



Case Study: The Canadian Football League

The Story

The [Canadian Football League \(CFL\)](#) covers games, stories, highlights, and events of its nine teams across the country, year round. Engaging in meaningful conversations with fans online has enabled the CFL to build loyal, trusting relationships. The CFL's Digital Media Team is able to grow relationships and communities by having all brand conversations centralized in one interface.

The Canadian Football League

The CFL is played in nine major cities across the country, from Vancouver to Montreal. Its championship game, the Grey Cup, is Canada's largest single-day sporting event and one of the most watched TV broadcasts each year — attracting an average audience of five million viewers. During the regular season, CFL viewership is second only to hockey, and attendance across the league remains strong. With a state-of-the-art new stadium opened in Winnipeg last year, and two more opening in Hamilton and Ottawa this year, the CFL is positioned to continue to accelerate its growth. One of Canada's biggest brands, the CFL remains true to its core by always putting their fans at the centre — a strategy in which social media plays an essential role.

"We enjoy having casual conversations with our fans about football, our players, and our games. Hootsuite gives us the ability to track, monitor, and engage in the various conversations our fans are having."

Richard Obrand, Coordinator, Digital Media, CFL

What They Did

The CFL's Digital Media Team prides itself on being accessible to its fans coast-to-coast on a 24/7 basis. This kind of accessibility on social media leads to greater loyalty and engagement than in many other sports, and has helped grow the CFL's social media presence. Connecting with their fans on a personal level has allowed them to develop a nation-wide community.

The CFL views engagement as a required social media effort. For example, in what has become a tradition of sorts, at the start of each off-season one fan will begin a Twitter countdown to the regular season. Eventually, hundreds of fans join in on the countdown and the CFL retweets as many posts as possible. The CFL has never missed a day on the countdown and by the time the season starts, fan engagement has reached an all-time high.

How They Did It

Overseeing all communications and working together in one centralized dashboard is essential to maintaining engagement. The CFL's Digital Media Team relies on Hootsuite and the ability to share personalized dashboards to monitor and participate in all brand conversations. In doing so, they are in constant communication with fans — whether listening to fans discuss a specific game around their tailored game hashtags, or keeping up with events like CFL Combine (#CFLCombine) online.

"Hootsuite Streams is an integral part of our social media efforts. Without it, we'd be spending far too much time searching for the conversation. With it, conversations are right in front of us to join."

Richard Obrand, Coordinator, Digital Media, CFL

Hootsuite gives the CFL's Digital Media Team the visibility into the volume and engagement of all of its channels — leaving time to improve content quality. Sharing great, effective content expands the CFL's reach into new markets through increased fan shares, comments, and likes. For example, when news breaks across Twitter, the social team is well-equipped to immediately tailor it for their audience and share it on the CFL website and channel feeds. This is critical for staying on top of the conversation and catering it to the industry.

"Social media is 24/7 and, as in any business, we need to manage our time and resources wisely. With Hootsuite, our team schedules content into the night, automates distribution, and engages with our growing following."

Richard Obrand, Coordinator, Digital Media, CFL



10x

More Twitter referral
traffic to CFL.ca
year-over-year



200%

Increase in social media
referrals to CFL.ca
year-over-year



12%

increase in pages viewed
per visit on CFL.ca
and Mobile



28%

Increase in use of
#CFL in Tweets

The Results

Twitter has become the CFL's fastest growing social media platform. Its primary hashtag (#CFL) was used over 430,000 times in 2013, a 28% increase over 2012. Referral traffic from Twitter is up 10 times year-over-year since 2012, and cumulative social referrals are up nearly 200%. Engagement on CFL.ca and CFL Mobile also grew, with average pages viewed per visit up 12%.

"Our goal with digital media is to grow usage across all of our properties and to monetize that engagement in a sustainable way. Hootsuite is central to that effort as our fans increasingly look to social media for news first. More importantly the tool expands the reach of our day to day activities, and helps us accelerate our efforts when the big moments hit."

Sean Bell, Director, Digital Assets, CFL

"Reacting and responding has become a key component to our team's social media efforts, and Hootsuite gives us the confidence to do so in a consistent and effective manner."

Richard Obrand, Coordinator, Digital Media, CFL



Grey Cup TweetUp

Each year, the CFL Commissioner Mark Cohon and the Digital Media Team host a Grey Cup TweetUp for the most engaged social fans during Grey Cup weekend. The event is an opportunity for the league to put faces to handles, as well as develop an even deeper relationship with its core group.