

Wimbledon enhances the experience for tennis fans

Increasing engagement with augmented reality solutions from IBM

Smart is...

Maintaining Wimbledon's position as the world's premier tennis event by exploring innovative ways of conveying the excitement of the tournament to millions of people around the globe.

IBM and Wimbledon are creating an increasingly reliable, secure and responsive infrastructure to keep pace with a global, grand slam tournament and help to provide a firm foundation for innovation. New developments were introduced for 2009/10: IBM Seer with Video, an augmented reality phone application which acts as an onsite, realtime guide and interactive map for Wimbledon and allows users to take live feeds from BBC and other cameras; an iPhone Wimbledon App which transforms how fans keep up with the action; and IBM Seer Aggregator, which enables fans to receive Wimbledon tweets direct to java-enabled phones from a variety of sources including players, commentators and a team of IBM scouts at the event.

For two weeks every year, the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (AELTC), a private members' club with fewer than 150 permanent employees, scales up its infrastructure to stage the Wimbledon Tennis Championships – a global, grand slam event. During Wimbledon fortnight, the Club accommodates around half a million spectators onsite whilst meeting the needs of the world's sporting media and over three quarters of a billion television viewers on 129 TV channels in 173 countries. During the 2010 Championships, over 11.5 million unique users visited the official wimbledon.org web site, and nearly 307 million page views were served.

As the popularity of Wimbledon continues to increase, the Club has managed to maintain the charm of English lawn tennis and keep pace with the demands of modern sport and multi-media broadcasting. Attracting and retaining even bigger audiences in a world of growing choice and distractions is, nevertheless, a challenge. The Club needs to engage its audiences by introducing innovative multimedia “touch points” where people can connect and interact with The Championships in new and exciting ways.

IBM has worked with the Club since 1990 to help ensure that, during Wimbledon fortnight, captured score and statistical data is sent around the world in an instant, keeping tennis fans up-to-date with all the news and information. IBM runs the official Wimbledon Web site which, although under regular attack, has never suffered any downtime. IBM Internet Security Systems managed several thousand attacks per day during last year's Championship.

By handing the hosting and management of its Championships' data solution to IBM, the Club benefits from a secure, scalable infrastructure, incorporating the latest technologies, without a large upfront capital investment. IBM does not just take care of integrating many disparate systems into one seamless solution that flexes to meet business demands; it also manages a number of third parties on the Club's behalf.

Having developed a deep understanding of the Club's culture, brand and values over the years, IBM works in collaboration with Club executives and the IT Department to help ensure the IT strategy and implementation helps the Club meet its business goals.



Business Benefits

- IBM Seer aims to provide an enriched experience for people attending Wimbledon and helps their day to go more smoothly by offering immediate, realtime information about the tennis and the Wimbledon site
 - Users can 'see through the wall' of the show courts by using live video feeds of play
 - Users can also get live video feeds from other points of interest such as 'Henman Hill' or the taxi queues.
 - The Wimbledon App helps fans to feel part of the action wherever they are, providing the latest news, scores, photos and tweets direct to their phone
 - Seer Aggregator helps to personalise the Wimbledon experience and make it more immediate. It brings together Wimbledon-related Tweets into one channel and, through a filtering tool, allows fans to choose those of most interest.
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Courting new audiences

As well as keeping it abreast of relevant innovations, the All England Club also looks to IBM to help it attract new and diverse audiences, with a particular focus on the youth market. Over the past two years, IBM has helped by introducing smart new mobile technology.

A free App for Apple's iPhone and iPod Touch received over 851,000 downloads during Wimbledon fortnight, sending it to number one in the iTunes Sports Chart. The App is designed to keep people up-to-date with the action wherever they are by delivering the latest point-by-point scores, news, schedules, draws and video highlights direct to their handset.

The IBM Seer Aggregator is a Twitter App that brings together Wimbledon tweets from various sources including players, officials and an army of IBM scouts. These scouts are onsite throughout the Championships, providing firsthand accounts of the tennis and realtime updates on queues, seat availability, even general travel information. Optimised for most Java-enabled handsets, Seer Aggregator is a straightforward, intuitive tool that helps fans make sense of all the action. Its easy-to-use filtering menu system is engineered to enable people onsite and around the world to access the information that interests them the most.

It is the IBM Seer application, however, which is really firing people's imagination. Developed for the iPhone and Android platforms, (both of which have an internal digital compass), it enables visitors to Wimbledon to point their phone's camera at the nearest court and an onscreen pop-up will indicate who's playing, the score, who's up next and even seat availability.

Smarter Wimbledon

Bringing tennis fans a richer, more personal experience with IBM Seer



Instrumented

GPS-enabled mobile phones equipped with an electronic compass transmit realtime GPS data identifying not only their user's current location, but also what is being viewed through the camera viewfinder.



Interconnected

GPS data is fed into a central data warehouse and used to select data feeds that enable the image seen through the viewfinder to be overlaid with appropriate facts, live scores, geo-relevant tweets and live video streams.



Intelligent

Combining realtime location data with analytics, processing and live data feeds helps to transform how tennis fans access information, enriching their experience of Wimbledon.

Solution Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere® Application Server
- IBM WebSphere Message Broker
- IBM WebSphere Portal
- IBM DB2 Universal Database™
- IBM Internet Security Systems

Hardware

- IBM Power 550 Express (POWER6®)
- IBM System x3650
- IBM System i5
- IBM Storage Area Network

Services

- IBM Global Business Services
 - Strategy and Change Services
 - Application Innovation Services
 - IBM Global Technology Services
 - e-business Hosting Services
 - Integrated Technology Services
 - IBM Global Sponsorship Events Infrastructure (EI) team
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– Rob McCowen, Marketing Director at The AELTC

Providing dynamic insight

GPS tagging of the Wimbledon site enables content and data associated with various points of interest to be superimposed onto the live video feed from a phone. By augmenting the display with realtime data from the scoring systems and the IBM scouts reporting from around the grounds, IBM Seer gives users a comprehensive and dynamic insight into their surroundings.

From tennis courts to food courts, ATMs to toilets, the application offers a pop-up display to annotate what the user is looking at or where the nearest facility is located. Location information can be displayed on a map of the Wimbledon site and a “take me there” option guides you to your destination.

Furthermore, for 2010, if the user points the phone towards one of the three show courts (Centre, Number One and Number Two), the camera will show live video feeds direct from the BBC so the user can see what’s happening, even if they don’t have show tickets.

The beauty of IBM Seer is that it provides realtime information about where the exciting action is taking place, up-to-the-minute advice about the Wimbledon site and pertinent tips on avoiding queues. For example, by pointing the phone towards one of the two taxi points, users can get a live video feed to see how long the taxi queue is.

In recognition of its combination of creativity and technology, the IBM Seer solution won the 2009 DMA Gold Award in the IT/Telecommunications business sector.

Adding a new dimension

Rob McCowen, Marketing Director at The AELTC, says: “IBM Seer was designed with tennis fans in mind and adds a whole new dimension to a visit to Wimbledon. I can see incredible potential here to change the way people engage with major sporting and other events. The application helps address common problems like getting lost, encountering queues or momentarily missing some of the action.”

By exploring new technologies, the Club is making the most of data that is already collected, bringing it to life and making it more useful, engaging and accessible. Fans visiting Wimbledon can find what they are looking for – whether it’s strawberries and cream or an empty seat – more quickly and efficiently, helping to make the whole experience more pleasant and freeing time to enjoy the tennis.

“We’re very keen on innovation,” confirms McCowen. “Research indicates that people are increasingly expecting information to come to them – so, essentially, we’re extending our Web site by pushing content out to mobile applications.”



Exploring possibilities

Having successfully introduced the ground-breaking IBM Seer at Wimbledon, the Club and IBM are keen to do further work on mobile devices. The mobile version of the web site (m.wimbledon.org) was partially rewritten in HTML5 so that visitors with a iPad/iPhone could play videos from the site. IBM and the Club will also look at how they can incorporate the iPad into plans for 2011. These plans aim to deliver benefits to many people involved in Wimbledon, from tennis fans, players, the media and Club officials through to security staff employed on the site, many of whom use these mobile devices as part of their daily role.

“We’re interested in anything that helps improve people’s experience of Wimbledon and we look forward to seeing how these applications can be developed in the future,” concludes McCowen.

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– Rob McCowen, Marketing Director at The AELTC

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