

CASE STUDY

An NBA team scores
***fan engagement
with a data-driven
social strategy***

How the social team drove 4x more video views — and won budget for a new hire — by leveraging audience and sentiment insights

ORGANIZATION

A National Basketball Association team with millions of fans and followers across the organization's social media accounts.

LOCATION

United States

INDUSTRY

Sports

PRODUCTS

Talkwalker by Hootsuite

Since tipping off its inaugural season, this NBA team has been on a mission to build an emotional connection with audiences — and one key way the social media team has done it is by using social channels to inform, entertain and build relationships with fans.

With a steady stream of action-packed content, the team had no problem capturing the attention of their audience across social media accounts. The challenge? Connecting these efforts to business impact.

To build out their social media listening and reporting capabilities — and gather more insights to drive their strategy — they turned to Talkwalker by Hootsuite.

How they did it

With several social media accounts across multiple platforms, the social team knew that fan interactions held a wealth of information that could help them build lasting relationships and improve their digital strategy over time. But without the right tools, distilling those fan interactions into clear insights was a manual effort that took up too much of their time.

Using Talkwalker, they consolidated social data from specific campaigns to identify key themes and opportunities that would help them better connect with fans during the offseason.

352%

increase in social video views over previous season

1M+

impressions on top-performing holiday posts

46%

increase in social impressions over previous seasons

27%


increase in engagement across social channels

Turning engagement insights into higher-performing content

By analyzing previous campaigns, the social team learned that fans responded enthusiastically to polls and Q&As — prompting them to build more of these engagement touchpoints into their upcoming content calendar.

Another valuable insight came through analyzing sentiment around the tone of their content. Their audience craved a bolder, more unique, and more authentic tone — and modifying their brand voice and content strategy to deliver on this desire for authenticity could deliver big results.

Instead of relying on repurposed broadcast clips or approved footage from the league, the social team decided to boost its own original content and behind-the-scenes footage. The strategy worked: this fresh content was a hit with audiences, leading to a shift in their content strategy, which now features at least 50% original content across platforms (and up to 80% original content on Instagram).



"Fans don't want to be talked at from a faceless team account. Talkwalker showed us that engagement spikes when we lean into content that is authentic and fosters two-way dialogue. It makes our audience feel like they're connecting with a real fan."


Director, Social Media

Using sentiment analysis to turn fans into brand ambassadors

At the heart of their approach is a commitment to meeting fans where they are, delivering content that taps into audiences' emotional connection to the team.

Using Talkwalker's sentiment analysis, the brand team was able to pinpoint nine key emotional drivers that resonate most with fans, then use these insights to shape a more collaborative approach to content that would keep audiences invested before, during, and after basketball season.

This data-driven look at emotional resonance informed both day-to-day engagement and long-term fan development strategies. By shifting content to focus more on fan activity before, during, and after playoff games, the brand and social teams were able to elevate more fans into brand ambassadors who not only engage with their content, but also broaden its reach and attract new fans.



“As an organization committed to our core brand, beyond team performance, it’s important to be able to parse between excitement about winning and excitement for the brand. With social insights, we can now analyze and track these fluctuations over time, pinpointing how our efforts are driving sentiment changes.”

Brand Strategist

Reporting on social performance against industry benchmarks

Before Talkwalker, reporting on social performance was one of the social team's biggest pain points. With Talkwalker, they can now present data in easily digestible formats for leadership, highlighting priority platforms based on audience interaction and engagement.

Talkwalker's Social Content Ratings for Sports solution has also become an essential benchmarking tool for the team, enabling them to validate their content strategy and understand their performance in the context of other franchises and industry brands.



“Social Content Ratings allow us to contextualize our results with other like markets across the NBA, helping us effectively communicate the value of efforts to leadership. It informs our strategy for branded, original content and allows us to have a framework of how we can best serve our fans with content that resonates with their excitement for our team and organization.”

Director, Social Media

Empowering collaboration that drives business outcomes

Data from Talkwalker has also proven invaluable across the organization, empowering the brand and social teams to collaborate with other departments and help them shape their own strategy and priorities.

In one example, when the Director of Community Engagement needed to prove business impact and inform future planning, they worked with the Director of Social Media to obtain data on how community-driven content was performing on their foundation's social accounts.

The findings were eye-opening: of the top 10 social posts for the year, seven focused on the brand's holiday giving program — and the remaining three highlighted the brand's other community events. This overwhelming engagement underscored the importance of local outreach efforts to fans, and supported ongoing investment in community-driven content.

The social team also works closely with the corporate partnership team to determine what channels will be most impactful when engaging with external partners.



The results

The basketball team has now gained newfound visibility into its social performance, brand affinity, and fan sentiment, making it possible to better understand, track, and act on social efforts and audience response.

Since the social team shifted to more original content this season, engagement has increased by 27% — even with fewer posts overall. Talkwalker's reporting has made it easy to track top posts and engagement across platforms, and has helped them deliver more tailored content for individual channels to further improve performance.

These results have even helped the social team make the case for increasing its headcount, successfully advocating for a new full-time hire to grow further.

The results have been transformative:

46%

increase season-over-season in overall impressions across social platforms

352%

average season-over-season increase in video views on Instagram, X/ Twitter, and Facebook

Over 1M

impressions on top-performing holiday posts

Proving business impact to grow the team

Recognizing that original and behind-the-scenes content drove the best engagement, the Director of Social Media successfully advocated for a new full-time hire to assist with in-game content, branded content, community content, and more.

