



Game, Set and Match

Case Study: Tennis Australia

Optus pairs-up with Tennis Australia to bring the Australian Open to the World

Introduction

For over 100 years the Australian Open has marked the start of the tennis season in January, welcoming the world's best tennis players, and their devoted fans, to the largest annual sporting event in the southern hemisphere.

The first of four tennis majors, the Australian Open is managed by Tennis Australia, the governing body of tennis within Australia, which links member associations throughout the country. Tennis Australia promotes and facilitates participation in all levels of tennis and conducts National and International tournaments including the Davis Cup, the Federation Cup, Tennis Pro Circuit, the Australian Open and the Australian Open Series.

Formerly known as the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia, Tennis Australia is based in Melbourne and sees its year-round staff of 135 grow to almost 5,000 to pull together the Open every January.

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The Challenge

The Australian Open is a place for competition, energy and passion, as well as innovation. Behind this world-class event is a complex web of technology where, with each serve, technology helps compile statistics, plan crowd control and communicate to billions of fans around the world.

For four years Tennis Australia has worked with long-time tennis supporter Optus to implement world-class communications technology, and 2008 is no exception. To bring the Open alive at Melbourne Park is quite a transformation and technological demands are great.

Due to a growing audience, the demand for more advanced technology to enhance the experience for tennis fans around the world was greater than ever. Tennis Australia needed technology to meet the needs of its large staff, the worldwide media and most importantly its tennis-loving patrons.

“The customer experience is increasingly dependent on technology and the ability for us to connect to them and provide an enjoyable tournament,” said Steve Wood, CEO of Tennis Australia. “Enabling that connection and interactivity is absolutely key.”

The Solution

Each year Optus provides a range of telecommunications services to ensure the Australian Open runs smoothly. For the 2006 event, Optus provided the Australian Open organisers with an entirely new fibre network at Melbourne Park. In less than seventy days, Optus laid five kilometres of fibre to get Tennis Australia communications up and running and ensure mission critical media services would operate without outages.

Optus has laid the foundations for present and future Australian Opens by ensuring the fibre infrastructure remains in place throughout the year. In the lead up to the Australian Open Optus ‘lights-up’ the fibre to cater for the increased service demand and on conclusion Optus ‘turns-off’ services specific to the tournament, ensuring that the infrastructure remains in place for future years.

“From a broadcast perspective, we hope to take the Australian Open to close to two billion people around the world, with live sites in Shanghai, Sydney and Melbourne,” said Wood. “This means that, on-site here, in the Melbourne Park grid, we need to have the right fibre runs and the right networking infrastructure to be able to handle that type of volume and capability.”

With more than 5,000 staff busily moving around the site, keeping track of their location and being in contact is crucial to the event’s success. Optus provided the Open with more than 500 temporary mobile phones for operational staff such as drivers, umpires, ground supervisors and others.

To ensure noise on court was kept to a minimum, SMS has long been a crucial form of communication for Tennis Australia staff. The organisation uses SMS to inform staff of the happenings on-site, and also communicate with patrons. For the first time during the 2007 Open, Tennis Australia provided SMS updates to patrons, informing them if a match ended early or if there was a delay on a specific court.

“Examples of how we use technology for a seamless experience include the tracking system in our courtesy cars, our hawk-eye video line calling experience, and the match update system which we use to communicate to patrons making their visit more worthwhile. In the end that’s what matters – tennis fans enjoying the ultimate tennis tournament.”

The Business Benefits

The telecommunication’s 2007 upgrades, especially with the new network, have made a massive impact that Steve Wood says has been vital to operations.

“The Optus network underpins how we communicate to the world, so it’s critical to the success of the event,” said Wood. “For example, our media workroom has 1,500 media – most of them from overseas – and the network architecture that Optus helped build for the duration of the Australian Open, allows us to take the message globally.”

Wood also mentioned that Tennis Australia is working with Optus to implement a VPN (Virtual Private Network) in every capital city in Australia. "This will connect the state-based associations with the national governing body," said Wood. Optus has built an underlying platform for the Tennis Australia network, so institutions nation-wide can access various resources and applications.

During the past four years Tennis Australia and Optus have formed a great working partnership. Because of the size and global impact of the event, the Australian Open needed a partner like Optus to assist in applying new and advanced technologies to improve the Open each year.

"What we like about the Optus partnership is that we can have an open, honest discussion about what's do-able and what isn't. We can then put it in the context of running a world-class sporting event that is the biggest January event in the world," said Wood. "After such a successful 2007 Open, we are all looking forward to working together to have an exciting 2008 tennis competition."

Further Information

If you want to discuss how Optus can help you increase productivity through innovative communications solutions, contact your Optus Account Manager, call our hotline on 1800 555 937 or visit our website at **optusbusiness.com.au**.