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Qrious



Spark<sup>nz</sup>

New Zealand Cricket  
unlocks the future of sport  
with digital innovation.





"Cricket, a game for all New Zealanders, a game for life". That's New Zealand Cricket's 'true north', the vision that's being driven forward by its digital technology journey.

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) understands that to successfully compete in the high-stakes arena of international sport, it has to be forward-thinking and push the boundaries of what is possible.

To stay ahead of the curve, the organisation has embraced the digital era as a core pillar of its business strategy. Spark New Zealand was an obvious collaborator.

"Qrious and Spark have a genuine passion for sport and for cricket. This, coupled with Spark's expertise in digital technology and Qrious' capability to provide data-led insights, make them natural partners to help NZC deliver our vision," says Paul Warren, NZC's Performance Analysis Manager.

Qrious and Spark have been instrumental in implementing a series of leading-edge digital innovations across NZC's business to help it leverage the data it collects to better serve participants and viewers of the game.

Today, NZC is taking a streaming-first approach to sports content, applying data-led marketing strategies to unlock new fan bases, and harnessing real-time data and analytics to provide an edge over its closest rivals.

And it's here where the first steps of the partnership began, with NZC's high-performance team.



"Qrious has an ability to take what we want and create a solution. It's amazing to have an external provider that can so quickly become aligned with what you are trying to achieve. They just get it."

— Paul Warren, Performance Analysis Manager, NZC



# The High-Performance Challenge

New Zealand's national cricket teams play in an intensely competitive environment. Success hinges on effectively analysing teams to ensure optimum player selection and tactics for campaigns and matches.

NZC's partnership with Qrious led to the development of one of the most advanced data analysis platforms in world cricket and provides New Zealand's top teams with a competitive advantage. They can now analyse more data than any team in the world to inform selection and tactics.

The innovative solution relies on access to data, of which NZC has an abundance and which it had been using to analyse player performance for years. However, it was a time-consuming, manual process. NZC couldn't easily extract actionable insights to feed back to coaches and players in a timely manner.

"When we started the journey, we had countless segregated data sources. We needed to bring them together so we could eliminate duplication and look at all the pieces of the jigsaw at the same time," says Warren.

NZC needed a better way of handling, automating and analysing performance data.

So, Qrious migrated NZC's on-premises data to the cloud and acquired new data sources to enrich it. This enabled NZC to automate the collection, cleaning and integration of multiple data sets and store them in a single platform. It offers a richer picture of external factors that might affect performance, such as ball-tracking, weather, injury and training workloads.

"We bring it all together around team and player performance, and look for cause-and-effect relationships. This influences what else we may need to bring into the training environment to ensure that we can perform. Winning is a given, but performance is about executing the things we've worked on in the moment," says Warren.

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The digital platform offers a scalable solution. So, as NZC gains access to more data sets, it can simply integrate these into the platform and gain even deeper insights.

NZC can easily extract data into visualisation tools for analysis and reporting. Insights that previously took days to generate are now available to the teams in real time, at the grounds, during the match.

"Sport, particularly cricket, is dynamic. Now, we can quickly collate and review the information and decide whether we need to change anything, either during a series or following a review of the game," says Warren.

Accessible data and insights mean more relevant information is passed on to coaches and players and key reports are generated automatically as part of the training process. They have access to smarter, higher-quality output from analysis so they can make more informed decisions for training and match preparation.

"The database is connected to our BI [business intelligence] software, which we use to build our reports. It's shared with coaches online so they can easily interact with the data and analysis that we produce," says Warren.

Coaches are empowered to ask for more specific information on any aspect of a game, and analysts can effortlessly generate relevant insights.

"The accessibility of the performance and athlete data has driven more engagement between coaches and players, and it allows conversations and decision-making processes to start from an objective point," says Warren. "Some conversations have led to outcomes on the pitch as a result of this data."

## Fan Engagement

NZC saw the power of the technology inside the high-performance game and is applying it to both improve fan engagement and grow the grassroots game.

Hand in hand with Qrious, NZC is exploring customer touchpoints and data across its business in a bid to market to audiences in a smarter, more intuitive way and ensure that fans are at the forefront of everything it does.

The challenge for NZC is how to retain its existing fans and maintain engagement with them while also attracting new audiences.

"We are increasingly competing with numerous forms of entertainment and new sports offerings for share of wallet," says Stacey Geraghty, NZC's Head of Marketing and Communications.

Additionally, people are engaging with entertainment in new ways.

"So we need to stay on top of evolving consumption behaviours," says Geraghty. "We want to ensure we have strong multimedia offerings and interact with fans through an increasing number of touchpoints."

But how do you create a consistent yet contextualised experience for fans in line with how they're engaging with the sport, be that playing, volunteering, watching or simply seeking news and information?

"Being digital-led is absolutely critical," says Geraghty.

So, having established a modern data platform capability within NZC, Qrious has now migrated its fan-engagement data from disparate data sources to provide a holistic view of engagement across several metrics, including email campaigns, traditional and

social media, ticketing, merchandise and community registrations. All of this can be benchmarked against population and demographics, providing a view of participation and engagement nationwide. NZC can now better target its resources to improve fan engagement and grow participation.

Geraghty says that three years ago NZC fan personas were developed on assumptions. "We are at the other end of the spectrum now; we understand fans much better. Ultimately, we want to understand the behaviours and interests of those across the whole ecosystem of cricket."

Data has two roles. First, the better NZC can collect data from its touchpoints the better it can understand its fans and tailor experiences. Second, data tools that integrate with coverage of the game can enhance fans' engagement.

"We want to empower fans to experience the sport on their own terms. It's about providing a more consistent and personalised experience so that they're able to engage with the sport in new ways," says Geraghty.

Also through data, NZC can identify under-representation in different communities. Qrious took participant data and overlaid it with Census data. It means NZC knows, by age, gender and ethnicity for each region, what the penetration of cricket participation is as a proportion of population. It allows NZC to focus its efforts in the right places.

Engagement at a community level has a powerful role to play.

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A vibrant, high-energy photograph of a crowd at a sporting event. In the foreground, two men are prominently featured, both with their arms raised and mouths open in celebration. The man on the left is wearing a light blue polo shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a red and white plaid shirt. They are holding up long, inflatable tubes that feature the NZC logo. The background is filled with other spectators, some also holding up similar tubes, creating a sense of a large, enthusiastic crowd. The overall atmosphere is one of excitement and shared joy.

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— Stacey Geraghty, Head of Marketing, NZC





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— Matt Bain, Marketing Director, Spark



# Grassroots Engagement

## Spark Sport is NZC's home broadcast partner.

It's a logical fit: each has a strategy to keep the next generation of players and viewers front of mind by innovating with new technology.

"This is the first time a major New Zealand sports body has made the decision to take a streaming-first approach. Streaming services put the viewer in control of what to watch and when they watch it," says Matt Bain, Marketing Director, Spark.

"It is about technology change and adoption. We know what happens when companies don't innovate and move with technology. We only have to reference Kodak and Blockbuster who both failed to meet customer demand and consumer trends in their respective markets."

Since Netflix entered the New Zealand market in 2015, it has transformed the television-watching landscape and ignited a streaming migration. Today, Netflix is the most popular pay-television service in New Zealand.

Its popularity is fuelled by how accessible streaming technology has become. From 2019 to 2020 alone, an additional 181,000 New Zealanders gained access to a streaming service in their home and these services now reach over 3.2 million people – a massive 82% of the population.

"The research and the statistics are undeniable," says Bain. "We are confident that the strategy we are jointly implementing with NZC is the right one."

Geraghty says it's important to NZC that Spark Sport engage with the cricket community at the grassroots level and show them the platform's capability. "How accessible and easy it is, and how it can help them bring their community together."

Six cricket clubs that needed support with technology adoption were identified. Spark helped by enabling fibre to the clubrooms, and providing a Spark Sport subscription, big screen TV and devices to help with scoring.

"Messages can become diluted as you work your way through the cricket network. Having boots on the ground to reach various groups is a great way to educate and empower the network," says Geraghty.

"Together with Spark Sport, we want to ensure clubhouses are a vibrant place for the local community to come together," says Geraghty.

It's early days for the data-led fan engagement and community initiatives. But NZC is confident that its evolving partnership with Qrious and Spark will help it achieve its vision.

Indeed, NZC's unwavering commitment to put technology and innovation at the heart of the game has positioned it well ahead of the curve compared to other New Zealand sports bodies. This strategy will continue to grow NZC's competitive advantage and it will have a long-lasting and positive impact on the game for today and the next generation.



## We're in it together

We see an amazing future for New Zealand. Where technology can make lives better, businesses stronger, and our country the envy of the world. And the best way to get there is together.

So that's what we do – we back our clients every day like we're part of their business, and it's also how we work together to support them. We're a group of specialist, world-class, Kiwi businesses working together to supercharge each others' offerings.

And together, we are our country's largest technology and transformation business – helping New Zealand run smoother, grow faster, and lead the way in an ever changing world.

Spark Business Group - in it together with New Zealand.

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