

How Verizon technology solutions delivered an Indy 500 virtual experience for Penske



Penske Entertainment



When you operate a diverse \$32 billion transportation services company, you need technology solutions that allow you to move at the speed of your customers.

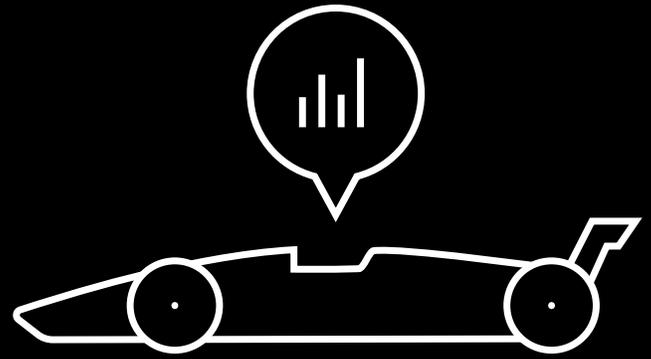
Penske Corporation, a global leader in transportation solutions, has a business that spans the retail automotive, truck leasing, transportation logistics and professional motorsports industries. Like so many businesses this year, Penske has had to adapt. In particular, the company's entertainment division – Penske Entertainment – had to find new ways to continue engaging its partners and delivering one-of-a-kind fan experiences.

Penske Entertainment leaned on Verizon for agile solutions to empower employees as they navigate this unprecedented time. In the process, the company uncovered new opportunities to strengthen its competitive advantage, as well as its partner and customer relationships.

When shutdowns threatened to upend racing's biggest annual event, Team Penske turned to Verizon 5G Ultra Wideband to support driving teams and connect fans to the action.



Empowering Penske employees and drivers



For more than a decade, Verizon has served as the technological backbone for Penske's global transportation services business, providing security, mobility and digital experience solutions across company operations.

Through this multifaceted business, there runs a common thread: racing. The company's professional racing team, Team Penske, has won 40 auto racing championships and taken first place 18 times in racing's most famous event – the storied Indianapolis 500. In early 2020, Penske Entertainment bought the IndyCar Series and iconic Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Great success is often accompanied by great legend, but for Team Penske, the secret to their success is simple.

“We've been racing for 55 years in a multitude of series across the globe. We're one of the winningest racing teams in the history of motorsports. Part of the reason we've been able to do that is by leveraging technology and innovation throughout the years,” says Jonathan Gibson, Penske's executive vice president of marketing and business development.



Gibson says the ability to use data to make decisions is critical to Penske's success on the racetrack. In preparation for previous Indy 500 races, Team Penske has relied on Verizon's 5G Ultra Wideband network and 5G-connected cameras to analyze data on the performance of its drivers as they came around the first turn during practice runs on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. This allowed the team to make adjustments in real time to improve performance. Prior to this, the team would have to analyze up to seven hours of video content after practice to glean the same insights. With the low latency and high bandwidth 5G Ultra Wideband enables, Penske engineers delivered their game-changing analysis in seconds to improve the team's efficiency.



56,000 employees



3,200 locations around the world

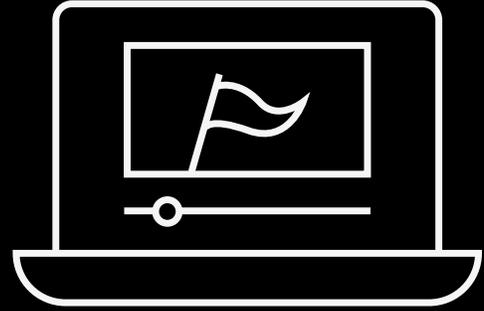


40 auto racing championships in 54 years



18 time first place winner in the storied Indianapolis 500

Bringing the heart of the action to the fan experience



Verizon technology solutions are critical to Penske's success off the racetrack, as well. Along with enhancing driver performance, partnering with Verizon has also allowed Penske to deliver best-in-class entertainment experiences for its fans and partners.

The Indy 500 usually takes place in May, but the pandemic upended that tradition this year, forcing the track to postpone the race, shift gears and develop its first-ever virtual event, including its annual drivers meeting. The drivers meeting is the ultimate fan experience, providing people with the opportunity to see all 33 drivers gather on the Pagoda Plaza and receive pre-race instructions. It's an important moment for everyone – drivers, fans and Team Penske – offering a unique chance to feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves.

The company traditionally holds its drivers meeting the Saturday before the Indy 500, but with just two weeks to go before the rescheduled event on August 23, the decision was made to take the entire thing virtual.

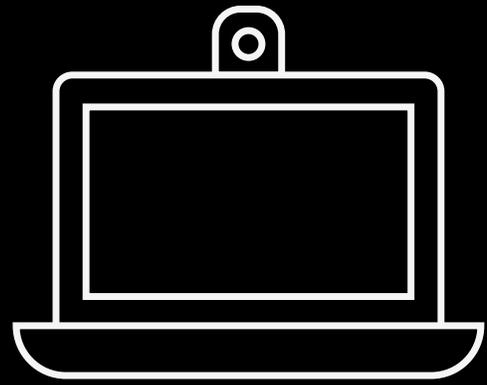


“As we went through the spring and our preparation for the Indianapolis 500, we realized that our ability to host fans on-site was going to be impacted based on what was happening in the world,” Gibson says. “We had to quickly pivot and figure out how we could bring these experiences we're known for to fans who were ... not able to attend the event. So, we quickly turned to our partners at Verizon.”

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Executive Vice President of Marketing
and Business Development

Supporting the (remote) team



As the Penske Entertainment team shifted to remote work, technology was critical to their business continuity. Employees were able to collaborate cross-functionally using [Verizon's BlueJeans enterprise video conferencing and event platform](#), working internally and with Verizon partners to map out a virtual events strategy.

"They're a really critical partner to what we do from a technology perspective. When we turned to this opportunity with Indianapolis Motor Speedway, it was an easy decision because they're already a strategic partner. They know our culture, they operate with integrity, and we were quickly able to move forward," Gibson says.

Since the Indianapolis Motor Speedway was already equipped with 5G capabilities, Penske Entertainment made it the operations center for its first-ever virtual drivers meeting. Penske used the BlueJeans platform to produce the show and partnered with NBC Sports to broadcast the event using a camera connected to Verizon 5G Ultra Wideband. The team also used a 360-degree, 5G Ultra Wideband-enabled augmented reality camera to create an even more immersive fan experience. Positioned on the infield, the camera allowed fans and partners to enter an augmented reality portal, see different views of the track,

The 5G-enabled event was such a success that the Penske team plans to continue producing virtual and enhanced experiences for fans, even after a return to normal.

and feel as though they were actually behind the scenes or in the grandstands watching from the front row.

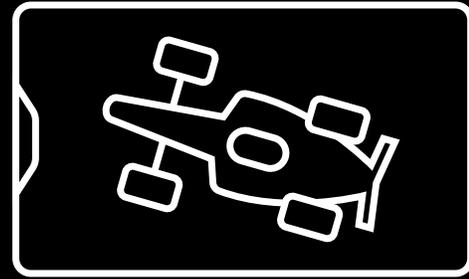
"By creating this augmented reality experience that Verizon did, it enabled our team to go to our partners and say, 'I know you can't come to the race this year, I know your customers can't come to the race this year, but let us give you this world-class experience and [show you] what happens during the race through a unique lens,'" Gibson says. "We had a 360-degree camera that was between the pit road wall and the track wall, and the sponsors and their customers were able to see that through the device we provided them. This could only happen through a partnership with Verizon."

Verizon technology solutions also enabled Penske to build stronger connections with partners. Along with the annual drivers meeting, Penske holds corporate sponsor events throughout the year and an annual partnership summit at the end of each racing season. Events have traditionally been held at both the Penske Racing Museum in Arizona and at the Speedway in coordination with the Indy 500. With no option for in-person events this year, the team decided to transform these traditional partner meetings into a virtual partnership event. With support from Verizon, Penske was able to use the BlueJeans platform to host 300 partners for the three-hour virtual summit.

"Going forward in 2021, even when we can get back together in person, we're still going to use the BlueJeans platform to deliver these types of experiences for our partners because it allows us to broaden the net of people that could be included," Gibson says.

Low latency, reliable network connectivity and high bandwidth are critical to the success of these virtual events. Thanks to Verizon's 5G network infrastructure and advanced technology solutions, Penske was able to successfully deliver its virtual events, providing a great show to the more than 25,000 people who watched the drivers meeting live and connecting with hundreds of partners who attended the virtual summit at the end of the season.

Embracing innovation and looking ahead



Innovation often happens in the face of adversity. Penske Entertainment was already an industry leader in creating engaging, interactive experiences, but during a difficult year characterized by social distancing, Penske has found new ways to connect with fans and partners by collaborating with Verizon.

As more companies adjust to a new normal and navigate the uncertainty around the return of in-person events, they are leaning on their technology solutions and providers to maintain their most important connections. Verizon has played a pivotal role in helping to develop Penske's virtual events strategy in 2020 and will continue to be a key strategic partner as the company considers hybrid events in 2021. Gibson says Penske has received overwhelmingly positive feedback about this year's events.

"It's taught us a new way of doing business," he says. "One of the positives that will come from this experience is the ability to do virtual experiences and create enhanced experiences for our customers. Even when we get back to some sort of level of normalcy, I think we'll keep that as part of our activation and our marketing plans because it allows us to broaden our reach and engage consumers that don't have the ability to attend on-site."

As Penske's business needs evolved, Verizon adapted and continued to support employees as they adjusted to a new way of working. The partnership has proven to be invaluable for the company throughout this year.

"The longevity that we share with partners is so important because you get to know the companies, understand their culture, and you see the level of importance they put on integrity and doing things the right way. Verizon could not be a better example of that," Gibson says. "We don't make a technology-based decision without talking to Verizon

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Disclaimer: 5G Ultra Wideband is available in parts of select cities.

Learn more

[5G Ultra Wideband for business](#)