

## Innovation Brings Sea Change to Dolphins Organization

When 74,000 fans flooded into Sun Life Stadium for Super Bowl XLIV in February, they were treated to a game-day experience that matched the intensity of the on-field action at the annual gridiron spectacle. A convergence of cutting-edge game video, multimedia entertainment and customized information created a unique environment for attendees that, not only captured, but also enhanced the action.

Delivering the ultimate experience for fans is part of Tery Howard's mission. As chief information officer and senior vice president of the Miami Dolphins, which also owns Sun Life Stadium, Howard is charged with leading the technology initiatives that create a state-of-the-art venue for professional and college football games, baseball and other events.

Howard sets the Dolphins' information technology (IT) strategy, making sure it supports the organization's overarching business goals. In addition to creating an unrivaled game-day experience, those goals also include creating new revenue opportunities and building the information-intensive foundation for a championship-caliber football team. Keeping technology investments aligned with the Dolphins' business strategy is a top priority for Howard. To accomplish that, the IT organization has to be agile enough to respond to fast-moving technology trends and business opportunities and must have the infrastructure in place that can scale up quickly to support new initiatives, she says.

With new majority owner Stephen Ross taking control of the organization early last year, the team has taken several steps to transform the stadium and team operations. To kick off the 2009 season, the Dolphins unveiled several technology improvements that support their vision to revolutionize the in-stadium experience. As a first step, working with Cisco, the Dolphins set their strategy and upgraded their network backbone to handle voice, video and data in "a single pipe." That convergence presents innovative opportunities and has been instrumental in supporting the organization's business goals, Howard says.

In September, the Dolphins introduced Cisco StadiumVision™, a video and digital content distribution platform that delivers HD video, targeted advertising promotions, customized content and digital menu boards to more than 1,500 TV displays installed throughout the stadium. With StadiumVision, the Dolphins can program each TV to show the action on the field, as well as replays, player information, sponsor messages or relevant announcements about traffic or upcoming events, allowing for new levels of fan engagement.

Additionally, through a partnership formed last season with Kangaroo Media, the team began offering premium seat holders "Dolphins Game Day Vision," a handheld video device. The devices have a 4.3-inch LCD screen and offer 10 channels of audio and video, empowering fans to view exclusive Dolphins content and unique perspectives, as well as updates on other NFL games and fantasy teams and players. The device was received so well by fans that the Dolphins are expanding the program to include all season ticket holders in 2010.

Another priority for Howard has been enabling what she calls a "360-degree view of the Dolphins' fans," which allows the team's sales and marketing organization to develop highly targeted campaigns. "It's incredibly important for us to know who our fans are and what their preferences are," she says. For example, with StadiumVision, the Dolphins can segment marketing and advertising messages and deliver them on the different video screens to the appropriate audiences at each game. "With the implemen-

ation of StadiumVision, we are able to broadcast what is relevant to the various fan segments at the stadium, providing for a more personalized greeting and messaging platform and at the same time, deliver more value to our partners," Howard says.

On Super Bowl Sunday, the Dolphins showcased the results of their technology investments. The 1,500 high-definition screens mounted across the stadium treated fans to multiple camera angles of the on-field action, augmented replays, player statistics and customized digital menus and messages from the NFL and sponsors. Some suites showed off the latest in 3-D TV, with screens displaying 3-D logos and graphics without viewers having to wear special glasses. And the point-of-sale systems at Sun Life Stadium handled a record number of transactions during the game.



Howard heads a group of nine, but the staff is augmented by partners like Cisco, who provide expertise, mentoring and guidance for new technology projects. "We look at Cisco as an extension of our group and business partner," Howard says. Howard reports to Dolphins chief executive officer Michael Dee, who joined the organization last year. To ensure the technology strategy stays in synch with the business goals, new technology projects are approved by a budget committee that is made up of executives from across the organization.

Looking ahead, the organization has proposed extensive stadium improvements and technology is in place to support any changes. "We have implemented the infrastructure capable of scaling, as needed, as it relates to voice/data/video convergence, bandwidth, security and Wi-Fi connectivity to be more responsive to the needs of our fans and partners," says Howard.

Howard's goals include tapping into all the video and data that the organization owns to create new products – and new revenue. "It's the same challenge throughout the sports industry. How do you monetize these assets? How do you empower the respective business functions to create new business models and deliver more value," she says. Howard is guided by a philosophy that remains constant: Anticipate change, build the infrastructure to sustain growth and be ready to take full advantage of the opportunities that technology enables. "Technology is going to be a key differentiator and create a competitive advantage in sports," she says.

**Tery Howard**  
Miami Dolphins



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