



Charlotte Hornets

KORE Software Success Story



How the Charlotte Hornets Empowered Their Team to Drive Targeted & Personalized Fan Journeys

CHALLENGES

In early 2020, the Charlotte Hornets had three major challenges with their fan database. Their biggest challenge was not having an accurate source of truth for all their fan data. They had multiple data sources and several ways a customer could interact with their brand, resulting in a fan having multiple records. For example, they had 12 versions of John Doe in 12 different platforms in 12 different areas of their business. They needed a way to consolidate all this data to show a single accurate record for each customer.

Their second biggest challenge was not having an easy way for other departments to access fan data and logically group fans together. Without a user-friendly platform, the business intelligence (BI) team was the gatekeeper of their data. Therefore, multiple departments heavily relied on them and the CRM expert to conduct research or pull detailed lists, creating a bottleneck of requests. For instance, if marketing wanted to know how many buyers bought tickets within the last seven days for an upcoming campaign, they had to wait for the BI team to manually pull the data for them which was time-consuming and inefficient.

Lastly, the Hornets needed help understanding the demographic makeup of their fans. Often, they were trying to target audiences without understanding who they were actually reaching. So, once marketing received the list of ticket buyers in the last seven days, they didn't know basic information like age, income, or household size to target them with tailored messaging. Additionally, the sponsorship group often asked, "who are our fans?". They needed this information to inform conversations with existing and prospective partners looking to gain exposure and create brand affinity with the Hornets' fanbase.

EXISTING SYSTEMS & THE NEED FOR HELIX

After taking a look at their existing systems, the Hornets realized they needed a platform to specifically tackle their three challenges. Their CRM system, like all CRM systems, answers questions like "what did the representative say to the customer?" but didn't have the deduplication logic they needed to create a single record for each fan. Their data warehouse, primarily used by the BI and analytics teams, answers questions such as "how many tickets did we sell in a certain price code?" but isn't user-friendly for other departments to use. They outsourced their data management platform (DMP) which identifies "what kind of person should receive this digital ad?" and handles their digital ad buying but doesn't include the fan detail they needed to customize fan journeys. By integrating a fan intelligence platform, like Helix, to their existing tech stack, the Hornets can solve key questions like "who are those buyers, how many are there, and what do they look like?" to inform every customer interaction and drive impactful engagement.

RESULTS: 360-DEGREE VIEW OF EACH FAN

The Hornets' BI team began by centralizing all their customer data sources into a standard and unified format. Helix then consolidates all that data from multiple sources into a single record for each unique customer. So, instead of having 12 versions of John Doe across multiple platforms, there is one accurate record in Helix. With a reliable source of truth for all their fan data, the BI team made it easy for other departments to access and use reliable customer intel.

"Helix is doing the heavy lifting on getting that Golden Record and creating those tags and attributes and updating the number of how many people fit each criteria."

*– Chris Zeppenfeld, VP of Business Intelligence,
Charlotte Hornets*



Interested in learning how Helix can simplify your fan segmentation? [Request a demo.](#)



| PERSONALIZE EVERY INTERACTION

The BI team then worked with different departments to understand common data requests and logical audience segments. This informed which behaviors and attributes to create tags for, like specific games, retail purchases, and age. Tags in Helix only need to be coded once and then can be used by any other department to dynamically and automatically group fans based on behaviors and demographics.

This is the main reason Helix is used in every marketing divisions across Hornets Sports & Entertainment - Hornets' marketing, arena marketing, email marketing, and retail marketing - to personalize every fan interaction. At any time, these groups can search pre-built tags to create a targeted campaign list. For example, if the Hornets' marketing team want to know which customers purchased a ticket in the last seven days and bought retail from the store in the last six months, they can search for those tags to find the fans with matching criteria and provide them with tailored messaging. Helix empowers the Hornets' marketing team to be self-sufficient in pulling lists and analyzing results without the help of the BI group.



"We keep it simple by making sure we're not the gatekeepers of the data, and I think that's been the biggest burden that's been lifted from bringing Helix into the fold. So, marketing doesn't have to ask me or our CRM person to build a marketing list...we can create a tag for them, that tag will update correctly with the number of Golden Records that fit that criteria, and then marketing can go in themselves and get that list."

– Chris Zeppenfeld, VP of Business Intelligence, Charlotte Hornets

The ticket sales and ticket retention departments also use the platform to show how many leads are available and build segments based on those leads. For example, if they had a game three nights ago, the ticket sales group may want to know how many walk-up buyers there were. Helix answers this question and allows the ticket sales team to segment the leads to create personalized journeys for them.

The retail marketing team has started using Helix to understand the traits and attributes of the customers who have recently bought retail items. Using tags related to retail, they build audience segments to identify who those customers are and then reach out to them with a custom message based on their latest action.

| DRIVE DEEPER CONNECTIONS

While the Hornets were able to easily segment fans into logical groups such as "all single game ticket buyers within the last seven days", they also wanted to understand, in greater detail, what those fans really looked like. Using the Golden Records, they mapped back to Live Analytics demographic data and summarized key behavioral stats like lifetime spend and total merchandise spend. This expanded level of fan detail allows for deeper personalization of the customer journey.

| EMPOWER WITH EASY-TO-DIGEST VISUALIZATIONS

After they added Live Analytics demographic data to Helix, they visualized everything on their own Tableau workbook so other departments could easily interact with the data through dashboards.

For instance, when the sponsorship team was asked "tell me about your fans" by a potential partner, they were able to select multiple relevant tags, like "age" and "season ticket buyers", to generate a quick summary breaking down key customer traits. The summary was easy to understand, and they showed it to the potential partner to quickly explain who their fans are and show the value of their audience.

| WHAT'S NEXT

Up next for the Hornets is adding more data sources to Helix, specifically YinzCam and VenueNext, to capture even more fan data into a central location. They also plan to start automatically syncing their fan data to Marketo. So, if a fan matches specific tag criteria in Helix, Helix will push that data back to Marketo to trigger a custom email to that fan.

