

TATA
COMMUNICATIONS



OFFICIAL GLOBAL
CONNECTIVITY SUPPLIER



CASE STUDY

THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE PGA EUROPEAN TOUR: TATA COMMUNICATIONS

**MICHAEL COLE, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER OF
THE PGA EUROPEAN TOUR GIVES US HIS OPINION ON
THE BROADCASTING SUCCESS OF THE TOUR - AND
THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND IT**



THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE PGA EUROPEAN TOUR - TATA COMMUNICATIONS

MICHAEL COLE, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER OF THE PGA EUROPEAN TOUR

“Golf is undergoing something of a transformation in terms of broadcasting. The wider perception is that it’s old-fashioned, and fixed in traditional media. But, unlike many other global sports organisations, we are actually in the unique position of having seen our audience increase in recent times.

Now this could be down to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games – it helped golf connect with new audiences who had never watched before. We’re talking more than three billion people worldwide. The knock-on effect is huge. But, also a large part of this can also be attributed to the European Tour’s desire to lead the transformation of the sport by putting content at the centre of our operations.”

For more information, visit us at www.tatacommunications.com/sports/pga-european-tour

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS; A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

“The European Tour is something of the ‘untold story’ in sport. We manage 47 events in 30 countries across 5 continents throughout the year. No other sporting event comes close to the operational challenges and demands we have to meet. Our end of season downtime is literally just days.

So, each year we already produce 900 hours of live content and 75 hours of non-live content for our fans across the world. But we need to reach out and engage with them in new ways.

This was my initial observation when I took over as CTO. That the European Tour had substantial investment in I.T., but there were no real collaborative partnerships with leading technology organisations to enable us to focus on content. For me, this was a real missed opportunity.”

NEW PLATFORMS, DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

“Generally, people who are able to attend golf competitions are in the minority. Tournaments traditionally last four days and most people have work and personal lives to juggle, so we need to find new ways of connecting our fans – some 470 million households around the world – to the sport.

We want to keep our loyal fans engaged, and broaden our reach through new formats to attract different types of audiences, through different platforms.

We want to create new digital content for global distribution to our fans, so they can follow the sport in bite-size chunks, wherever and whenever. And to expand our digital platforms, so that we can live-stream events to our fans, and broaden our appeal amongst digitally-savvy, younger audiences.

This is the massive opportunity: to engage with our audience and take the experience to them – digitally. In doing so, we can make golf a true spectator experience for viewers of all ages, cultures and walks of life.

Transforming the types of content, and the way we deliver it, is vital to this. And that’s where content, technology and Tata Communications, the partner we work with in this, all come into play.”

A PARTNERSHIP OF UNDERSTANDING

“In order to move with the times and attract new fans, our partners must fully understand our needs. It’s early days in our relationship, but in terms of maintaining and building on our initial momentum, Tata Communications is proving ideal.

They appreciate that most golf courses are in beautiful but exceedingly hard to reach locations, and that using satellites for broadcast across 47 venues is expensive.

They understand that our 40 rights holders rely on global transmission of high-quality content and that we want to be able to give viewers exclusive, higher definition content, and a true immersive experience.

Then, of course, there’s Tata Communications’ experience. For both Formula 1® and MotoGP™, they’ve taken the sport and changed the whole playing field in terms of combining digital and media.

With that, there’s a trust there. **An assurance that they can 100% deliver global connectivity. So armchair fans can get access to content. And we can engage through innovation and grow our fan base.**

For us, to have reliance in a world-class partner like this, is fundamental. It’s why we chose them as our technology partner.”



TECHNOLOGY LIKE NO OTHER

“As well as the fact they understand content and we are able to leverage their experience in other sports, Tata Communications’ global reach - the sheer range of their capability - is one of the main ways they’ve helped us at the European Tour.

Tata Communications has the largest wholly-owned fibre cable network in the world. **It means that they can offer extra network capacity so we can distribute more high-quality video media out to broadcasters from the remote places our golf courses are located**, and in a more affordable way.

And, because they’re connected with major broadcasters like Sky, we’ve been able to use their eco-system and distribute simply and directly.

This capability, the size and scale of the network, enables us to maximise our commercial partnerships, both with media rights and sponsorship. I feel we are now beginning to monetise our operations properly.

At the moment we don’t have the option to just use fibre, so for now, we’ve started our transformation with a hybrid model. It means that for most of our events we use satellite, but for certain major tournaments, we may use our extra capacity fibre line to deliver 4K HDTV and OTT content in the future.

The low latency provides near real-time digital content. It means we can move quickly on to our website, into the cloud, and on to our official app. With greater capacity we open up so many more possibilities: live interviews with the golfers between shots, cameras actually ‘in’ the holes so the viewers feel like they’re actually there. This is premium content that people are more than happy to pay for. Using Tata Communications’ fibre network we are able to create a true experience for our fans.

And rather than manage a huge ecosystem of suppliers, our partnership with Tata Communications makes life that much simpler. **They deliver economies of scale, a level of consistency and end-to-end assurance which we just didn’t have before. As far as their technology goes, it’s a real game-changer.”**

“Tata Communications has the largest wholly-owned fibre cable network in the world. It means that they can offer extra network capacity so we can distribute more high-quality video media out to broadcasters from the remote places our golf courses are located, and in a more affordable way.

They deliver economies of scale, level of consistency and end-to-end assurance which we just didn’t have before.”

PEOPLE POWER

“Whilst Tata Communications’ network is helping us to drive engagement, there’s the people side of their company, too. That’s what initially stood out to me in my role.

From a cultural perspective it feels like a genuine partnership. We jointly recognise the challenges and opportunities with open minds. There are common goals and objectives to create key ground for our stakeholders.

Tata Communications’ experience on the ground, working on multiple services, connecting data, has helped us to modernise our thinking. But I feel the attitude of their team really sets them apart, too.”

A NEW VISION FOR THE FUTURE

“The future for the PGA European Tour is all about the potential challenges we can overcome. And it comes back to Tata Communications’ understanding of content.

Using their availability and reliability we can change the conversation in golf. We are, above all, an entertainment company. Content is the new currency - and compelling content captivates audiences. We want them to come back time and time again. We want to be able to monetise that channel.

Our transformational journey is supported by technology. This is where we can be smart and use Tata Communications’ experience in other sports to benefit the European Tour.

It’s not necessarily about us being number one in any technological innovation, but about being number two, **to take tried and tested insight and experience learned from other sports and apply it to the world of golf.**

Niche capabilities in technology don’t have to be invented at the European Tour. But if Tata Communications can help bring them in for us, we can start to experiment. Using our genuine partnership we can begin to adopt and achieve.

We’re already looking at hosting and storage - we have a lot of archive content that would be of value to many - but we want to push technological platforms and experiment with mixed realities, too.

Things like virtual reality and augmented reality can allow fans to go past the ropes on the fairway. We can use the Internet of Things to collect velocity data as the ball is chipped in. We can guarantee closer access to the golfers, their swings, and their shots.

The benefits of technology will not just elevate the viewing for the fans, but also provide them with personalised content to their own unique tastes and preferences. As our technology changes, so does their experience.

This ‘in the moment’ experience is the way things are going. And it all comes down to data. Raw data. From back of house systems to migrating to the cloud, raw data needs to be at the heart of everything we do.

It drives meaningful insight to the golfers - they can use accurate data to improve their play and achieve greater success. It enables the fans, both at home and at the tournaments, to feel like they really are connected as part of an immersive experience. And it also offers opportunities to our commercial family. They can get a true R.O.I. on activation by using data to understand the behaviour of spectators.

Using our partnership with Tata Communications, we have the capability to utilise all kinds of new technologies, and cost saving features, to deliver high-quality content from anywhere in the world.

But content doesn’t just have to be video. It’s data, too. We want to be able to track everything that moves, everything that creates data, to drive insight for our players, fans and sponsors.

That’s the European Tour’s vision. And with the synergy of Tata Communications’ technology and infrastructure, I believe it’s something that we can achieve together.”



The European Tour logo and Harry Vardon silhouette are trademarks registered to the PGA European Tour.

TATA COMMUNICATIONS



OFFICIAL GLOBAL
CONNECTIVITY SUPPLIER

www.tatacommunications.com | [tata_comm](https://twitter.com/tata_comm)
<http://tatacommunications-newworld.com> | www.youtube.com/tatacomms