

Utah Jazz Slam Dunks Personalization

How one NBA team used customer data insights to achieve a major marketing win



Utah Jazz Needs to Turn Its Losing Streak into a Winning Streak

Three years ago, the Utah Jazz, an NBA team based in Salt Lake City, Utah, were struggling. They had just suffered a crushing loss to the Atlanta Hawks. Their overall season record was 19-28 and hopes of making the playoffs were rapidly diminishing.

On the marketing side, they were also not achieving their full potential. There was no personalization: every person received the same email, whether they spent \$6 on one ticket or \$54,000 on the best season tickets money could buy. These emails were also poorly timed and often pushing promotions that didn't align with their fans' interests. In basketball lingo, their emails were air balls.

Challenge:

A lack of personalization as well as an inability to track users across domains or devices hampered the Utah Jazz from increasing ticket sales.

Solution:

Using Tealium to track, identify, and segment visitors into different audiences, the Utah Jazz gained a comprehensive view of each customer, allowing them to personalize ticket packages and offers.

Results:

Marketing results went from low-scoring to high-converting, with email ticket sales increasing almost a million dollars in three years. The Utah Jazz also saw a conversion rate twice as high as that of any other team in the league on leads provided by the NBA.

“We do millions and millions of dollars in ticket sales every year. On email, we have hundreds of thousands of email subscribers, but we only sold \$25,000 worth of tickets. Not very good.” – Jared Geurts, Senior Director, Analytics, Utah Jazz

But it wasn't just email that was a problem. Despite having sales data and hundreds of thousands of email subscribers, the Jazz needed better insights across the customer journey. For example, if the Jazz tweeted about an upcoming game and someone clicked through to the Jazz website and then to Ticketmaster – a domain the team didn't own – to purchase a ticket, they needed to be able to attribute the final ticket sale to their social media post.

“Our Ticketmaster data will tell us whether somebody purchased, but there's no way we could ever trace that back to the fact that they really started that from the Jazz site, or even further back through a Twitter campaign,” says Geurts.

The other challenge they faced was not knowing who website visitors were. Site-wide, the Jazz estimated that 90 percent of visitors were unknown. “Most of the time on our site, we don't know who visitors are. They've never clicked through to an email; they've never made a purchase online. We know them by their devices, but we just don't know who these people are,” says Geurts.

The Jazz needed to identify who these visitors were so they could track their behavior, segment them into audiences, and begin personalizing marketing efforts to align with these visitors' individual preferences.

Tealium Gives Jazz an Assist with Personalization and Visitor Identification

On the court, the Jazz needed to figure out how to score more points, hold the competition at bay, and turn their season around. Behind the scenes, they needed a similar breakthrough – they needed to unlock the power of their customer data to improve their marketing efforts and accurately attribute marketing activities.

The Jazz started by adding Tealium, a customer data platform (CDP) and tag management solution, to their marketing tech roster. By combining their customer data in Tealium, they could learn more about what types of emails would appeal to which people, allowing them to segment audiences and send personalized emails.

“If someone has come to six games and every game is a Lakers game, when we send them an email, we're going to highlight the next time we play the Lakers. Or, if you've only ever come on the weekend, we're going to highlight the next couple of weekend games we have,” says Geurts.

Just by offering this simple level of email personalization, the Jazz started to see positive results. Meanwhile, on the court the team was making a comeback – they were on an 11-game winning streak.

With Tealium, the Jazz were able to address other critical challenges as well. First, they could finally tie the Jazz and Ticketmaster domains together by using Tealium's third-party cookies to track visitors across both sites. Tealium even allowed them to track visitors on browsers that block third-party cookies by letting the Jazz insert their Google Analytics tag – which provides cross-domain tracking by appending a Google ID to the URL – into Tealium.

“Because this is all happening inside Tealium, we got all that data back, even though these are two completely different data points. One's a cookie and one's a URL parameter. We can still tie it all together and stitch those sessions together,” says Geurts.

Tealium offered another assist to the Jazz by helping identify unknown visitors. Before Tealium, the Jazz could see when a device came to their site, but without a phone number or email address, they had no way to use this information to reach out to the person on the device – even if they'd visited their site multiple times. Once Tealium was deployed, the Jazz could stitch multiple identifiers back to a device to create more comprehensive visitor profiles that allowed the Jazz to better target visitors with the right messages.

“This was one of the first use cases with Tealium that was really, really profitable for us. Because of Tealium’s connections with all these digital marketing platforms – with Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google Ads – when those devices are on those social media platforms, we can fire ads without ever knowing who these people are. We can do it just based on their device,” says Geurts.

Additionally, when the Jazz created an audience, Tealium would send all that data back to their site. That way, even if the device might not have ever been on the Jazz site before, only on Ticketmaster, the Jazz were still able to target these people with messaging when the device came to their site.

Tealium also helped them tie online and offline data together. If someone bought a ticket offline, for example, the Jazz could push that data back into Tealium and use it to create campaigns for different marketing channels online. Tealium also helped the Jazz identify if the same person interacting with them offline was also interacting with them online.

“Whenever somebody does anything on our site...Tealium – on the fly, dynamically, and in real time – is combining that so we can see that our online and offline visitors are really the same person. We don’t have to do anything to tie that together. Tealium does it for us,” says Geurts.

Utah Jazz Scores Big on and off the Court

The Utah Jazz went from being on a losing streak to having one of the greatest season turnarounds in NBA history – making it to the second round of the NBA playoffs. Their marketing efforts were on a similar winning streak.

By being able to identify, track, and segment their online and offline visitors, the Jazz could send highly personalized and timely emails to fans. And fans responded. The team’s personalization efforts pushed their email ticket revenue from \$25,000 three seasons ago to \$950,000. And in a kind of “marketing playoff,” where the NBA provided every team in the league with customer leads for each team, the Utah Jazz came in first place.

“We converted almost twice the rate as the second-best team,” says Geurts. “We were by far the best in the NBA, and we know that this is all due to Tealium and our data strategy.”

The Jazz were also able to build out a marketing scorecard for the first time. “Because Tealium was able to tie our campaign, the Jazz site, and Ticketmaster data together, we were able to build our own attribution models. We could see the performance not only just on individual campaigns but also on each of our channels,” says Geurts.

Having this information has allowed the Utah Jazz to be able to make more informed decisions and be more strategic so they are spending their marketing dollars where they will score the most points.



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