainment industry in Australia. Through a focus on data capture, profiling and targeted communications, Greenroom has brought transparency and measurable returns to an industry that was in desperate need of accountability. The brands that engage Greenroom's services now have a much clearer line of site on the power of their sporting partnerships – which has led many of them to extend this high-performing data-driven approach to their wider businesses.

Visit greenroomdigital.com.au for more information.