



CUSTOMER STORY

British Rowing demonstrates the value of truly understanding its members through data and analytics

The sport of rowing is one in which the British excel. Historic and prestigious rowing events such as The Boat Race and Henley Royal Regatta, date back to 1829 and 1839 respectively and continue to garner the attention of the world's media.

Nowhere is sport contested more fiercely than at the Olympic Games. British Rowing has an exemplary record with its athletes winning at least one gold medal for Team GB at every Olympic Games dating back to Los Angeles 1984.

British Rowing, the sport's National Governing Body (NGB), first partnered with SAS in 2014. Initially, the partnership's aim was to understand what data British Rowing had at its disposal and how analytics could be beneficial to its ongoing success. Several pilot projects were carried out in the first cycle to achieve this, but since 2018, SAS has been supporting British Rowing with three key data projects relating to the rowing community and the GB Rowing Team.

One of these is the Membership Analytics (MA) project which was initiated with the additional funding support of Sport England. Once funding was successfully secured, Demarq - a business intelligence consultancy, which partners with SAS - was contracted to implement the data management and data visualisation build phases of the MA project using SAS software provided via the partnership. Before any development could commence SAS Professional Services worked closely with British Rowing and its hosting provider to architect and deploy a secure platform that consisted of both a development and production environment. Given that there were three streams of work being delivered in parallel (the MA project by Demarq, SAS Ranking Points Index (RPI) and Athlete Longitudinal Profiling (ALP) by SAS Professional Services), it was imperative that both development teams adhered to the same development practices.

Demarq delivered the data management platform and MA project against a challenging background with the membership management database being migrated to a new platform in parallel to the reporting project. Using data management and data visualisation capabilities provided by SAS software, Demarq was able to support the significant reconciliation effort for membership data between the old and new platforms.

Additionally, SAS Education Services was enlisted to ensure that British Rowing users received the necessary training in order to build their own SAS Visual Analytics dashboards.

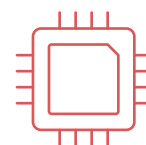
Demarq augmented the formal SAS Education training with significant 'on the job' knowledge transfer; this closely coupled approach to training and development



Helps British Rowing's membership grow through helping to make strategic decisions



Time saving by generating repeatable reports in a fraction of the time



Business intelligence/enhanced understanding of membership trends

helped ensure British Rowing was able to consolidate and apply the knowledge. The result was the ability to create highly effective visualisations and reports and automated processes, drastically reducing the manual effort in producing these reports previously.

The MA project targets British Rowing's 32,000 members to help better understand the rowing community and enhance grassroots participation across the country.

Faster, more flexible reporting

To understand trends and changes in grassroots rowing, it is important to track membership over time and be able to easily report on this data. These reports are used to inform key British Rowing stakeholders, such as the Board of Directors, regional chairs and standing committees.

Marieke Bal, British Rowing Insight Manager, explains that key to this is the understanding of new and expired memberships: "Prior to SAS' involvement, we were dedicating as much as two to four days per month producing Crystal reports and manually updating Excel spreadsheets.

"What now seems like an archaic process involved us manually manipulating our membership data to produce the information we are required to report.

"It was difficult and time-consuming to delve into what the data in those spreadsheets could tell us. There was no time to repeat or revise a report and the information generated, albeit functional, was simplistic."

With the MA project, which is driven by SAS software, British Rowing sought a means of creating faster, more flexible reports and to generate greater business intelligence that could help better inform commercial decisions and drive an increase in membership figures.

Focusing on trends and demographics, all the data is completely anonymised and GDPR compliant. Insight can be drawn daily and gives immediate segmentation of information by region, age, gender and membership type - and all contained via a dashboard in clear graphics.

"Prior to the implementation of the MA project, we knew that January was the busiest time of the year for rowers renewing their memberships. We are now able to quantify this, track it over the course of the year and begin to make business decisions based on this intelligence," added Bal.

Data autonomy through staff training

With the project commencing in July 2018, the first steps for British Rowing were to update its membership reporting system and replace the outdated Excel spreadsheets, progressing instead to a new visual analytics-based system to help compile reports.

SAS provided the underlying architecture through Data Management Studio alongside Visual Analytics. SAS training then helped provide British Rowing with greater autonomy over its data.

"Not only are we now utilising SAS' software, we've also been able to tap into the expertise of SAS' data scientists and consultants," explained Bal.

"Having done the training, we can now also delve deeper into the data and we have confidence to use the software and explore our data sets on our own at a much more granular level."

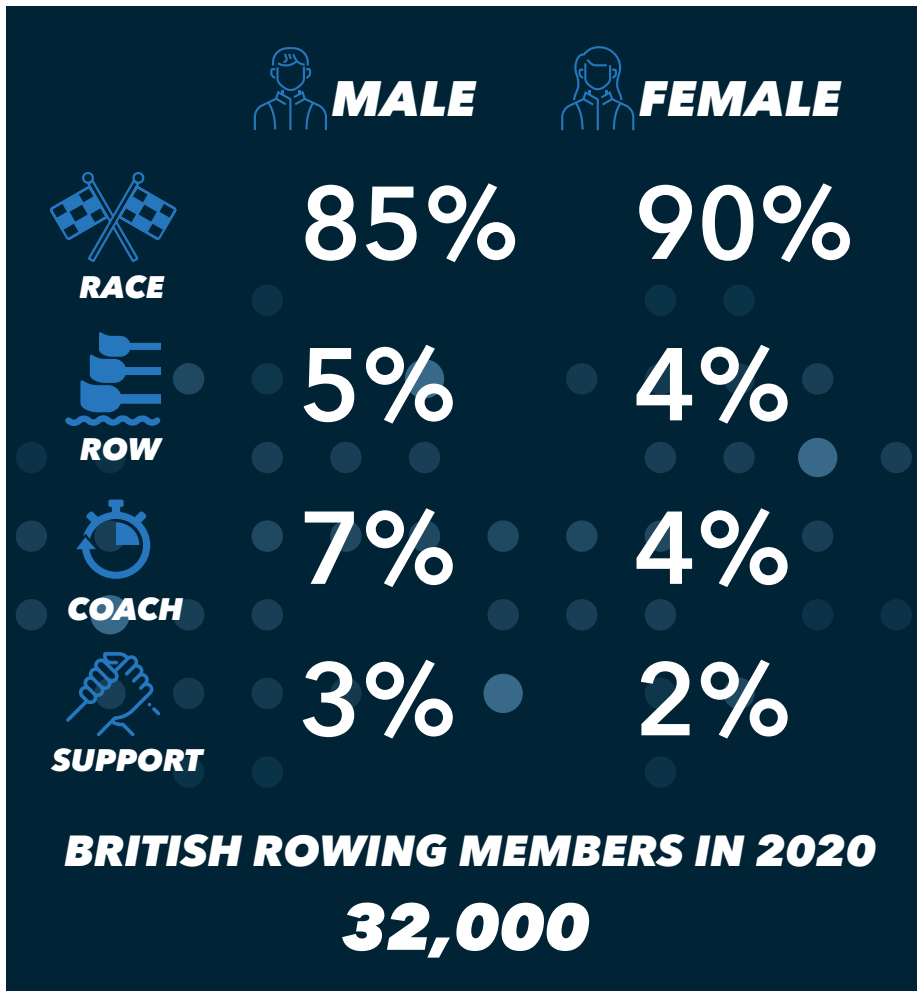
In providing the new platform, SAS has integrated data from British Rowing's old legacy database and a new membership management platform into Data Management Studio and SAS Visual Analytics.

"SAS Visual Analytics has given us great visibility of our data. Historically, it's been tucked away in a database that only one or two people would know about and could access. Now, with Data Management Studio, our data is being pulled daily into SAS Visual Analytics. We can then interrogate the data or create graphics that actually mean something and share in such a way that everyone can understand."



“SAS is crucial to the success of growing British Rowing’s membership, in terms of enabling us to make strategic decisions driven by better use of our membership data.”

Brendan Purcell
*Director of Performance,
British Rowing*



“Grass roots is the biggest thing. You can think of it like a pyramid; if you can create a bigger grass roots base, you can have a higher peak.”

Will Satch
Olympic Rower, British Rowing

Membership Category	About
COACH	Specifically designed for qualified rowing coaches
RACE	For rowers and coxes who race in affiliated competitions
ROW	For those who want to be part of a passionate and active community and who row for the love of the sport
SUPPORT	For anyone otherwise actively involved in rowing, whether as an umpire, volunteer coach, event organiser or club committee member,

Getting to know the membership

British Rowing has already learned a significant amount about its membership thanks to the MA project, including useful information such as over half of members are under the age of 24 and the greatest drop-off point for participation is after university.

Commercial Manager, Daniela Mingham, shares the wider business implications of understanding their members: “We are now able to target our marketing and communications to suit our audience, driving engagement and participation.”

Further intelligence gathered by British Rowing through the MA project supports the fact that a large majority of rowers buy membership as a requirement in order to race - essentially they are buying a racing licence for a short period of time; many for only one year. Mingham adds: “Since working with SAS, we have been able to develop our membership offering for recreational rowers, coaches, umpires and volunteers to encourage their longer-term engagement. We are now looking at how to develop our offering for fans and tailoring content and communications to suit the audience.

“With the observation of some trends in Visual Analytics, we have been able to trigger discussions at team and board level around membership growth. In addition we have been able to respond to subsequent queries quicker than ever before. It has been encouraging to see the engagement so far and we are now planning ways to further this.”

The Power to Row

The MA project is doing precisely what British Rowing wants it to.

Reporting now takes minutes, rather than days: it is flexible enough to provide answers to numerous questions and it gives British Rowing the ability to take a data-driven approach to both existing and potential new commercial partners.

With the ability to see when members renew and lapse their membership, British Rowing can target communications appropriately and look at the granularities of regions to discover the different types of member across the country.

Bal went on to add: “The MA project is enabling all of us to work faster and smarter, but it’s also helping to improve our data quality. We have greater visibility of the data and as such can identify outliers or anomalies, with the ease to rectify.”

Overall, three of the most significant benefits include:

Time saved

Generating repeatable reports now takes a fraction of the time previously required (five minutes versus two eight-hour days) – a significant saving on British Rowing’s resources.

Business intelligence/enhanced understanding of membership trends

Visibility of overall membership levels and other key information such as the split by demographic, renewal rates and tracking new memberships has given insight into member lifecycle and engagement with new membership offerings.

Commercial aims

British Rowing is now able to use targeted communications and demonstrate reach and engagement to commercial partners which enhances their commercial value.

Having experienced so much benefit so quickly, British Rowing is also looking at how it can progress and enhance how it uses SAS’ Visual Analytics in the future.

Bal says: “We are now making decisions with the insights we’re getting from the data we’re analysing. We are using what we’ve learned to inform email campaigns and engage with clubs in regions where we see significant changes; but as far as the MA project is concerned, this is just the start. We are ambitious to continue learning from our data analytics and, in the future, link email campaigns and web analytics so we can steer appropriate membership offerings to a wider audience. We also hope to be able to forecast the number of potential future members and link our competition data to our membership data.

“We will also be looking for more people at British Rowing to have access and more visibility of SAS’ Visual Analytics, as it can undoubtedly enhance everyone’s understanding.”

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