



Customer Solution Story

Real Madrid brings the stadium closer to 450 million fans around the globe, with the Microsoft Cloud

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José Ángel Sánchez, CEO, Real Madrid C.F.



As the leading sports franchise in the world, Real Madrid has a lot to brag about, including more than 100 championships and a passionate fan base. But what the football club didn't have was a way to directly engage with its 450 million global supporters. That changed when it implemented a comprehensive technology solution based on the Microsoft Cloud platform. Now, Real Madrid is able to connect more closely with its fans and give them a better overall experience, while analyzing social media data and other information to customize marketing campaigns and boost revenues.

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Enrique Uriel, CIO, Real Madrid C.F.

In the world of sports, it doesn't get any bigger than Real Madrid. The world's #1 sports franchise, the Spanish football club boasts more than 450 million fans across the globe and is known for its domination on the field. Since its founding in 1902, Real Madrid has won 116 official trophies, 10 European Cups, and a FIFA Club World Cup. It was recognized as the best football club of the 20th century by FIFA.

Passion is the hallmark of Real Madrid. The club's global fans are fiercely loyal to the club, whether they're cheering on the team at Santiago Bernabéu Stadium or watching a match on television. “It's impossible to change football club loyalty. Fans never change clubs,” says José Ángel Sánchez, CEO of Real Madrid. That kind of passionate support is true for all Real Madrid fans, whether they're in Spain, the US, or Asia.

But even with all its on-field success and ardent support, Real Madrid was still missing one thing: the ability to connect more closely with its fans. “We wanted to connect with all the people who support Real Madrid in the world,” says Sánchez. “It is critical for us to understand and learn from them, because in the end, the club belongs to them.” By engaging with its fans in more personal ways, Real Madrid wanted to increase revenue, customize marketing initiatives, and reinforce the club's leadership position in the worldwide sports industry.

Embarking on a digital transformation initiative

Because Real Madrid knew it wanted to use state-of-the-art technologies to achieve its goals, the club chose to enhance its already strong partnership with Microsoft, which started when the Real Madrid Foundation and Microsoft began working together on social projects for Latin American youth around the world.

Real Madrid engaged a Microsoft Services team to develop a new technology solution that would provide a cohesive structure to support innovative digital services to serve the club's global fans. Real Madrid also wanted to use the solution to collect and analyze data on fans. Microsoft Services worked with Real Madrid to build a comprehensive platform-as-a-service solution, based on the Microsoft Cloud and Office 365 platform. “Our core business is football, so having a technology partner manage the technology infrastructure is important,” says Enrique Uriel, CIO, Real Madrid. “The Azure platform will help us provide the services we want to offer because it gives us the scalability we need whenever we need it.”

The solution includes the following components:

Fan Engagement Platform. The marketing back-office engine of the solution, the platform captures and stores every

Overview

Customer: Real Madrid C.F.

Customer Website: www.realmadrid.com/en

Customer Size: 200 employees

Country or Region: Spain

Industry: Sports

Customer Profile

Real Madrid, a professional football club based in Madrid, Spain, is one of the most successful and widely supported sports organizations in the world.

interaction with a fan, including mobile check-ins at the club's stadium, online fan profile updates on the club's official website, and online merchandise purchases. It is hosted on Microsoft Office 365 based on Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online, Dynamics Marketing, and Power BI. The solution also takes advantage of Microsoft Social Engagement to collect club mentions and other data from Twitter, Facebook, and other social media sites. An innovative solution built on Azure aggregated such data into social segmentation of the individual fan. The highest volumes of data reside in Azure Table Storage and Azure DocumentDB, which is used to enable high-performance queries for analysis.

Extended Video Platform. Hosted on Azure Media Services, it contains both new and historical video content, including previous Real Madrid matches. The platform uses Azure App Service to integrate the apps to Azure Media Services. The solution also uses Azure Media Player to present the content to fans and Azure Search as the search engine, so fans can filter searches to view specific games using criteria such as games where the club scored a certain number of goals.

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José Ángel Sánchez, CEO, Real Madrid.

Consumer App. This mobile interactive app, designed for iOS, Android, and Windows platforms, was created using the .NET Framework with Microsoft Visual Studio 2013. Fans access the app on their mobile phones, tablets, or wearable devices to have the Real Madrid brand as part of their experience wherever they are. They can use the app to virtually access the stadium before, during, or after each game, and they

can search data on all the club's players, past and present, while also exploring detailed statistics from specific games.

For user authentication and profile storage, the solution uses a preview version of the Azure Active Directory Business to Consumer (B2C) identity service. Fans get simplified registration and login through use of social accounts like Facebook, or they can use traditional username/passwords for a seamless experience across mobile applications on any platform. Using a standard service built on the established Azure Active Directory platform significantly reduced custom code while giving Real Madrid customized branding and alleviating concerns about security, data breaches, and scalability.

Telemetry and Data Analysis. All aspects of the solution, including the cross-platform mobile applications and supporting web services, take advantage of Visual Studio Application Insights to provide rich telemetry on application usage by fans along with in-depth technical and operational insight across the entire infrastructure spanning mobile devices and Microsoft Azure.

The majority of this telemetry data is automatically collected with no added code, which significantly simplified the solution and reduced operational complexity. This telemetry is also surfaced through Power BI, giving Real Madrid the ability to analyze fan engagement.

Engaging one-on-one with millions of fans

Previously, Real Madrid only had a one-way communication method for broadcasting information and news to its fans, without the ability to get any feedback from fans.

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Real Madrid C.F.

“The club will be in a very good position because of the sophistication of the developments we have made with Microsoft. By partnering with Microsoft, we have tools to enable mobility, efficiency, and productivity. With our new platform, we are going to make a big jump into the future.”

Enrique Uriel, CIO, Real Madrid C.F.

With its new solution, Real Madrid now has a tool to capture detailed information about its hundreds of millions of fans, which it can use to engage with them more deeply. For example, the club can capture and discover personal preferences for providing more relevant content to that fan through the new mobile app. Or when fans use the app to check in at the stadium for a live match, the fan engagement platform can automatically provision a personal QR code for a loyalty in-stadium offer, or even a simple message that thanks the fan for investing time and money in seeing this live match.

“We can create a one-to-one relationship with fans around the planet with the Microsoft solution, connecting this huge community of people and making the experience of being a supporter of Real Madrid much better,” says Sánchez. “Our goal is to profile all our supporters, to understand who they are, and to give them what they want from us, such as exclusive content, and bring them closer to the club.”

Creating near-real-time marketing campaigns

Real Madrid is also able to take all the fan information gathered and stored in the fan engagement platform through fan actions to generate a detailed user profile of each fan. As a result, Real Madrid marketers can offer more targeted, customized marketing initiatives that could ultimately help the club increase revenues. For instance, the club’s fan engagement platform can aggregate social media post volume for each fan registered through the Real Madrid website or the new mobile app.

By analyzing these social media signals with Microsoft Social Engagement, Real Madrid can customize its marketing and advertising or encourage fans who have downloaded

the app to use it. Or, by capturing social media information such as a fan’s favorite player, Real Madrid can send personalized emails to that fan showing how to find statistics on that particular player inside the app. “Using the Microsoft cloud, we are building a way of understanding who our fans are, where they are, and what they want from us,” says Sánchez. “We can find out if they want products or content, as well as whether they want to have an influence in decisions. This is an old dream of ours now made real with the Microsoft solution.”

The club hopes to use insights gained through the solution to plan, create, and optimize its marketing campaigns to drive the best possible engagements with its global fan base.

Using data to analyze app usage and fan behavior

Real Madrid is also able to use the solution to analyze specific user behavior. The digital platform records all information related to user actions, such as winning an external challenge, checking in at specific places, or updating profiles. The process of collecting and analyzing the data is based in Azure Data Factory, which extracts, loads, and transforms the information and stores it in Azure HDInsight for querying. The data is then published to Azure SQL Database and consumed by Excel and Power BI. Additionally, Real Madrid can perform queries to extract specific information from large data sets.

From its telemetry information, the club can see how users interact with the app, including how they open the app, if they click on advertisements proposed by the app, or use third-party applications integrated in the app to access specific areas. Using Visual Studio Application

Insights, Real Madrid can see which users have executed specific actions. The club can use this information for better monitoring, operations, and forensic insights.

With all the data it collects and analyzes, Real Madrid has a process to clean, categorize, and group the information into reports that show how users are participating in the app, the number of users interacting with the system, and the specific actions inside the app.

Looking ahead, Real Madrid plans to use Azure Machine Learning to work directly with coaches and players to find out the status of players and also predict the price of seats during the season.

Transforming the business

As it expands its solution to add new features and engage with fans in new ways, Real Madrid will continue to completely transform its business. "The Microsoft Azure platform is helping us rebuild and reinterpret our business in a way that makes it possible for us and our fans to do things that used to be impossible," says Sánchez. "It is really a complete disruption of the business model that football has had over the past 15 to 20 years."

With its comprehensive new solution in place, Real Madrid believes it will be ready for the future. "It was our dream to connect with all our fans in the world, and we are doing that with our new technologies. We

also understand that in the next five years, everything that is going to be transformed in this business will happen through technology," says Sánchez. "The club will be in a very good position because of the sophistication of the developments we have made with Microsoft." Adds Uriel, "By partnering with Microsoft, we have tools to enable mobility, efficiency, and productivity. With our new platform, we are going to make a big jump into the future."



Software and Services

Microsoft Azure platform

- Microsoft Azure
- Microsoft Azure App Service
- Microsoft Azure Cloud Services
- Microsoft Azure Active Directory B2C
- Microsoft Azure DocumentDB
- Microsoft Azure Media Player
- Microsoft Azure Media Services
- Microsoft Azure Search
- Microsoft Azure Storage
- Microsoft Visual Studio Application Insights

Microsoft Dynamics

- Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online
- Microsoft Dynamics Marketing

Microsoft Office

- Microsoft Power BI

Microsoft Social Engagement