



Penn National and Barstool: A winning combination

Barbara DeMarco, governmental affairs consultant with Porzio Governmental Affairs, looks at how an effective social media strategy can breed sports betting loyalty



Bio

Barbara DeMarco is a governmental affairs consultant with Porzio Governmental Affairs, a fully owned subsidiary of the New Jersey law firm, Porzio Bromberg and Newman. She specializes in gaming, education, technology and agricultural policy, as well as procurement and corporate development.

Recently, I went to pick up my 28-year-old son in Philadelphia. He asked to go to Angelo's in South Philly for a cheesesteak and pizza. I asked: "Why Angelo's?" He replied: "My favorite Barstool personality said it is the best cheesesteak and pizza in Philly."

When we got there, the place was mobbed. Everyone in line ordered the same thing: a pizza and cheesesteak. When we asked why, the other people said Barstool recommended it.

Having represented Penn Gaming in Trenton, New Jersey as their governmental affairs consultant for years, I was intrigued by this interaction. So, I asked my son if he was a regular follower of Barstool.

He said: "Barstool has my favorite sports podcast. I listen religiously as do my friends from high school, Notre Dame, and my work colleagues." (He works in NYC's financial district).

I asked him to tell me more about Barstool. He said: "Mom, their commentary is real, just normal guys talking sports. It is authentic, funny, and endearing. It is not like the cookie-cutter television sports shows. They do not take themselves so seriously. They are comically human in their approach to sports and other things I really enjoy, like food."

I then asked him if mobile sports wagering was legalized in NYC, what platform would he use? "Mom, I would definitely use Barstool. If I am not anything, I am loyal."

Knowing that the observations of one young man was not good enough to see 'if' Penn Gaming and Barstool had honed into a special formula, I asked my five teenage nephews about Barstool. While they did not listen to podcasts, all of them followed Barstool on Instagram. All sports enthusiasts, my nephews are the customers of the future. Talk about building loyalty!

Social chat

I then asked my colleague, Sal, who plays recreational ice hockey, for his thoughts on combining social media with sports wagering in a diversified platform.

He said: "The team goes for beers after the game and talk Barstool. Every dude under 40 spends 60% of the time talking Barstool." I asked him about the demographic. He said: "Many of these guys still live at home with their parents and make a good salary. They are constantly consuming stats and commentary on the upcoming games they want to wager on."

I asked him if they do it responsibly and he said: "Yes, they put aside a weekly bankroll for betting and stick to it."

As a daughter of a horseman, I said: "So, they handicap a game like a race – assessing the quality of the athlete, the team surrounding the athlete, the weather conditions, etc." He replied: "Yes, Barstool combines handicapping and analysis with social media. Add to it great online personalities as well as diversified content, and it works."

One stop. No shopping.

Instant gratification

No need to go to mainstream media for 'canned' or 'edited' commentary. It was all there. Plus, Barstool hit the other major factor for this demographic: the need for immediate access and gratification. Combine it with one of the most stable US gaming companies in Penn Gaming and all I can say is: "Brilliant."

I know my informal survey cannot compete with the experts that assess trends and believe a gaming company's social media investment may not pay off – something I heard frequently in 2020.

All I can say is let us give it a year to see 'if' the mom in the room is right. And as the old adage says: 'Mothers know best.' If you do not believe me, ask your mom. ●