



Case Study: Major League Soccer (MLS)

Social Contesting for the Win

The Major League Soccer (MLS) Social Media team wanted to use social contesting—using social media to facilitate an online competition—to expand their audience and reach fans at scale. By simply asking fans to vote for their favorite MLS player's name or Twitter handle using the hashtag #MLSAllStar, MLS successfully generated fan excitement and amplified the association's social presence. Read on to find out how social contesting worked for MLS.

Major League Soccer (MLS)

[Major League Soccer \(MLS\)](#) is a North American professional sports association that includes 19 soccer teams and provides sport entertainment to over 20,000 soccer enthusiasts every game. Founded in 1993, MLS is a relatively young association, with a [loyal and vocal](#) audience. The social media team wanted to continue to build on these relationships but also appeal to a new fan base.



19,704

Total campaign-related
Tweets



37,464

Total votes



621

Number of votes for
winning player, Marco
Pappa

What They Did

In 2012, MLS launched a contest using Twitter to increase audience engagement. Social contesting is one of the best ways to connect with an already-engaged group of followers. It increases fans' excitement about the game, the players, and their favorite club or team. Plus, it has the added benefit of post-contest analysis, which was precisely the type of metrics-based information that the social media team wanted.

Using the association's reach of over 116,000 Twitter followers, MLS asked soccer fans to vote for their favorite Major League Soccer player. To vote, a participant needed to include the hashtag #MLSAllStar and the full name of the player or the player's Twitter handle.



The goal of the contest was twofold: to award a player chosen by MLS's fan community with Allstar status, and improve social media engagement with @MLS. Once the Twitter contest was launched, MLS needed a reliable and scalable tool to filter votes and archive contest results to produce a winner.

How They Did It

[Hootsuite Professional Services](#) trained MLS to use these Hootsuite features to uncover the contest results:

- Keyword and Search Streams
- Archives
- Reports and Analytics

MLS calculated contest results by filtering and archiving the votes. Using keyword and search streams, the MLS social team was able to easily filter the results, saving time and energy as well as gaining valuable insight into the demographics of the participants. By using Hootsuite Archives to export all Tweets with #MLSAllstar, the social media team tallied the results to determine the contest winner.

After the winner was announced, MLS was able to create and analyze reports from the contest using Hootsuite Analytics. The association gained concrete insight into the levels of social engagement—who the fans are, where they are located, what they have to say—as well as the ROI of its social media strategy.



The Results

MLS's creative approach to social contesting was a great success. In only 36 hours, the social media team drummed up positive fan participation, which increased the association's Twitter presence. The numbers back this up: 19,704 Tweets with the hashtag #MLSAllstar and 37,464 votes in total. As a result, MLS was able to successfully increase social influence and engagement of its Twitter community, and promote the brand.