



The Aspire Group Case Study Bowl: Driving Repeat Attendees for Collegiate Men's Basketball

The Scenario:

You are a leading consultant for Raise Your Game, Inc., a respected sport management consulting team focused on partnering with sport and entertainment properties to develop strategies for revenue maximization. Your team is widely known as the industry “gurus” regarding ticket packaging and pricing strategies that drive fan consumption and engagement with sport properties.

Your Client:

The University of Massachusetts (UMass) Athletics program partnered with your team to build a sales and marketing strategy that would increase their rate of repeat attendees for Men's Basketball. Established in 1900, the University of Massachusetts Men's Basketball team is one of the more storied programs in collegiate history that rose to national prominence during a mid-1990s, 7-year consecutive run competing in the annual NCAA Tournament. This dominance was led by prominent basketball personalities such as John Calipari and Marcus Camby that produced a Final Four and two Elite Eight appearances. Since 1998, the UMass Men's Basketball program returned to the NCAA Tournament only once during the 20-year span.

Following two consecutive losing seasons and a 14% decline in their season ticket base, UMass Athletics needs to find ways to keep the fans that are currently coming and entice 1st time attendees to keep coming back in order to grow their fan base back to prominence.

A New Era of UMass Men's Basketball

Since the conclusion of the 2016-17 Men's Basketball campaign, UMass' program executed a number of strategies to freshen the program and reengage fans. In March 2017, UMass hired a new coach, Matt McCall, to take the helm of a young basketball team. The hiring spurred a new season ticket campaign encouraging fans to “Answer the McCall” by donating to the Men's Basketball Excellence Fund or purchasing season tickets to have the chance to win prizes.

“Matt is a rising star in college basketball coaching who has been a key piece of three successful programs in his career. He has earned a reputation as a relentless worker, a great teammate and colleague and a confident leader of young men. Matt has worked with some of the most respected coaches and administrators in the country, who loudly sing his praises. Coach McCall's appointment begins an exciting new chapter for our tradition-rich men's basketball program at UMass,” noted Ryan Bamford, UMass' Director of Athletics.

In addition to a coaching change, UMass engaged Daktronics, a prominent digital display company, to modernize the 25-year old Mullins Center. This included the installation of four new video displays including a new centerhung videoboard. Alan Pandiani, the Associate Athletics Director for Sales and Fan Experience, commented, “the new videoboards provide us the opportunity to truly innovate our in-game experience. Fans can expect a more integrated experience with higher quality videos, fan engagement activities, and social media integrations.”

Current Ticket Strategy and Results

Over the past 5 seasons, UMass' Men's Basketball program experienced a decline in their season ticket and single game purchaser base by 11% and 50% respectively. However, UMass has maintained a high renewal rate with a 5-year average of a 90% renewal rate for season ticket holders. This is off-set by a consistent challenge to sell new season tickets and keep 1st year accounts year-over-year, further highlighted by the fact that only 10% of season tickets sold over the past 5 seasons were categorized as new accounts.

For the 2016-17 season, UMass renewed 90% of their season ticket holders and welcomed 5% of their season ticket base as 1st year accounts. To further increase the value of the season ticket package, UMass

introduced renewal pricing, flexible season tickets, ticket holder gifts, behind-the-scenes tours, on-court experiences, personal account representatives, and event priority benefits. The flexible season ticket allowed fans that couldn't attend a game, the option to exchange their ticket for a game that they would be able to attend later that season. This led season ticket holders to attend 82% of all home games during the season.

Previous to the 2016-17 season, most fans received mass communication from athletics that distributed a variety of content from post-game recaps, ticket offers, and other news. Over the past 12 months, UMass altered their communication strategy to provide targeted content to fans that best fit their relationship with Men's Basketball. Specifically, the 22% of single game purchasers that were 1st time attendees received an automated message thanking them for attending and providing additional information on upcoming games. This differed from the victory recaps that the general fan would receive.

To facilitate interest in attending multiple games, while not committing to a full season ticket, UMass offers 3-game and 5-game mini plans. Over the past 5 seasons, mini plan purchasers grew by 47% with a near perfect 50%/50% split between 3 and 5 game purchasers. Although the min-plan package exists, UMass is challenged with converting multi-game attending single game purchases into mini plan holders. For instance, the average single game purchaser attended 4.3 home games during the 2016-17 season, while still not being a mini-plan purchaser.

In support of ticket marketing, sales, and service strategies, UMass employs a staff of two full-time sales representatives and a database marketer. This staff is charged with reaching out to UMass' database via outbound phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and email to engage fans and expose them to ticket opportunities for Men's Basketball. "Our goal is to better understand existing and potential fans of UMass and cater customized ticket recommendations that best fit their needs," said Chris Tucci, Manager of Database Marketing and Analytics. "Currently, this is accomplished by segmenting our database based on their behavior and purchase history to deliver what we would believe is the ticket package that best suits their needs."

Once at the game, UMass leverages a mix between a traditional college sports environment and a modern sporting event with interplay between the band and their new digital videoboards. However, the game day experience is quite typical to most sporting events that include t-shirt tosses, team videos, in-arena fan cams, and fan contests on court. To educate fans in the building about future games and ticket opportunities, the game script includes multiple PA reads discussing mini plans as well as next home games for Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, and Hockey. Typically, UMass discusses the next Men's Basketball home game four times during the entirety of the game experience.

"It is vital to our university community and the surrounding communities that UMass Basketball returns to the vibrant experience that our fans reminisce about from the 1990s. With Raise Your Game, Inc.'s insight on how we can better engage current attendees during the game to come back, I'm confident that we can grow our ticket purchasing base. Our first goal is keeping the fans we have coming back, then we can focus on bringing on new fans.", said Alan Pandiani.

Data:

To assist your team with your analysis, UMass has provided the following data:

- A script of a typical game presentation
- 5-year historical ticket sales data
- Current ticket prices for the 2017-18 season
- Historical ticket prices for the past 5 seasons

Case Study Questions:

1. How can UMass increase the avidity of fans during a game day experience to drive repeat attendance?



2. What can UMass do in-venue to enhance the game day experience?
3. What alterations would you make to UMass' current ticketing offers to increase the likelihood of fans to buy and attend more games?
4. How can UMass better engage 1st time attendees to encourage them to come to a 2nd game?
5. For the 2017-18 season, UMass has acquired a \$15,000 budget to execute game promotions. What are ways that you would recommend UMass utilize their budget for greatest return on investment?



Ticket Price Summary

2012-13

- **Season Tickets**
 - Premier
 - Adult \$270
 - Fac/Staff/Senior \$240
 - Value (GA)
 - Adult \$150
 - Fac/Staff/Staff \$135
- **Mini Plan – Pick Any 5 Games**
 - Premier - \$90
 - Value-GA - \$60
- **Individual Tickets**
 - Premier/Reserved
 - Adult \$20
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$18
 - Value - General Admission
 - Adult \$14
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$12
 - Group Rates (15+) –Value Sections \$8

2013-14

- **Season Tickets**
 - Premier
 - Adult \$275
 - Fac/Staff/Senior \$245
 - Value
 - Adult \$155
 - Fac/Staff/Staff \$140
- **Mini Plan – Pick Any 5 Games**
 - 5 Game Premier – \$95
 - 5 Game Value - \$65
- **Individual Tickets**
 - Premier
 - Adult \$21
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$19
 - Value
 - Adult \$15
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$13
 - Group Rates (15+) – \$8

In 2012-13 and 2013-14, “Value” meant general admission in designated corner/endzone sections. From 2014-15 on, “Value” meant reserved seating in the same sections value used to be.

2014-15

- **Season Tickets**

- Premier
 - Adult \$275
 - Fac/Staff/Senior \$245
- Value
 - Adult \$155
 - Fac/Staff/Staff \$140
- **Mini Plan**
 - 5 Game Premier – \$95
 - 5 Game Value - \$65
- **Individual Tickets**
 - Premier
 - Adult \$21
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$19
 - Value
 - Adult \$15
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$13
 - Group Rates (15+) – \$10

2015-16

- **Season Tickets**
 - Premier
 - Adult \$275
 - Fac/Staff/Senior \$245
 - Value
 - Adult \$155
 - Fac/Staff/Staff \$140
- **Mini Plan (Premier Level Seats)**
 - Maroon Plan- \$55 (1 Gold Game plus 2 other games)
 - Musket Plan- \$90 (2 Gold Games plus 3 other games)
 - *Gold games were New Orleans, Providence and VCU
- **Individual Tickets**
 - Premier
 - Adult \$21
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$19
 - Value
 - Adult \$15
 - Senior/Fac/Staff/Youth \$13
 - Group Rates (15+) – \$10

2016-17

- **Season Tickets – Early Bird**
 - **Premier**
 - Adult \$275 (\$265 + \$10 donation)
 - Sr/Fac/St/Yth \$245 (\$235 + \$10 donation)
 - **Value**
 - Adult \$160 (\$150 + \$10 donation)
 - Sr/Fac/St/Yth \$140 (\$130 + \$10 donation)

- **Season Tickets - Standard**

- **Premier**

- Adult \$295 (\$280 + \$15 donation)
 - Sr/Fac/St/Yth \$265 (\$250 + \$15 donation)

- **Value**

- Adult \$185 (\$170 + \$15 donation)
 - Sr/Fac/St/Yth \$160 (\$145 + \$15 donation)

- **Mini Plan – Pick any games**

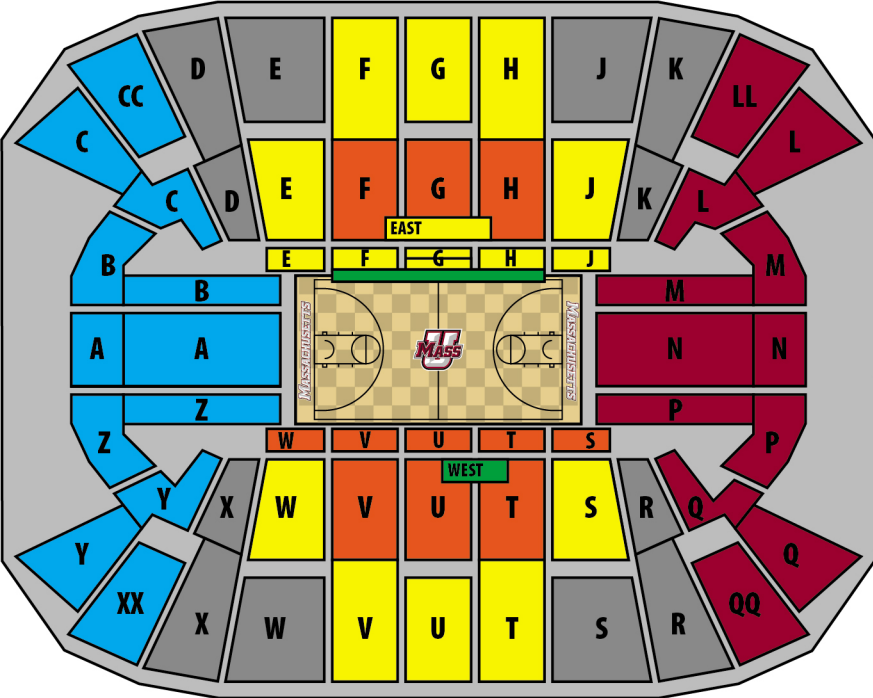
	Premier	Value
5 Game Plan-	\$90	\$70
3 Game Plan-	\$54	\$42

- **Individual Tickets**

Premier	Advance	Walk-Up
Adult	\$21	\$25
Sr/Fac/St/Yth	\$19	\$23

Value		
Adult	\$15	\$20
Sr/Fac/St/Yth	\$13	\$18

Groups		
10-99	\$16	\$12
100+	\$12	\$8



2017-18 MEN'S BASKETBALL SEASON TICKETS

SECTION	EARLY BIRD RENEWALS (BEFORE JULY 26)		NEW SEASON TICKETS (AFTER JULY 26)	
	ADULT	FACULTY / STAFF SENIOR / YOUTH	ADULT	FACULTY / STAFF SENIOR / YOUTH
PRIME	\$275	\$245	\$305	\$248
PREFERRED	\$260	\$210	\$260	\$210
BASELINE	\$215	\$172	\$215	\$172
VALUE	\$160	\$140	\$185	\$148
STUDENTS	-	-	-	-

EARLY BIRD PRICING IS AVAILABLE FOR RENEWALS MADE ON AND/OR BEFORE JULY 26, 2017. RENEWALS MADE AFTER JULY 26 WILL BE SUBJECT TO NEW SEASON TICKET PRICING.