Technology Keeps the San Jose Earthquakes at the Top of Their Game

Cloud-Enabled Avaya Stadium Now the ‘Village Green’ for the Bay Area Community

Fueled by soccer-raised millennials and post-millennials, Major League Soccer’s time has come. Nearly 40 percent of MLS fans are ages 34 or younger, and 14 percent are under the age of 18. Attendance, viewership, social media activity and merchandise sales have grown steadily for the past decade and have now reached an all-time high. In fact, Major League Soccer now ranks behind only the NFL and MLB in average attendance.

MLS franchises are continuously enhancing the stadium experience to appeal to fans of all ages, and perhaps none more so than California’s San Jose Earthquakes. With its cloud-enabled home field, Avaya Stadium, the Quakes lead the league in leveraging technology to influence the fan experience. And in the tech hub of San Jose, it’s the kind of experience fans expect.

“People in the Bay Area expect technology to be seamless and almost invisible,” says Jared Shawlee, COO of the Earthquakes. “They want to share the game experience without having to think about the technology behind it.”
The First Cloud-Enabled MLS Stadium

After years of borrowing fields, the Quakes opened their own stadium in 2015. As management planned the venue, they knew technology would be essential.

When Quakes leadership talked with technology providers, Avaya stood out for its ability to scale as the club’s needs evolve. Avaya could support both the club and fan experience, from Wi-Fi to videoconferencing to rapid video capture for player analysis.

“From day one, we have enjoyed a collaborative relationship with Avaya, one based on a shared fabric of innovation,” Shawlee says. “The fact that Avaya was an end-to-end solution sealed the deal.”

100% Digital Ticketing

When Avaya Stadium opened, it became the first cloud-enabled sports venue in MLS. Consequently, Avaya Stadium gives fans an experience unlike any other. This 18,000-seat, European-style, outdoor stadium boasts the longest outdoor bar in North America, using 1,000-year-old reclaimed California redwood in its construction. “Neighborhoods” throughout the stadium give various groups their own homes, from a standing-only section for the most avid fans to a family section to another for visiting fans.

Above the bar is the second-widest LED screen in the state, at 120 feet by 30 feet. The screen serves as a spot for fans to share their experiences on social media – a Fan Engagement Wall – using stadium Wi-Fi. When posting with the #Quakes74 hash tag, fans have the chance to see their messages, images and videos broadcasted automatically on the massive screen.

Challenges

- In Silicon Valley, fans expect innovation and engagement at the highest level.
- The Quakes sought to enhance the game experience from the time fans leave home to the time they leave the event.
- Technology would be critical to the fan experience, and essential in attracting non-MLS sports and corporate events.

© 2018 Avaya Inc. All Rights Reserved.
These days, the Quakes see more than 4,000 concurrent Wi-Fi users every game. Likewise, social media activity has grown substantially since the stadium opened, with Twitter followers up 254%, and Facebook fans up 64%. For fans, social engagement goes well beyond sharing the event with friends; it actually enhances the in-stadium experience.

Likewise, technology also influences the fan experience from the time they leave their homes to when they return home. With the custom Quakes mobile app from Avaya, fans can pre-pay for parking online, enter with digital tickets, see player stats, and follow fans’ social posts.

More recently, the club transformed game entry with 100 percent digital ticketing. In the Quakes app, fans can view and manage their tickets before the game, and even transfer them to others.

For team management, detailed analytics, or “Fanalytics,” from the Quakes app, in turn, enables them to make decisions that simplify game days for fans and staff. For example, based on data regarding where fans exit the stadium, the Quakes moved the rideshare pickup location.

Avaya Stadium: A Community Hub

Behind the scenes, in club offices and private suites, Avaya Scopia enables live videoconferencing. Staffers can conduct meetings with partners, foreign players can videoconference with their families back home, and suite owners can conduct business meetings at Avaya Stadium using advanced conferencing tools. The same capabilities extend to any of the many organizations hosting events at the venue.

Avaya Stadium also hosts scores of non-MLS events annually, from major corporate events for 10,000 attendees with companies like Apple and Tesla to nonprofit fundraisers. In fact, the stadium has become a community hub.

“We’ve heard people say that the stadium is their second home, that it feels different than other venues,” Shawlee says. “We believe it reflects the diversity of Silicon Valley; it crosses all barriers for ethnicity, gender, nationality and socio-economics, bringing people of all types together to celebrate.”

Record Ticket Sales, Attendance

A more engaging experience for fans means nothing less than more revenue for the Quakes, from ticket sales to corporate sponsorships to stadium rental for non-Quakes events. The club’s investment in the fan...
“We are convinced we are entering a new chapter in soccer where we can capitalize on Big Data. We’re undertaking serious technology investments with the goal of leading the league, and expect those investments to have a long-term impact on the organization.”

–Jesse Fioranelli, General Manager of the Quakes

experience has paid off, with nearly every game selling out. And the more people that visit the stadium and share their experience socially, the more others will want to join.

“Social and digital have been a huge way to grow our brand,” Shawlee says. “It’s our fastest method for new fan acquisition, and an essential way for us to connect with our younger generation of fans. We’ve exceeded all revenue and popularity expectations and expect demand to continue growing.”

Shawlee and the rest of Quakes management see this as just the beginning, with plans to bring more technology to Avaya Stadium. With the flexible, future-ready Avaya foundation, the Quakes have the bandwidth to make their vision a reality.

Soccer In The Age Of Big Data

Data influences nearly every industry today – including Major League Soccer. The Quakes leverage video analysis, captured from hundreds of cameras, along with artificial intelligence to help players improve their skills, and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the competition. They use similar technology to evaluate hundreds of potential Quakes players across the globe. And the club continuously monitors players’ rate of perceived exertion during practice and games with the ultimate goal of reducing the risk of injury.

“We are convinced we are entering a new chapter in soccer where we can capitalize on Big Data,” says Jesse Fioranelli, General Manager of the Quakes. “We’re undertaking serious technology investments with the goal of leading the league, and expect those investments to have a long-term impact on the organization.”
“We’ve heard people say that the stadium is their second home, that it feels different than other venues. We believe it reflects the diversity of Silicon Valley; it crosses all barriers for ethnicity, gender, nationality and socio-economics, bringing people of all types together to celebrate.”

– Jared Shawlee, COO of the Earthquakes

About San Jose Earthquakes

The San Jose Earthquakes are one of 23 teams in Major League Soccer. The club won MLS Cups in 2001 and 2003 and took home Supporters’ Shields in 2005 and 2012. They are led by 2012 Volkswagen MLS Most Valuable Player Chris Wondolowski, one of the most prolific goal scorers in league history. The club opened its new home, Avaya Stadium, in 2015, the first cloud-enabled stadium in MLS. The stadium holds 18,000 fans and is one of the most technologically advanced stadiums in MLS. The organization was originally founded in 1974 and was one of 10 charter members of MLS when the league began in 1996. The club’s non-profit arm, the Quakes Foundation, focuses on health and fitness initiatives for underserved youth in the Bay Area. For more information about the Earthquakes, visit www.sjearthquakes.com.