

ORACLE + THE CHICAGO BEARS

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

At Oracle it's called "the power of advocacy"—the ability to craft compelling and emotionally resonant experiences that speak to the individual customer, not to a crowd. It's a new classic in the B2C playbook. Why? Because only by personally engaging people through the whole funnel can companies convert leads into buyers, and buyers into loyal brand evangelists. But a good customer experience isn't built overnight. It takes clean data, smart testing, cross-channel planning, and cross-team alignment.



Elaine Delos Reyes
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
CHICAGO BEARS

ELAINE DELOS REYES - DIRECTOR OF MARKETING WITH THE CHICAGO BEARS—REVEALS HOW ONE OF THE OLDEST SPORTS FRANCHISES IN THE U.S. USES POWERFUL NEW TOOLS TO BUILD ENGAGING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES AND ENERGIZE THEIR FAN BASE.

BACKGROUND

RELATIONSHIP ONE: Elaine, it's a pleasure to speak with you. Could we start with your providing some perspective? How do you think about marketing in the NFL knowing that your team, the Chicago Bears, has sold out every home game for the last 31 years?

ELAINE: I would say the word 'marketing' can be interpreted in many different ways. Organizational goals really keep the Bears' brand relevant and ensure we're continuing to grow and nurture the fan pipeline. Fan engagement in the NFL goes beyond the 10 games we have each season [two home preseason games and eight home regular season games].

RI: How so? I think for the average football fan, watching that handful of televised games can feel like the alpha and the omega of "being a fan," so to speak.

ELAINE: It's about really engaging with fans and having touchpoints 365 days a year - touchpoints that are meaningful, exciting, and authentic. We really want to make that emotional connection with our fans. We had the Miller Lite Draft Party on April 28 [on the first day of the 2017 NFL Draft]. We had the PNT Bears 5k at the end of the June. And then there's training camp every July and August, which is free and open to the public. We also have a Ladies' Night coming up in October.

But in addition to events, we also engage our fans through social networks and digital and broadcast content. For example, we produce "Inside the Bears" which is a television show that works as digital content we can run throughout the calendar year. There is also our Bears mobile app [where users can follow roster moves, watch live press conferences, and more].

Keep in mind: For us, fan engagement is not one-size-fits-all. It's also about paying special attention to growing engagement with our young, female, and multicultural fans. It's about hitting fans whom some may call 'out of market.' We never want to take the fact our stadium is always sold out for granted. We want to make sure our fans know we value and appreciate them every day.

CHALLENGE

RI: Given the wild success of attendance rates at Bears home games, how do you define marketing success? Or would it be better to ask, "How are you measuring engagement?" As we alluded to before, it's not like you're hurting to sell more seats!

ELAINE: One of the main reasons we decided to start using the Oracle Eloqua platform was that we wanted to strengthen the relationships between the team and our season ticketholders, fans, corporate partners, and key stakeholders. We wanted the communication to be personalized, targeted for them—not just a means to sales lead generation. We wanted to make sure we were nurturing and providing value.

With that in mind, different metrics and KPIs can be used to define marketing success. Some examples [of success] would be if people bought tickets to Bears events other than for games, or if a certain number of people participated in our event surveys (we do 20 to 30 a year.) It could be seeing growth in our database, growth in the number of engaged users we have on social. It could be unique opens, websites views, clickthrough rates, and retail sales.

But to really narrow it down, it's all about engagement and making memories for our fans. Any way we can amplify the Bears brand and make sure our fans know we value them is a win. We'd consider that a successful marketing and engagement piece.

SOLUTION

RI: And how has your work with Oracle Eloqua and the Oracle Marketing Cloud impacted those metrics and your ability to achieve them?

ELAINE: Oracle Eloqua has helped us make an impact on these goals in various ways. During our first year

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with Eloqua, we saw an immediate impact on the Bears organization. Prior to the implementation, each department was really sending its own message through different systems. Oracle Eloqua really motivated us to think strategically as a whole about tailoring and targeting our messages to our fans.

We developed an email marketing calendar and started having weekly meetings with different departments and partners, so we could have an integrated communication plan and so our emails would have a consistent voice and look.

RI: After that inaugural year with Oracle Eloqua, how did the marketing team move forward? How did the Bears' marketing team keep building based on what had been learned or discovered?

ELAINE: In our second year with the platform, the focus was on cleaning and appending data where applicable. Since we had more data sources and were integrated into Oracle Eloqua, we wanted to make sure everything was standardized. So, we developed programs that ensured when new contacts were uploaded, the data would be cleaned and formatted correctly. After that we created programs that would append additional information based on the data we already had.

For example, since we were collecting zip codes on our sign-up page, we created a program that would [automatically] append the city and state [someone lived in based on the zip code they entered]. This made it easier for both us and the fans to see who lived 75 miles within our stadium, practice facility, and training camp.

That same year we also integrated with the Chicago Bears' Pro Shop, which is technically a third-party vendor for us. There were some hiccups along the way; for example, the Pro Shop's preference center didn't mirror the same kind of information we were collecting from the Bears' preference center. But with a lot of collaboration we were able to work through it.

RESULTS

RI: What outcomes emerged from this collaboration—from the Bears' marketing team working together with the team's Pro Shop to standardize data?

ELAINE: We decreased the Pro Shop's database by 53% during the process. That was definitely very scary as a marketer. But we shouldn't be afraid of cleaning our contacts or even deleting them if they're bouncebacks or inactives.

RI: Aside from increasing the strength and health of your database and contact records, what other results did you actualize?

ELAINE: When we did our year-over-year analysis, we saw we'd experienced a 75% increase in gross sales and a 53% increase in the number of orders. Since we aligned with the Pro Shop back in 2013, our unique open rates have increased by 91% and our unique clickthrough rates have increased by 70% for Pro Shop emails. Additionally, the percentage of revenue we generated from emails has increased by 111%. This really shows us that our fans are valuing the communication they're getting from us now.

RI: Those are fantastic numbers! It's so encouraging when a program yields outcomes like that. Can I ask if you've observed anything qualitatively, as well—beyond the metrics?

ELAINE: Sure. Last year, when we focused on building out integration with the Bears' Pro Shop, we realized it's one of the areas of our business with uncapped revenue potential. We helped the Pro Shop with branding strategy for their communications and enabled consistent use of Bears colors—blue and orange—and marketing phrases, like "Make every day Bears blue and orange." We were also able to launch a Bears email campaign that sends fan to the Pro Shop within 24 hours of the Bears' winning a game, so we can ride that emotion and celebrate together.

The biggest impact [internally] was the collaboration between different departments and developing an integrated communication strategy. Before Oracle Eloqua, we had lived in a world where there were a lot of silos around fan communications. Breaking those barriers down was really important for us. We were able to strategize on what communication was most valuable and when it was best to send. From there, it was easy to see the effect on goals and metrics.

RI: And en route to your achieving those goals and meeting those metrics, what were some challenges you encountered? Eloqua is a powerful tool, but integration can be tricky for any organization.

ELAINE: We've overcome some challenges, yes. There are challenges anytime you work with [marketing technology] platforms, because the technology is always changing and it can change rapidly.

I mentioned this earlier, but the Bears' Pro Shop, for example: It was collecting really basic information, and we had to try to mirror that data to our own preference center. The Pro Shop only collected name and email address, and even then I don't think they had a separate field for first name and last name—so it was also quite messy.

RI: As a marketer, I'm getting nervous just hearing this story! How were you able to fix this?

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ELAINE: First we had to collect all of the Pro Shop information and append the current subscribers' purchasing data. Then, we put together a preference center that we could iframe onto the Pro Shop's sites, so we both could have a similar type of preference center. After that we did a manager preferences email campaign specifically for that group [of contacts], so we could get their data cleaned up.

FUTURE

RI: After overcoming these challenges, the Bears' marketing team must be excited and encouraged going forward. What lies ahead? Are there upcoming projects that you and the team can't wait to tackle—pardon the pun?

ELAINE: We do have an opportunity for improvement as it relates to CRM. There are several departments that are not integrated with their CRM system. That limits our ability to use automation in the best way possible, since we don't have that connection yet with Eloqua and CRM.

That means we're still heavily relying on uploading lists to manage certain email campaigns. But since we want to avoid ineffective or duplicative communication as much as possible, we understand eventually there needs to be more conversation and action around connecting the dots between CRM and a larger data hub for the Bears. That's how we can really, truly maximize the Oracle Marketing Cloud.

RI: Earlier you spoke about the importance of fan engagement—about not taking the amazing fans for granted who've helped make the Bears a successful, profitable franchise. Are there any new ideas coming on that front?

ELAINE: Well, hopefully the next big thing we'll be talking about next year is the playoffs! But really, every new season brings a lot of excitement. Next on the list would be connecting CRM to concession, merchandise, digital behavior, and obviously the Oracle Marketing Cloud. This statement has been widely overused, but we mean it: We want that true 360-degree view of our customers, so we can serve them better. That would include more customized communication and an improved gameday experience.

Some other to-do's would include better leveraging social media and real-time actionable data, so we can see how that plays into the larger data picture.

RI: What advice would you give to marketers who seek to meaningfully engage their contacts? Have you learned anything in your journey with Oracle Eloqua that particularly sticks with you?

ELAINE: My biggest piece of advice would be to be patient. Start with quick and impactful wins to show progress. Think about the low-hanging fruit. This [mindset] is why one of the first things we did was an automated birthday campaign. Obviously, that's not revolutionary; lots of brands do that. But the current campaign sends emails to people on their birthday and also sends belated emails three days later if they haven't opened [the first send], and the birthday email has an offer in it for 35% off in the Bears Pro Shop with free shipping. That campaign's done really well for us.

RI: How so?

ELAINE: It's generated over half a million dollars in gross revenue. We actually had a fan write to us and say, and I quote: "Wow, you guys are the first ones to wish me 'Happy Birthday!' I know it's set up by a computer but it means a lot. Thank you, and go Bears!" This person knew exactly what was going on, that it was automated, but they still appreciated that we remembered them on a special day. So, this is a simple campaign—low-hanging fruit—but it's provided ROI for the organization through merchandise sales, because the campaign was personalized.

RI: And what about beyond the Bears—what about you as a marketer, as someone who builds campaigns and strategizes touchpoints? What's that one thing you can't live without in your role?

ELAINE: Like many people, I can't live without my iPhone. I'm not that much different from the larger population that uses mobile for everything from paying bills to shopping. But as a marketer, I find myself evaluating mobile ads and consumer experiences for myself. I take lots of notes when I put myself in the shoes of a consumer, so we can better promote Bears initiatives to the fans.

RI: Lastly, Elaine—let's talk motivation. What fuels your fire? What inspires you on a regular basis?

ELAINE: Family.

Timing is a funny thing. When I first started with the Bears in January 2012, I was married with children. I had just moved to Chicago. [In the past] I'd experienced living in major cities because I'd lived in Philadelphia and New York, but it had been the childless life with my husband and our dog. But now we're living in the suburbs with two children! I have Mason who's 3-and-a-half and Michaela who's 2 years old. They inspire and challenge me every day.

I'd like to say that being a female minority Millennial—and now a mother—allows me to have a unique perspective on my dream job here with the Chicago Bears. 