

New Youth, New Media: **How Major League Baseball Can Build Tomorrow's Loyal Fan Base**



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PURPOSE

This is a comprehensive public relations plan designed for Major League Baseball as the client. The purpose of the plan is twofold. First, I will demonstrate to Major League Baseball how the youth fan is crucial to the future success of professional baseball. Second, I will suggest original programming designed to increase the youth fan base.

I will use research and statistics to prove the importance of youth fans to the professional sport. I will show that fewer children today play youth baseball and that fewer children are loyal to Major League Baseball.

I will recommend programming that uses “new” media, which is a broad term used to define varied Internet content. Programming will be centered on the creation of an entirely new website for youth. Promotion of the website will be described in this plan.

Major League Baseball currently lacks the type of new media content that will draw interest from kids. The programming suggestions in this plan are designed to solve that.

Notes:

Programming elements suggested in this plan are designed to be used together as a comprehensive new media plan but would also be effective as individual elements.

Throughout the report, I will use the acronym MLB to represent Major League Baseball.

- The silhouetted batter logo is a registered trademark of Major League Baseball Properties, Inc. The use of the logo in this plan qualifies as fair use for scholarship under United States copyright law.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participation in youth baseball is declining and American children are turning to new media for entertainment. What does this mean for MLB's future? Probable consequences include less ticket sales in the short-run and a decreasing loyalty among the next generation of baseball fans. For a sport that has always held a tender place in the hearts of Americans, evidenced by its well-known moniker "America's Pastime," it is particularly critical for MLB to cater to its youngest fans to build tomorrow's loyal fan base.

Through a comprehensive public relations plan, I outline original initiatives that MLB can use to target youth using new media, including aspects of social networking, online gaming, and content sharing. To revive the popularity of baseball trading cards, and in turn increase interest in MLB, I suggest a digital trading world where users can view, collect, and trade baseball cards while connecting with other fans around the country. This and other initiatives will unite the traditions of baseball with innovative new media, making MLB relevant and important to the next generation of loyal fans.



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RESEARCH

Major League Baseball has a special place in American culture. It is not just a sport; it is indeed America's Pastime. As the saying goes, nothing is more American than baseball and apple pie.

Baseball is so engrained in American culture that its terminology has become everyday language. For example, it is common to say "Three strikes, you're out" if a person fails after three tries, but "hitting a home run" means success. When something is done quickly, it's "right off the bat" but a "curveball" can change the outcome entirely.¹

Baseball's history is far from perfect, but fans continue to overlook the transgressions and remain loyal to the sport. Scandals and cheating have been a part of the sport since the beginning and still continue today. From the Black Sox Scandal in 1919 to the ongoing steroid investigations with several Major League players, baseball continues to bounce back thanks to loyal fans.

Recently, baseball's fan base has spread beyond the United States. International audiences, especially those in Japan and Latin America, have avid baseball fans of all ages. MLB opened the regular season in Japan for the third time in 2008, and there is potential for robust expansion in these countries.

Revenue for Major League Baseball reached \$6 billion in 2007, and Commissioner Allan H. (Bud) Selig predicts that it could reach \$6.5 billion in 2008.² When Selig took office in 1992, his goal was to make baseball accessible to every kid around the country.³ If MLB hopes to see continued growth and revenue, targeting U.S. youth must remain a top priority. It is absolutely crucial to target the youth demographic to build baseball's next generation of loyal fans.



Problems

Research shows that fewer American kids are playing youth baseball.

In 2003, about 28 million American children ages 7-11 played baseball, according to the National Sporting Goods Association.⁴ Baseball ranked fifth in participation behind bicycle riding, swimming, soccer, and basketball for this age group. For children ages 12-17, action sports like basketball, football, soccer, and volleyball have higher participation rates than baseball. Participation in baseball declines as children get older, whereas in other sports, especially basketball, there is a substantial increase.⁵ Lacrosse and hockey are growing in popularity, while baseball continues to experience shrinking participation rates, especially in Little Leagues.⁶

Children are choosing extreme sports over traditional team sports, because of the excitement and the celebration of individual achievement. Extreme sports like skateboarding, inline skating, and stunt bicycling are thriving. In 2003, about 3.5 million kids ages 7-11 participated in skateboarding, a figure that continues to increase exponentially.⁷ Children are enticed by the action and can practice these sports with little equipment by themselves.

Children are heavily involved in computer and video games. They aren't playing "Stickball" in the streets or catch at the local baseball diamond with their neighborhood friends – they are playing video games against their friends. Baseball fans ages 7-11 spend an average of 5.4 hours a week on the Internet and an average of 44 days a year playing youth baseball.⁸ Because of this shift to more sedentary activities, America is seeing an increase in childhood obesity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of obesity in children ages 6-11 years has increased from 6.5% to 18.8% over the past twenty years.⁹

Research shows that the current generation of youth fans is less loyal to baseball than previous generations.

Many children attend MLB games, and in fact attendance at regular season and playoff games continues to increase. According to the MLB Attendance Report, the average attendance at a regular season game was 43,300 in 2001, and increased to 52,739 in 2007.¹⁰ But there is an immeasurable decrease in the amount of loyalty that children show to baseball.¹¹ There has been a perceptible shift in how today's youth feel about MLB.

Today's youth have more options for entertainment than any previous generation. They have access to a multitude of information online. They are less loyal to one sport or one hobby and can instead sample anything in which they're interested. Research shows that children participate in several sports instead of picking just one. In 2003, more than half of children who played baseball also played basketball, and almost a quarter of these children also played football and soccer. Playing multiple sports often means less specialization in one sport and less loyalty to one sport.¹²



Some children collect baseball trading cards, but it is not a universally popular trend among youth. In the past, trading baseball cards was one of the top leisure activities. In 1991, the trading card industry set a record with \$1.1 billion in sales. Today, that figure has dropped to \$300 million.¹³

To past generations, the stories behind the ball players were important. Sports players were idolized and baseball cards symbolized loyalty to the sport and the player.¹⁴ Now, fans can easily follow stats and have access to all information online, but fewer youth are loyal baseball fans.

Most of MLB's marketing and public relations efforts are geared towards teens and adults.

The content on MLB.com is geared mostly to adults. There is a small children's section of the website called "Kids Club," but it is quite bare. To get to the children's section, one must click the "More" button at the top right corner of the screen and then click on "Kids." There is not an easy to remember, user-friendly URL address for the page, which makes it confusing and hard for kids to find.

One significant issue with MLB's marketing strategy is that there is an extraordinarily advanced and interactive gaming arcade called MLB Arcade, but it clearly targets teenagers and adults. The site is revolutionary – it contains hundreds of online games and not just games related to baseball. Users can try games for free and then purchase full versions. Though the site is very popular, there is the significant issue that it has content not suitable for users under age 12. There are games with themes of violence and sexuality that young children should not access. There are ratings to identify mature content, but many games with adult themes can be accessed by young children.



Opportunities for Growth

“No one in the game believed that the Internet would be as pervasive a commercial vehicle for us in such a short amount of time.”

-MLB President Bob DuPoy

MLB Advanced Media (MLBAM) is on the cutting edge of digital technology, with more live streaming video over the Internet than any other website on Earth¹⁵. The site requires users to register and pay a monthly fee of at least \$14.95. With over 1 million fans currently registered for MLB.TV, MLB is seeing huge profits from the venture. However, the cost and content of the site deters youth fans and targets mainly teenagers and adults.

To reach children where they spend most of their leisure time, MLB needs to utilize new media. New media are hugely popular with our nation's youth. The interactivity and diversity of content is perfectly suited to the evolving tastes and interests of young audiences. The success of new media continues to expand limitlessly. New media is an umbrella term for any type of online activity, including:

- Instant messaging
- Downloading music and video
- Online gaming
- Blogs
- Social networking

New media engages users on their terms, in an environment in which they feel comfortable. It puts children in control of the messages they are exposed to, contrary to almost every other aspect of their lives in which a parent or teacher is telling them what to do. Traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines are limited in their content. New media, on the other hand, allows users to change the content they are accessing at any point in the process of using it.

For today's youth, new media are a part of daily life. **For every one hour of television watched, children spend four hours using other media.**¹⁶ Youth use new media more than any other group, and an impressive 84% of online youth belong to some kind of online group.¹⁷ Youth users spend an average of 25 minutes a day on any given new media site.¹⁸

As further proof of the success of new media, it took the Internet just four years to reach an audience of 50 million people compared with the 13 years it took television and 38 years it took radio.¹⁹ Every second, seven people log on to the Internet for the first time, and many of those users are under the age of 18.²⁰

For MLB to effectively reach kids, new media are a promising outlet.



Strengths, Challenges, & Threats

STRENGTHS: MLB has embraced new media strategies on MLB.TV. This has shown fans that MLB is modern and relevant in today's changing media landscape. This is advantageous for MLB and will pave the way for new media strategies geared to youth. MLB's expansion of new media content for youth will be considerably easier because MLB has technological expertise in providing high-quality new media content.

The MLB brand is recognizable and familiar to children and will garner interest simply because of this. MLB does not face the challenge of explaining the brand to the consumer. This is a huge strength for MLB that should not be overlooked. Children recognize the MLB logo and will be curious about an MLB site made especially for them.

CHALLENGES: The target audience ranges from youth with little understanding of baseball to fans who can reel off long lists of stats. It will be a challenge for MLB to create new media content that appeals to youth fans of all knowledge levels. Content must include quizzes and contests for the expert youth fan and stories and interesting facts for the less informed fan.

Children have short attention spans, and new media are inherently distracting, with several different images and messages on each page. MLB faces the challenge of keeping children's eyes on the website for long periods of time. To do this, MLB must create a "sticky" site, which means that the content has to grab children's attention and keep it.

Internet behavior does not always translate into real-life behavior among users. Just because a user accesses the MLB website and actively engages in the content there does not mean he/she will be an avid fan in real-life. Internet usage does not directly correlate to purchasing MLB merchandise or attending games. MLB must overcome this by providing content that encourages real-life follow through, such as online contests to win free tickets.

THREATS: The immense popularity of social networking has lead to many competitors. By including social networking in its new media plan, MLB faces the threat of being one of many in a cluttered media landscape. MLB must overcome this by providing unique content that cannot be found anywhere else online.



What the experts think ...

"Kids today have great newspaper sports sections and websites to follow their players' stats and maybe some Fantasy League teams. Kids can follow any out-of-market teams and usually follow their father's favorite team depending on where he grew up. So, kids have more access to baseball information, but **basketball, football, and action sports are blowing away baseball in terms in new, younger fans**. The young fan is very, very important to the future success of Major League Baseball. The thing with baseball is that there are still enough older people who follow the sport. But the stats say **baseball is in dire trouble in ten years without a future demographic** that will replace them."

-Matt Winkler, Associate Dean, Sports Industry Management, Georgetown University²¹

"You know the biggest myth in American sports today? That kids don't go to baseball games. Sure they do. Look around some day if you're ever at a game. You see kids everywhere. But **baseball doesn't have the same grip on the soul of these kids**, or on sports fans, in general, that it used to. And that's the difference."

-Jayson Stark, ESPN sports journalist and author, *The Stark Truth*²²

"Competition from other sports is certainly a big factor, but there're many factors [for the decline in youth participation, especially among African Americans]. **We've got to work on it in terms of getting younger children playing**, into the game, and getting communities behind the programs, like the RBI [Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities] programs and the academies."

-Rachel Robinson, widow of Jackie Robinson²³

"**Every year, it gets tougher and tougher to keep kids on the field**. It's really getting disheartening. I don't think Little League will ever fade away. But ... kids are just spread so thin. There are so many more options."

-Mike Hirschman, administrator of the Little League in Northern Delaware²⁴

"We know there are much greater diversions today for kids. But our game has been around for well over 100 years and we believe it has a purchase on the soul of the country and always will. Of course, **that doesn't mean we can be complacent about our game as it relates to the youth**."

- Rich Levin, MLB spokesman²⁵



OBJECTIVES

"When I first became Commissioner, one of my goals was to put a bat and ball in the hands of every child."

- Bud Selig

The long-term goal of this plan is to build a loyal youth fan base. To build loyalty, casual fans need to become avid fans and new fans need to become casual fans. Because the target audience of this plan is young, MLB can target youth without previous knowledge or exposure to baseball and can introduce them to baseball in an MLB branded environment.

The model of sports fan involvement has shifted over time. In the past, fans started playing a sport as young kids, joined local teams as they grew up, played the sport in high school, continued following it in college, and bought season tickets as adults.²⁶ Today, that is still the ideal, but companies need to be more innovative to achieve lifelong commitment in an increasingly cluttered sports and entertainment market.

The goal of this plan is to introduce kids to baseball and excite their interest in the sport so they can continue playing and/or following the sport as they grow up. The plan is less focused on increasing ticket sales and more focused on changing attitudes. It is harder to measure attitude changes, but it is crucial to creating loyalty.

ATTITUDINAL CHANGES DESIRED:

- Children will be interested in learning more about MLB
- Children will be more knowledgeable about MLB
- Children will care more about MLB
- Children will continue to be interested in MLB

BEHAVIORAL CHANGES DESIRED:

- Children will talk about MLB with friends
- Children will visit MLB website regularly
- Children will watch more MLB games
- Children will attend more MLB games



- More children will play baseball/softball

MEASUREABLES:

- Reach one million users on children's MLB website in the first year
- Increase participation in youth baseball 10% over the next two years (Baseline figure is 30 million participants)²⁷
- Increase MLB ticket sales 5% over the next two years (Baseline figure is 3 million tickets sold per team)²⁸

AUDIENCE PROFILE:

- Primary audience: Boys and girls ages 7-12 around the country who play baseball or softball
- Secondary Audience: Boys and girls ages 7-12 around the country who enjoy watching professional sports and use new media





Audience Segments

GIRLS: Baseball is traditionally seen as a sport played and watched by males. One goal of this plan is to begin to shift that perception to include females. For simplicity, the phrase “youth baseball” is used throughout the plan, but it includes youth softball as well, even when not specified.

MLB is making great strides with the Commissioner’s Initiative on Women and Baseball. A study released by the Initiative found that baseball is women’s favorite professional sport because of the family atmosphere and ballpark experience.²⁹ In many cases, women control the family budget and choose leisure activities for the family. By targeting women, more children will be exposed to the sport and will be more likely to show interest in playing and attending games.

Programming in this plan is designed to target both girls and boys. Girls will be represented equally in pictures, images, and in gender neutral wording. The website will feature stories from girls about their experiences playing youth softball and their aspirations at playing professionally. If young girls are loyal baseball fans, it is more likely that when they raise families of their own, they will share their love of the game with their children.

AFRICAN AMERICANS: MLB is seeing success with its RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities) program. The program now encompasses more than 200 cities and has about 120,000 male and female participants each year.³⁰ The educational element helps children stay in school and the training helps children strengthen their baseball skills.

Sports like basketball and football draw more African American youth than baseball. Children play baseball but often quit around ages 13-16 because of poorly organized youth leagues, lack of funding, or outside influences like street gangs.³¹ In MLB, only 8.2 percent of players are black, which is the lowest level it has been in at least two decades.³²

This plan will include programming initiatives that target African American youth and provide ample information for how to join a local youth league or an RBI program. The website will feature equal representation of African Americans in pictures and stories. Achievements of African American players and those honored in the Hall of Fame will be highlighted throughout the programming.

LATINOS: Latino baseball players are succeeding in youth, minor, and Major League Baseball. In the RBI World Series, youth teams from Puerto Rico hold several championship titles.³³ In 2003, about one-third of all youth baseball participants were Latino.³⁴



In the minor leagues, about half of players are foreign-born. Nearly 80 percent of foreign-born players come from just Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.³⁵ The number of Latino players in the minor leagues continues to grow rapidly.

In 2006, there were 410 Latino players in MLB.³⁶ Baseball is popular among Latino children, and MLB would be foolish to ignore this growing and influential demographic. Programming in this plan is designed to reach out to Latino children in a language and format they understand. The site will be in both English and Spanish and feature important Latino players from the U.S. and Latin America.

MLB has a huge advantage over other sports that are popular among Latino youth. It is easily accessible online and on television and is a well-established professional sport. This is a huge advantage over soccer, which is quite popular among Latino youth but relatively new as a professional sport in the U.S. New media programming should emphasize the easy access that children have to learn about or watch MLB.



PROGRAMMING

To reach children where they spend leisure time, all programming will use new media. Programming is centered on a comprehensive new children's website named MLBdugout.com. Other aspects of programming include a branded MLB widget and an online launch promotion. Safety and privacy concerns will be addressed in detail.

The new site differs from MLB's current youth website most notably in the interactivity of content. The new youth website has an easy to remember name. The name is catchy, relevant to baseball, and includes MLB branding. Additionally, the site has its own URL address that can be accessed without going through MLB.com but can also be accessed from MLB.com by clicking on a branded link. The new site will have an expanse of interactive content such as videos, games, contests, and quizzes. There will be opportunities to interact with other users through social networking and chat features.

****Notes:** Throughout all programming, the word "kid" should be intentionally omitted. The website name does not include the word, as previous MLB site names have. Bright colors, fun fonts, and moving imagery signify a youth audience. Research shows that even the youngest users can easily recognize websites geared to them. The beauty of new media is that it puts users in control of the messages they see, which emphasizes independence and maturity. One of the primary features of MLBdugout.com is a digital trading card world, which gives users the independence to trade with others and manage their own online account.

MLBdugout.com – A Digital Baseball World for Children

FEATURES:

- Flash animated content
- Streaming video
- Digital Card World
- Arcade games, quizzes, contests
- Build your own Hall of Fame with your trading card collection
- Take a virtual tour of the National Baseball Hall of Fame
- Brush up on baseball stats and scores
- Share stories and chat with friends



FLASH ANIMATED CONTENT

Every page will feature moving images and pictures that change when the page is refreshed. The site will open with a flash animation of a baseball scene. There will be 5 different opening sequences so users do not see the same thing every time. Image links will change when rolled over and moving images will travel across the screen.

STREAMING VIDEO

The home page of the site will feature a video that begins playing automatically when the page loads. Alongside the video will be several other videos that users can click on to watch. All video will be kid-friendly. Video content can include highlights from MLB games, interviews with players, baseball training lessons, etc.

DIGITAL CARD WORLD

This is the most innovative, attractive feature on MLBdugout.com. The goal is to use baseball trading cards as a springboard to get children interested in baseball. Digital Card World uses the strengths and popularity of new media and the time-tested catchiness of trading.

The idea of creating digital baseball cards has never been developed. Through a **strategic partnership with Topps**, MLB would provide licensed Topps cards as digital versions. For baseball card manufacturers who made older cards that are very desirable, but who no longer make cards, licensing agreements will be established for the rights to use the content. Digital cards would be trademarked to prevent creation of counterfeit baseball trading cards. The library of digital baseball cards will be extensive, including some of the rarest cards that exist. Making digital versions of preexisting baseball cards will be simple, they can be scanned. Users can also scan in digital copies of trading cards they already own. As an optional bonus, some cards could be animated to be interactive and could literally “come to life.”

In addition to digital versions of the cards, some cards can be printed out and colored in and others will be available to purchase as real copies. The advantage of digital cards, though, is that they are free. This means that children do not have to beg their parents to buy them new cards; they can simply go to the online trading center and acquire new cards themselves. The ability to control their own card libraries gives children responsibility and independence in their decision-making.

To use the digital card world feature of the website, users must register for an account. Users without an account can still view much of the library of digital cards but cannot collect cards or trade with other users. Similar to a card's real-life value, digital cards will be valued on a points system. The rarer the card, the more points it is. Older and rarer cards are valued highest, based on what they would cost to buy in real life. To collect any card, users must have enough credit in their accounts.



Users can acquire credit several ways, all of which use other new media components on the site. Users can get credit from answering quiz questions correctly, playing games, posting to their personal Hall of Fame, and several other ways (including family purchases of MLB merchandise and tickets). This unique strategy is designed to connect all of the site's elements and create an incentive for users to explore all of the content on the site.

ARCADE

As discussed in the research section, the current MLB Arcade is problematic because there is limited kid-friendly content. The arcade on MLBdugout.com will solve that problem. All games on MLBdugout.com will be catered to the target audience of children ages 7-12 who play baseball or enjoy new media. The children's arcade will have similar formatting and appearance to the MLB Arcade, but with flashier graphics and brighter colors. Similar to the current MLB Arcade, many games will have a baseball focus, but many more will be puzzle games, driving games, and other sports games. Games will be fun, free, high-quality, and easy to use.

The arcade will provide a place for users with a low interest level in baseball to be exposed to it in a MLB branded environment. Because of the nature of new media and the flow between pages, users in the arcade will be encouraged to experience other aspects of the site. Repeated visits to the online arcade will create repeated exposure to MLB and increased likelihood of developing loyal fans.

MY HALL OF FAME

The Hall of Fame on MLBdugout.com is an innovative programming strategy for MLB. Everyone is talking about if today's players who used steroids should have asterisks by their names in the Hall of Fame. MLB needs to bring the focus back to celebrating great baseball achievements that have earned a place in the Hall of Fame. Children do not care about legal issues and Senate hearings – they care about genuine baseball talent. With this feature, users will be able to create their own Hall of Fames and honor their favorite players. Users can put their favorite digital trading cards in special virtual glass cases to show them off in their Hall of Fame. They can share their Hall of Fame with other users and chat about their selections. They can read facts about MLB players and even write stories of their own to put on virtual plaques next to the players in their virtual Hall of Fame. This personalizes the players and makes their stories more relatable to children.

VIRTUAL TOUR

Every year, many children visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. To date, about 13 million people have visited since its opening in 1939.³⁷ Visiting is a step back in time that connects generations of baseball fans. To engage today's youth and make the Hall of Fame more accessible than ever, MLBdugout.com will feature a virtual Hall of Fame. Through a **strategic partnership with the National Baseball Hall of Fame**, users on MLBdugout.com will be able to take a virtual tour of the Hall and the Museum. For youth who cannot visit the Hall in person, taking a virtual tour means



going there for free as often as they want. To encourage youth who take a virtual tour to also visit the Hall in person, any registered user on MLBdugout.com will receive one free admission ticket to the Hall valid for use within one year (\$6 value).

BASEBALL STATS & SCORES

To increase knowledge about baseball, MLBdugout.com will feature tons of statistics and scores for MLB games. This section of the site is not just for the avid, knowledgeable fan. The stats will be worded clearly and explained thoroughly so baseball novices can easily understand them. This section will be completely informational and will instruct users on where and how to get involved in youth baseball anywhere in the country.

The stories of outstanding baseball and softball players of all ethnicities will be featured in this section of the site. There will also be a “Today in Baseball History” factoid and other historical information.

SHARE!

The “Share!” feature of the website allows children to communicate with each other and share content through social networking. The site will feature basic social networking elements that will be tied to the Digital Card World and My Hall of Fame functions. Registrants can put up one picture and create a limited profile, not including any identifying information. In their profile, users can write what baseball cards they want so they can find people with whom to trade. They can view each other’s profiles and find people with common interests. There will be a chat feature and the ability to comment on other users’ Halls of Fame. Any communication that strays beyond baseball topics will be flagged by site administrators, users will be warned and parents will receive notice of their child’s warning. This gives children the independence to communicate with others and gives parents the assurance that MLBdugout.com is safe.

The safety of children online would be a top priority for MLBdugout.com. Many companies are hesitant to create websites with social networking and chat capabilities for young children because of the risk of child predators, but MLBdugout.com will be fully prepared to protect for these risks. This gives MLBdugout.com a unique advantage to target youth that other companies are unwilling to do. MLBdugout.com will be committed to providing social networking in a safe environment for children ages 7-12. Youth under age 12 have been ignored when it comes to social networking, and because there is such little competition, there is potential for huge growth for MLB.

The site will be highly regulated to ensure the highest child safety measures are maintained:

- **Privacy** – Users will be prompted to read and agree to a privacy statement upon registering for the site, which can only be done with the consent of a parent or legal guardian. The privacy notice will be emailed to parents when their child registers for the site.



- **Child Protection** – To use several features of the site, children must register with two email addresses – theirs and a parent's. They must provide a parent's credit card number that will not be charged and will be used for verification purposes only. Parents who supply their email as verification will be able to monitor their child's usage at any time. To allow users whose parents have external filtering software to access the site, the site will be rated as child-safe.

MLB Widget

In addition to MLBdugout.com, the new media plan includes an MLB Widget. A widget is an application that can be placed on any webpage and has interactive content such as games, contests, or polls.

The purpose of the MLB Widget is to encourage real-life follow-through. As discussed earlier, there is not a reliable connection between online action and real-life action. The MLB Widget will encourage attending or watching MLB games on television.

The MLB Widget will be a small, colorful application in its own box on the main MLB website and on MLBdugout.com. The widget will have a question or a survey poll that users can answer to win free tickets to an MLB game, the All Star Game, or World Series. The widget will refresh itself to show different questions everyday, and kids can enter once a day for the chance to win free tickets.

At the bottom of the widget will be a link to put in a code that comes up at the bottom of the screen during the third inning of televised games or that can be found at the bottom of ticket stubs. Entering this code will give children a chance to win free tickets, digital trading points, and tons of other cool prizes.



LAUNCH PROMOTION

For the launch of MLBdugout.com, there will be a promotion run entirely on new media. The promotion will begin in June 2009 to celebrate important dates in baseball history and to introduce children to the new website. The promotion will highlight important June dates including: the dedication of The National Baseball Hall of Fame on June 12, 1939, baseball's first perfect game on June 12, 1880, and Tom Seaver's No-Hitter on June 16, 1978.

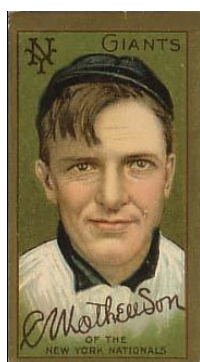
Working in conjunction with the Hall of Fame, the promotion will highlight the Hall's 70th anniversary and will promote the digital Hall of Fame on MLBdugout.com. Press releases will be sent out to various online media, including *Sports Illustrated for Kids* (sikids.com), ESPN.com, and other outlets.

The goal of the promotion is to celebrate baseball's history by celebrating the players and teams who make it great. Everyday on MLBdugout.com there will be a "Today in Baseball History" with facts, pictures, and video of treasured baseball moments.

The promotion will offer prizes, incentives to join the site, and programs that increase baseball awareness. Any kid who opens an account on MLBdugout.com during the inaugural month will automatically get 5 free cards. Five lucky winners will receive a digitized version of one of the cards below, which are among the most valuable cards in baseball history and represent the first players chosen to the Hall of Fame (Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson, Walter Johnson, Honus Wagner, and Babe Ruth).



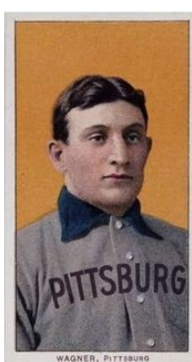
Ty Cobb



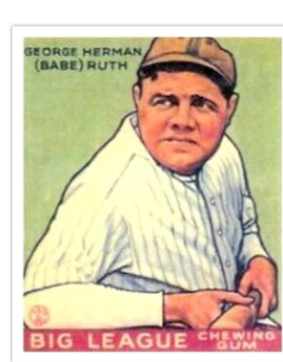
Christy Mathewson



Walter Johnson



Honus Wagner



Babe Ruth



SAMPLE LOGO

This is a basic idea for the MLBdugout.com logo that will be seen throughout all branding and promotional materials. The logo is designed to evoke the feeling of sitting in the stands looking down into a team's dugout. The logo is simple and uses MLB branded colors of blue, red, and black.





SAMPLE SCREENSHOT

This is a basic idea for the homepage of MLBdugout.com. It features easy to find links at the top of the page for the various sections of the website.



Welcome to
Major League Baseball's
online kids' world where you can
trade digital baseball cards,
play games, tour the virtual
Hall of Fame, catch up on stats
and scores, and share stories
with other users just like you!

online streaming video

Enter now for a chance to win one of the most valuable baseball trading cards in history! An original Babe Ruth card!





PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



For more information:

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MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL UNVEILS NEW KIDS' WEBSITE CALLED MLBDUGOUT.COM

WASHINGTON, DC – Major League Baseball has launched a new website for children that includes innovative new media technology and several features that have never been offered until now.

The website, named MLBdugout.com, caters to children ages 7-12, and features social networking, extensive online gaming, chat, and streaming video. The site includes more diversity and interactivity of content than the previous MLB kids' site.

The new children's website attempts to bridge baseball's generation gap using advanced new media technology. One of the most innovative features on the site is a digital baseball trading card world, where kids can view, collect, and trade digital versions of baseball cards including the most famous cards in baseball history. Users can earn points completing activities throughout the site and use them toward collecting cards. The social networking and chat features allow users to trade their digital cards with friends. Users can also take a virtual tour of the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY, which celebrates its 70th anniversary this June.

"MLB has found a unique niche in the youth market for social networking and card trading," said new media expert Emily Golomb. "There are few competitors who provide these innovative new media solutions to kids. MLBdugout.com is the perfect balance between a safe site that parents will love and a fun site that keeps kids engaged."

MLB hopes that the new site will bring a whole new audience of media savvy youth to the sport. Preliminary reviews reveal that the site could be a huge hit. Experts predict that the site could reach over one million users in its first year.

For more information, please contact Emily Golomb at 800-885-2008 or email emily.golomb@gmail.com.



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EVALUATION

To evaluate the effectiveness of this plan and its impact on the target audience, an impact analysis should be conducted. Interim analyses should be conducted every three months and a final, comprehensive impact analysis should be conducted at the conclusion of a year. The impact analysis will determine (1) if the target audience was reached effectively, (2) if they showed a favorable response to the plan, (3) if the plan caused a change in attitudes or behaviors, and (4) if environmental factors affected the impact.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Audience Coverage

- Was the target audience reached?
- How many people were reached?
- To what extent was the target audience exposed to the messages?
- Which unintended audiences also received the messages?

MEASUREABLES:

- Weekly media checks for media clippings
- Readership surveys and audience rating information to determine what types of audience were reached (if intended audience was reached and if unintended audiences were reached)
- Impressions for online media hits
- Website hits
- Unique visitors to the website
- Click-through between sections on the site
- Time spent in each section of the site

Audience Response

- Impact of messages on target audience and how they responded
- Favorable, unfavorable, or neutral reaction
- Did message attract attention, arouse interest, or gain audience understanding?



Attitudinal Changes

- Are kids interested in learning more about MLB?
- Are kids more knowledgeable about MLB?
- Do kids care more about MLB?
- Will kids continue to be interested in MLB?

MEASUREABLES:

- Survey of users to measure current interest and knowledge level and expressed continued interest

Behavioral Changes

- Are kids talking about MLB with friends?
- Are kids visiting MLBdugout.com regularly?
- Are kids watching more MLB games?
- Are kids attending more MLB games?
- Are more kids playing baseball/softball?

MEASUREABLES:

- Monitor and log chat topics to determine most discussed topics
- Demographic profile of MLB game attendees
- Survey of parents to find out if kids are asking to go to baseball games
- Youth baseball participation figures

Environmental Mediation

- What environmental factors contributed to meeting or failing to meet objectives?
- Were there unforeseen negative conditions such as a baseball strike, technological difficulties with website, etc?
- Were there positive external forces that propelled the success of the plan?

MEASUREABLES:



- Environmental monitoring and logging – record outside events and analyze how they positively or negatively influenced the plan
- Focus groups among kids to determine what other factors influenced their decision to join/not join website



FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

After determining the effectiveness of the plan, MLB must decide whether to continue the new media strategy and what modifications should be made for a future plan.

If future plans seek to target youth using new media, they must be more innovative than this plan. New media is constantly evolving, as are the interests of youth. MLB must constantly reinvent its youth image to stay relevant and important to the next generation.

There is room for growth in the new media market because innovation is inherent in its design. There is constantly a “next big thing,” and children are keen on spotting those trends. Today’s youth grow up with new media and are familiar with the technology. Children know what they like on the Internet and what they expect from a website. To set new objectives for future plans, MLB should ask children what they think.

One modification for the next plan could be to include more opportunities for user-generated content. Today’s youth are media savvy and capable of producing material themselves. For future plans, MLB should put the power to determine online content in the hands of its loyal youth fans.





Endnotes

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