

## Munster Rugby improves supporter experience with Microsoft Dynamics CRM

Published: March 2010

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*Internationally renowned, Munster Rugby has achieved consistent success on the pitch and is a well known sporting organisation and Brand in Ireland. Now, it wants to harness business-class CRM to build stronger ties with its supporters*

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### Situation

Formed in 1897 and named after the province of Munster which spans the South West corner of Ireland, the Munster rugby club has a long and successful history in the sport, at home and internationally. They are current champions of the Magners League and 2006 and 2008 Heineken Cup winners.

The club enjoys a huge supporter base and a significant catchment area, helped by a unique situation. The team has two home grounds, Thomond Park in Limerick and Musgrave Park in Cork.

Like many teams and sporting organisations, Munster was looking to improve its commercial model by utilising business tools and technologies to ensure the club stays on a sound financial footing.

When Glyn Billingham was recruited from the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) sector, one of his objectives was to engage more proactively with supporters using the customer knowledge it had built up in its transactional systems. The problem was there were silos of information and a disjointed approach to customer relationship management (CRM).

Transaction points included merchandising through the club shop, ticket purchasing, coaching courses and summer camps. "The various systems and processes had evolved at a different pace and it wasn't a joined up as it could have been," said Billingham.

There was a database of 50,000 supporters but it was mixture of duplicated names and incomplete personal information, compounded by the fact that the sales and marketing department didn't have the tools or the time to access the information and turn it to business advantage.

### Solution Overview

**Organisation**  
Munster Rugby

**Certified Partner**  
Green 4 Solutions, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and expert in supplying CRM and e-marketing solutions to the sport and leisure sector

**Customer Profile**  
Munster Rugby is an internationally renowned rugby club with a large and loyal supporter base

**Industry**  
Sport

**Business Situation**  
Munster had a significant amount of different customer groups, communicated to by different members of the organisation. These customers needed to be managed to build loyalty and secure potential revenue

**Solution Description**  
The objective was to amalgamate disparate data, clean it up and use it to facilitate more effective customer relationship management

**Benefits**  
Data can be segmented for target marketing  
Personalised interaction increases loyalty  
Single database provides a platform that facilitates cross-selling

**Microsoft Software**  
Microsoft Dynamics CRM

**Country/Region**  
Ireland

## **Solution**

While Glyn Billinghurst recognised that enterprise marketing solutions could bring benefits to Munster, he was also aware of the difference in applying them to a sports club than a business. He began looking for a specialist IT solution that addressed the unique requirements and found it through a combination of Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Green 4 Solutions.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM offers sales, service and marketing people an intuitive interface for accessing comprehensive customer histories, viewing product and sales data and tracking incidents of interaction. It could also help the marketing team plan and manage contacts and campaigns.

Green 4 Solutions takes it a stage further. As a Microsoft Independent Software Vendor that has been approved to customise Microsoft technology, the company has carved out a successful niche in supplying CRM and e-marketing solutions to the sport and leisure industry.

“By working with the Dynamic CRM environment we were able to identify other functionality that we could develop for the sector,” explained Peter Oliver, Director and Founder of Green 4 Solutions. This was precisely the combination of expertise that Billinghurst was looking for, a recognised business solution that had been tailored to the unique needs of running a club.

There were two parts to the Microsoft-based solution. The first is about taking all the disparate sources of customer information from the merchandising and ticketing systems, cleansing the data and then making it available from a single SQL server. At the outset, over 45 different spreadsheets of customer information were merged and cleaned up; 80 per cent of it from Excel.

The second part was creating a closed loop environment where the data was profiled and segmented for use in targeted marketing campaigns. “The greater the depth of information, the better the opportunity for creating targeted audience segments,” said Oliver.

Campaigns are created within Dynamics which identifies the segment and structures the communications. Most of it is delivered by email, some with SMS and the rest by direct mail. In the case of electronic marketing, a profile is created within a Dynamics application, then an HTML template document is produced and merged before being delivered by email. On the way it is scanned by Green 4 for viruses to make sure it is successfully delivered to the supporter's inbox. The response is automatically created within Munster's CRM database.

Green 4 has also created a separate portal where customers can go and update their profiles. “We incentivise them to do so,” said Billinghurst. “The perfect customer is where you have their full name, address, mobile number and date of birth. You have everything you need to for direct mail, email or text. Then we let them choose how they want to be contacted.”

## **Benefits**

Munster Rugby has successfully integrated disparate transactional systems and created a clean, de-duplicated database of supporters. This enables sophisticated levels of interaction, where the onus is on improving the customer experience rather than irritating them with excessive promotions.

Customised reports have also been developed for Munster Rugby with Green 4 using Dynamics CRM to provide regular database summaries, enabling Billinghurst to monitor the continuous improvement in the quality of the data and the number of new supporters

who register with the club. With over a million people living in the Munster area there is plenty of room for growth.

The overall Munster Rugby database is now over 70,000, a figure that most clubs would struggle to achieve. Quality of the data and the interaction is what counts for Billingham. He measures the success of the club eazines, for example, not by the total number mailed out but by the percentage that are opened. The figure regularly reached 40 per cent, but one carefully targeted campaign was opened by an incredible 87 per cent of recipients.

Detailed profiles encourage more personalised interaction. Supporters that provide a birth date automatically receive a personalised eCard and a discount voucher to be redeemed in one of the three Munster Rugby stores, in Limerick, Cork or Thomond Park.

Information from ticket sales bought through Ticketmaster and details of sales in the club shop are pulled into the same system within 48 hours. Opportunities for cross-selling are in the pipeline but it's not a priority at this point in time

"It is important to understand that our objective was to understand our customer base and not to use CRM as a selling tool, this will come later. We want to be able to sit down and know how we interact with people and how many supporters are actively involved with us," explained Billingham.

That said, the new CRM tools are already helping the bottom line. He cites the example of a customer who might choose to opt out of a particular mailing list for seasonal promotions. That one decision might have removed the person from the entire database. If they happened to be a high-spending supporter who occasionally bought a corporate box it could be a costly loss of revenue. With the new system there is a 360 degree view to prevent such mistakes from happening.

## **Summary**

Through a combination of Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Green 4 Solutions customisation, Munster Rugby is now at the forefront of sporting management.

Too often, success on the field is the barometer for a club's financial success but Munster has introduced business-class CRM to maintain and develop supporter relationships, irrespective of sporting achievement.