

The passion of Manchester United

From Founder Matt Busby to manager Alex Ferguson and the best football brand, David Beckham - what does it take to make a great football brand, and arguably, one of the best brands in the world: Manchester United?

 By Louise Marsland 1 Oct 2004

The birth of the football brand started on 17 October 1945, when it was founded by Matt Busby on his return from the war. Despite tragedies such as a plane crash which claimed the lives of the entire team in the 50s, it has grown into a mega brand with 71 million fans globally in 17 key countries.

Man U, as it is colloquially known, started with a vision: "to be the best football club in the world both on and off the pitch".

"This doesn't mean winning everything, but ensuring the team competes consistently in the world. It is about recruiting and training the best people," said Ben Hatton, commercial development director, Manchester United Football Club.

"We're a business first and foremost. And we're a complicated business. We're not just into the football business:

1. We are also a conferencing & catering business.
2. Museum business - housing memorabilia
3. TV business - own global channel.
4. Magazine business
5. Cinema business.
6. Merchandising business.
7. A seller of rights..."

But, as he said, all successful businesses are run along simple business principles, Manchester United just has a unique twist: football.

"It's not rocket science, we do what other businesses do: products, position, markets, customers - every single day. But, today, we put our customer at the centre of everything we do... we give our fans and customers the most passionate and rewarding experiences in whatever we do, wherever they are. That's our most important brand value.

"What do we stand for? Success, aspiration, excitement... but most of all for passion, passion is what we're all about!"

Hatton said the challenge for Man U was turning that cradle to grave loyalty and affinity of their fans into customers. "Your challenge as marketers is turning your customer into fans."

"The message I would leave you with is that it's not rocket science - we've set a vision and are playing by pretty simple business principles, and have put the right people at the right place to do their job."

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer.  

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