



How Fox Sports in Australia makes broadcast planning 10% to 20% more efficient

Fox Sports is saving time and effort in delivering sports programming to a nation of passionate fans using Smartsheet.



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Steve Barnes, Outside Broadcast Manager, Fox Sports Australia



Customer:

Fox Sports

Industry:

Media and Production

Organization Size:

Medium (50 - 999 employees)

Region:

APAC

Website:

foxsports.com.au

Fox Sports Australia is Australia's leading producer of sports coverage and is home to Australia's favorite subscription television sports channels as well as Australia's number one multi-sports website and app.

Background

Planning and executing the TV broadcast of 1,000 live sporting events per year requires tremendous organization and oversight of fine details. The Outside Broadcast team at Fox Sports in Australia wanted to streamline and automate their processes. With the help of the productivity consultants at 6STEP, and the features and functionality of Smartsheet, Fox Sports is saving time and effort in delivering sports programming to a nation of passionate fans.

Solution

"Our bottom line is to make sure we capture what's required for each event and don't miss anything," says Steve Barnes, Outside Broadcast manager at Fox Sports. "Smartsheet has worked really well for us; the automation of change management is good. Producers are entering information, and I can let go of that and focus on the issue of the day. As we're dealing with strategy meetings and tackling time-sensitive tasks here and there, it's a relief to know that Smartsheet is in the background just working away and keeping us honest."

Barnes leads a team that spans specialized sport groups planning broadcast and on-air commentary for live games including Australian Football League (AFL) matches, Super Rugby, boxing, sailing, hockey, darts, and more. Each broadcast event comes with a long list of details to manage, such as event start and finish times, broadcast start and finish times, number of cameras to deploy, announcers, physical equipment such as announcer desk or podium, and drones to dispatch for live aerial footage. Fox Sports colleagues coordinate across teams to plan coverage details, archiving and logging, compilation of statistics, satellite or fiber-optic connectivity, and advance publicity.

Change is a constant, and keeping up with those changes used to be a time-consuming task in itself. Teammates would have to manually search spreadsheets for new updates, or rely on their colleagues to compile and send out email. Sporting-based teams range from 10 or 20 people to hundreds for the most popular sports, so the number of updates and emails can be staggering.

"We haven't moved our cricket department yet," Barnes says. "They still send out a massive spreadsheet, which is very thorough, with a cover sheet that points out what changes have been made. In peak season, they send out three or four of those emails daily. So, your day has to come to a stop: You have to read the email, look at what's

Customer:

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changed, and have a think about the impact. And you can't guarantee people are always going to be reading those. We're looking forward to getting them onto Smartsheet so we can get all those alerts in real time."

Barnes started looking for a solution partner that could understand Fox Sports' unique needs. A contact at production company NEP Group recommended 6STEP, a Smartsheet Platinum Partner in the Asia-Pacific region. Founder & CEO Rohann Chapman and his team worked with Barnes to design a solution that could streamline broadcast planning and be quickly implemented to ensure no breaks in planning and coverage.

Dashboards give teams a real-time view of essential information

Barnes and his team at Fox Sports use a set of Smartsheet dashboards to execute live coverage. Because each sport team sets up its broadcast codes in slightly different ways, the Smartsheet solution uses DataMesh to aggregate and feed the data into the dashboards to create standardized viewing options without reformatting it. Calendar App, a premium add-on, allows their teams to plan for upcoming broadcasts by month, week, or day to fit their immediate needs.

Automation has transformed the way the Outside Broadcast organization does its work. Every update or deadline triggers an alert for the people who need those details. There's no need to start a new email thread when an athletic roster is updated or a playoff is rescheduled, and no risk of forgetting to loop in all the people whose tasks will be affected. Logistics staff know all new requests have been received and dealt with well before they arrive at an arena; on-air announcers receive customized schedules in time to prepare for the game.

Because Smartsheet is easy to access via mobile device, the latest updates are always at team members' fingertips. On-site teams used to rely on printouts of the latest schedule to hang up in the broadcast trailer, marking them up by hand as last-minute changes came in. Now event staff can confirm what to do next without having to walk halfway across an arena, saving them time — a precious commodity during live broadcasts.

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A central source for details brings a 10% to 20% jump in efficiency

Barnes says the biggest benefit of Smartsheet is that it saves time while improving accuracy. Because updates are reflected in the dashboard immediately, there's no need to dig through email trails to confirm changes, and no risk of working from an outdated plan. Collaboration is streamlined because it's easier for colleagues across teams to see who's accountable for specific items. Barnes estimates his team works 10% to 20% more efficiently.

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Barnes is also pleased that with one full-time employee designated as a power user to train others, he hasn't had to hire additional staff to bring teams into the dashboard system. His team's collaboration with Chapman and his 6STEP experts has created a platform that can scale easily as more sporting teams are incorporated.

"One of the one of the pillars of the success of this project has been the commitment to support it within the Fox Sports organization," Chapman says. "At 6STEP we've built solutions for manufacturing, education, research, entertainment, medical, and other industries. It was a bit of a leap of faith for Fox Sports and for Steve to engage us in network broadcasting, but it's part of our DNA to make sure that whatever we produce and build with our clients, we make sure that it's working for them at all times. And now it's fully integrated into their system. In the Australian market, we are finding that the challenges are shared across industry are quite similar, although they may be described differently. 6STEP have created a broad portfolio of product to use as either out of the box, readymade solutions or provide an advanced development point for bespoke solution development."

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