



HOW TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE SPORTS AUDIENCE?

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The Beijing Games expanded the horizons of the Olympic audience. Our challenge now is to build on that success, extending the depth and breadth of our reach and retaining an audience outside of Games time.

The Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games was watched by an estimated two billion people worldwide. More than 28,000 journalists travelled to Beijing to form the largest media contingent for any event ever. New media also extended the reach of the Games, via websites, mobile phones and the YouTube channel of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In every quantifiable measure published, Beijing cemented the Games' claim to be the greatest show on earth.

How do we build from here? During Games time, the sports audience is huge; between Games we must increase the appeal of our sports to try to improve our audience retention.

The marketplace is more competitive than ever before, but we must remember we have two key advantages. Firstly, the Games themselves: as the world's greatest single event, there is no better marketing tool. Secondly, new digital technologies mean that the opportunities for targeting specific audiences, customising content and reaching new markets are now far greater than before.

I would now like to explore four themes:

1. A CENTRAL RESOURCE, SHARING DATA ACROSS ALL SPORTS

If we want to expand our audience, we need to look at ways of making our product, i.e. our sports more appealing, relevant, accessible and understandable.

And what is the key selling point of our product?

Our athletes.

After every Games, what sticks in the memory is the Olympians who define it. To increase our sports audience we must find ways of creating heroes outside of the Games.

Here is the perfect example of where new media can help us build upon the success of the Games. Every four years, the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG), in tandem with the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the International Federations (IFs), goes through an exhaustive period of data-collection to ensure that information about our athletes is available at the click of a button to the world's media. Yet, as soon as the Games end, this information evaporates. An information database, shared across the Olympic Family, would provide us with a key component in expanding the sports audience. If we can do this during the Games, why not outside of the Games? Not only would we immediately provide every NOC and IF, with a huge resource of information, but we would also relieve every Organising Committee of a huge and extremely expensive burden.

2. EXPLORING NEW DATA TO BRING SPORTS TO LIFE

If data-collection is one area where we can improve, data production is another. Statistical data is a very useful tool in making our sports more understandable and relevant to our audience. Watch a Formula 1 Grand Prix without being able to see the time splits between the cars and you'll see what I mean. It is impossible to tell if one car is pulling away or being hauled in. Or try to follow a tennis match without a scoreboard. The simple addition of a small graphic in the top left of the screen means I can start watching any match, at any time, and instantly know where the action stands.

The digital revolution gives us the tools to provide a sharper focus than ever before on the key elements of the sporting competition; not just in terms of the positions or score, but play by play.

We should be providing our audience with information about every element of the competition, and in real time. How about seeing a sudden wind shift on the sailing course as soon as it happens? Such knowledge should not be restricted to audience members by the water or only apparent to the worldwide audience when all the sailors change tack. It should be available to everyone.

3. INCREASING THE TRANSPARENCY OF OFFICIALS' JUDGEMENTS

Many sports have been successful in increasing the transparency of their officials' rulings. Rather than decisions being justified after the event, we can now hear the explanations offered to the players on the field. Opening up our sports does require careful planning and good training, but it brings another element of the competition to the audience. Now, with innovations such as Hawk Eye, the audience even gets to participate in the competition at the same level as the competitors and officials. The final ruling is revealed to everyone at exactly the same time.

4. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Participation brings me to another aspect of the new media, which we can mobilise to develop our audience. Online games and interactive forums provide a chance for audience members to become completely active, not just choosing their content and data, but interacting with it. In my own sport, sailing, the recent online games accompanying the



Volvo Ocean Race attracted over two hundred thousand players. During the final stage of the race, even the competing teams began to interact directly with the online players, posing them key tactical questions. The strength of the game was based not only on the game-play element, but also on the social aspect of taking part.

With over one million daily page views, the Games built a huge online community. Over the past two or three years, we have seen the huge impact of social networking communities. Interactive gaming and forums can provide a new sphere for the fan communities, which have always played a central role in sport, and can also help them develop beyond the traditional realms of teams or nations, attracting new audience members who do not fit these sometimes restrictive profiles.

Technology can often be exclusive, but the Digital Revolution is all about inclusiveness. During the Beijing Games, the IOC's online channel meant viewers anywhere around the world could watch the action live, even if a rights deal had not been agreed in their territory. To increase our sports audience this is the kind of goal we must continue to chase, but we need to be smarter and better organised in how we do it.

None of my recommendations are groundbreaking. These are simple steps towards sharing information, pooling our resources, and bringing the audience ever closer to our sports. As members of the Olympic Family we need to work together more, to meet the challenges that an increasingly competitive marketplace brings, and seize the opportunities new media offer.

In summary, I would like to conclude my presentation with four specific recommendations based upon the themes I have presented to you.

1. A NEW CENTRAL DATABASE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The IOC should work with the IFs, NOCs, OCOGs and the IOC Athletes' Commission to develop an "IOC Athlete and Sports Information Database". This database should be available to all IOC members, NOCs, IFs and OCOGs, and would be used to store information about athletes, sports and key results. All members should be able to submit updates to the database, perhaps using a standard XML language such as has been developed for use during Games time.

2. CAPTURING MORE DATA ON SPORTS EVENTS

We should investigate new ways in which technology can bring our sports to life and follow the example of market leaders like Formula 1, using advances in technology to provide our audience members with a better service.

How about heart-rate monitors on shooters and archers, or perhaps on each member of a rowing team? Gear sensors on cyclists or pin-pointing tracking on sailors? We should carry out a detailed analysis of each sport to discover the key data requirements, and how they can be monitored and presented in a meaningful way.

3. MAKING RULES AND OFFICIALS MORE TRANSPARENT

Technology can bring greater understanding to the role of officials in sport, giving the audience a first-hand perspective on the decision they take. We should aim to have all officials wired up, so that their decisions are available to the audience, as well as the competitors. And in

sports where decisions are not made during the heat of action, we must ensure that rule hearings are transparent and clearly communicated.

4. ENHANCING THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF SPORT

The Digital Revolution has brought about a huge range of new developments in social networking. Community is at the heart of sport and the Olympic Movement. The IOC is the central hub around which these communities can revolve and interact. We need to conduct a thorough review of the existing social networking opportunities, then formulate an IOC-wide strategy for developing the Olympic Community.

I would like to conclude by saying thank you to all the IFs that have contributed ideas, examples or inspiration to this presentation. I would also like to say thank you to all those members who submitted suggestions and comments via the Virtual Olympic Congress. And my final thanks go to the IOC, for inviting me to speak in front of you today. It has been a great pleasure. Thank you.