

CASE STUDY: The FA

The Football Association (The FA) is the governing body of association football in England and holds the distinction of being the oldest football association in the world, established in 1863. They recently faced a growing challenge with their membership programme for the official England Supporters Travel Club. With over 30,000 fans signed up to travel internationally to support the English national team, The FA relied on plastic membership cards to manage ticket collections and ensure member identification.



These cards served as a way for fans to verify their identity at games, reducing the need for them to carry sensitive documents like passports or driver's licenses. This approach was designed with fan safety in mind, aiming to minimise the risk of losing important personal identification while attending matches abroad.

The physical cards, while effective for their time, were becoming a costly and cumbersome solution for both members and administrators, prompting The FA to seek a more efficient alternative. As a highly regarded organisation, The FA wanted to work with a trusted and experienced partner to ensure a smooth transition to new membership cards for their fans, which is why they turned to us. VeryConnect were able to provide them with a digital solution that replaced the physical cards and improved the experience for both fans and administrators.



“The initial response to the app has been really positive. The digital membership card has done a great job replicating the physical card while adding extra benefits such as the ability to check if it's live and the convenience of never losing it.”

Richard Weekes, Senior Membership & Operations Manager at The FA



Challenges

The FA faced several key challenges with their previous membership cards:

High costs and administrative burden: Producing and distributing physical cards for over 30,000 members was costly for The FA, with printing and postage expenses rising significantly in recent years. It was also very time consuming for administrators as they often faced challenges such as members changing addresses and cards getting lost in the post.

Fan inconvenience: Physical cards were often lost, forgotten or misplaced by fans, particularly during international travel. Without their membership cards, fans would need to carry alternative forms of ID like passports. This not only increased the risk of losing sensitive documents but also created additional complications for fans traveling abroad to support their team.

Need for modern, secure functionality: The FA required digital cards that could include essential features such as a member photo, name, date of birth and a scannable QR code. They also required integrated security measures to prevent screenshotting and general misuse of the cards.

Prestige and usability expectations: The FA is a globally recognised and prestigious organisation so required a high-quality digital solution that upholds their reputation. The solution needed to provide a service level that fans would expect, including being free from disruptions such as bugs and downtime. Members of the England Supporters Travel Club invest considerable time and money traveling to support their team so it was essential for The FA that the transition to digital membership cards is seamless. The app also needed to be intuitive and accessible for members of all ages and technical abilities.

These challenges called for a sophisticated digital solution that aligned with the FA's high standards and the needs of their passionate supporters.

Solution

The VeryConnect team delivered a digital membership app tailored to The FA's unique needs, available for both iOS and Google Play stores. Here's how we met their requirements:



Intuitive and user-friendly design: The app displays membership cards clearly, complete with photo, date of birth and a scannable QR code for fast and efficient ticket collection. The app is straightforward and designed to be accessible for fans of all technical skill levels.



Comprehensive security features: To prevent misuse, the app includes a "liveness check" to prevent people misusing the cards by screenshotting. The app also requires two-step verification during sign-in to guarantee the security of fans' cards.

Thorough testing and phased rollout: We collaborated with The FA to rigorously test the app, ensuring it functioned seamlessly prior to the release of the app. We rolled out the app in stages to confirm that it worked well.

Integrated fan support: Recognising the importance of fan safety, the app includes a dedicated support number, ensuring members can access assistance easily, especially when traveling abroad.

"Finland was our first away trip using these cards, with 1,500 people – and it worked really well! We then sent out around 2,900 digital membership cards for the Greece game and there were no issues. People accessed them quickly and had no complaints which is exactly what we want. The fans seemed excited about it, and overall, it was seamless."

Richard Weekes, Senior Membership & Operations Manager at The FA



Results

The digital membership app has been rolled out and successfully used by fans at international games. It has addressed all of The FA's key challenges and delivered a streamlined experience for both the organisation and its supporters. The key results have been:

Fan approval: The response from fans has been positive and fans are now able to access their membership cards quickly and securely, without the worry of losing physical cards. When rolling out the app, The FA sent out an accompanying feedback form so fans could easily notify them of any issues. They received almost no negative feedback, despite having a vocal membership base and the handful of inquiries had simple resolutions.

Cost and time savings: By moving to a digital solution, The FA has been able to reduce both production and distribution costs, as well as the time spent on administrative tasks. This has not only streamlined operations but also improved efficiency for the team managing the membership base.

Enhanced security: The app provides a high level of security. The integrated two-step verification and liveness check features ensure that membership cards are only accessible to the rightful owners, providing peace of mind for both The FA and their supporters.

Seamless experience: The transition to digital membership cards has been smooth and trouble-free, with no disruptions to fan access. The app's user-friendly design and intuitive interface have made it accessible to fans of all technical abilities, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the benefits without any barriers.



"The roll out of the app has gone really well and everyone we've provided access to has been able to use it. This is a really positive foundation to build on and gives us the ability to introduce things we've never been able to do before"

Nick McCabe – Memberships and Operations Manager at The FA

An Ongoing Partnership

Overall, the digital membership app has not only met but exceeded The FA's expectations, providing them with a modern, secure and efficient solution that aligns with their prestigious reputation and enhances the fan experience.



The FA views this app as a stepping stone toward a more connected and secure future for their supporters. Our partnership with them continues and the next steps will see our partnership exploring wider fan engagement.

This collaboration demonstrates our ability to deliver tailored solutions for prestigious organisations with complex needs. We take pride in helping The FA elevate their membership offering, setting a new standard for fan engagement and safety.



The FA's membership app has helped them improve the fan experience and streamline their admin processes. Get in touch to see how we can help you do the same.

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