



storm
technology

CASE STUDY

IRFU

Returning to Play with Microsoft Power Platform



IRFU Return to Play with Microsoft Power Platform & Storm Technology

Rugby enjoys a prominent profile within the Irish sporting and cultural landscape with a following that continues to increase both at home and abroad. The Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) is the governing body for rugby on the island of Ireland with the remit for development of the professional game to the community game and ensures that the game evolves with the ever-changing societal expectations.

How Covid-19 Changed the Game

In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused a major change in the way the world operates and in how people led their daily lives from work to their social and personal lives. Ireland saw its towns and communities locked down as people were forced to stay home to help protect the most vulnerable. Months later as we continue to navigate through the impact of the pandemic, we have begun to safely reopen our country. For the IRFU, the initial measures meant that all matches and training had to come to a sudden halt leaving the organisation with a fresh challenge of rethinking how they could re-open in line with new restrictions.

When restrictions began to lift, the IRFU considered how they could change the way they operated. To start this process, they needed to document and distribute a policy on how they were going to manage returning to play with an emphasis on player and spectator safety and adherence with government guidelines.

The first step, ensuring a safe return of professional players to training through creation of 'training bubbles'; the IRFU used their existing technology infrastructure to educate and monitor players and coaches within the 'bubbles'. The IRFU realised that although their existing technology had worked well for this phase, it would not be able to scale up to cater for the increased numbers required for stadia or have the flexibility to adapt to the changing Covid-19 environment - while maintaining the same high standard and integrity the IRFU required.

Returning to Play

As the government began to further ease restrictions and sporting events could recommence, the IRFU prepared to return to play, which meant the meticulous management of all areas of the stadium. The key requirement was to protect players and management from potential Covid-19 cross contamination risks and the 150 plus staff required to operate a professional game. This occurred through creating 'stadium zones', to better manage access and keep attendees and players separate.

It was for the management of these zones that a new solution was required, one that would allow them to manage larger volumes of people from different organisations and align them to the processes that they had in place.

The IRFU engaged with Storm Technology to essentially scale up the 'bubble' methodology, to manage the influx of external visitors with a solution that would provide the flexibility and scope for future expansion. Critical to success of the project was not only the accuracy and reliability required to adhere to government guidelines and prevent the spread of Covid-19 but also delivery of experience excellence to spectators through seamless usability of the solution that was simply an extension of match-day experience.

"Power Platform gives us the flexibility to make rapid changes due to its low-code design. The solution brings together business data and an intuitive user interface to empower business users to create and use simple business applications or data visualisations with little-to-no code."

Scott Walker,
Director of Technology & Strategy,
IRFU

A Seamless User Experience

Storm Technology harnessed the power of Power Platform to build a portal and corresponding app that would manage the entry and screening of external visitors. Speaking on the decision to implement Power Platform, Scott Walker, Director of Technology and Strategy said that "With the 'fluid' Covid -19 environment in which we operate, Power Platform gives us the flexibility to make rapid changes due to its low-code design. The solution brings together business data and an intuitive user interface to empower business users to create and use simple business applications or data visualisations with little-to-no code. Our relationship with Storm Technology means that more complex requirements and add-ons can be provided by their developers".

The Power Platform portal operates simply on the front end while it works tirelessly in the back end ensuring all protocols are met at each critical stage. The process begins for a match attendee by registering and making a profile on the IRFU portal which requires them to complete a short education section followed by a declaration of symptoms or health screening. Once this has been confirmed, they can then submit a match day application. Applications are then reviewed by the IRFU approvals team, and upon acceptance the system triggers an automated reminder prompting the user to re-confirm their health check on match day prior to arrival at the stadium. The final step is to undergo a temperature check once arriving at the stadium, once passing this final step they can be admitted entry. This process repeats for every match day application submitted to continuously monitor and confirm health status of attendees at multiple stages for every match to safeguard the health of all other attendees, staff and players.

The application also operates a user-friendly approach for the administrators who approve and move users along each status and log the final temperature check on match day. This ease of use essentially allowed IRFU staff to safely manage and scale up their safety protocols for external visitors. The return to play programme was successfully led by Gerard Carmody, IRFU Head of Operations. On commenting on the match ready system "The successful implementation of Power Platform has streamlined match day processes, savings us between two-three days of manual data entry and analysis per match. For match day attendees the creation of a dedicated portal creates a sense of security, demonstrating the commitment of the IRFU to not only our players but our fans and ancillary staff. We truly believe we are in this together, and the platform ensures we the IRFU are doing our part to help prevent the spread of Covid-19".

"Our engagement with Storm Technology and the application of Power Platform has been a game changer for the IRFU. Storm's professionalism and agile project methodology combined with the use of low-code technology meant we were able to go from design to delivery in just three weeks"

Scott Walker
Director of Technology & Strategy,
IRFU

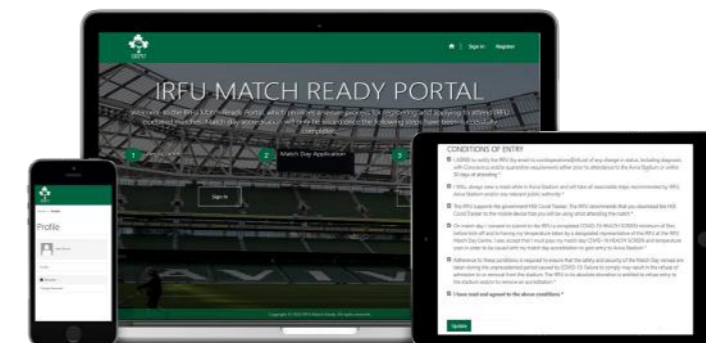
Speaking on the design and development of this new solution, Scott Walker, Director of Strategy & Technology at IRFU stated; "Our engagement with Storm Technology and the application of Microsoft Power Platform has been a game changer for the IRFU. Storm's professionalism and agile project methodology combined with use of low-code technology meant we were able to go from design to delivery in just three weeks. The team's expertise and honest approach helped us find the best fit solution, rather than focusing on short term gains the team helped us identify and implement a future ready solution, one that will provide us with the flexibility and agility required to respond to the future needs of our community and fans."

Looking Forward

Looking ahead to the future of sporting events amid the pandemic, it is clear strict safety practices and restrictions will be with us for some time. By investing in a scalable, changeable, and modern solution, the IRFU were able to ensure complete compliance with Irish government guidelines.

This also means they now have the basis for managing events as the numbers of attendees increase and further rugby stadia open, it allows the IRFU to safeguard player, staff and visitors and allow them to feel as comfortable as possible whilst attending the games. Despite, the ongoing disruption to their normal routines, the IRFU wanted to bring back the match day and match going experience in a way that was safe. Keeping with the integrity of the IRFU, they are starting to bring back the much-missed sport from society.

Interested in finding out how Power Platform can support your business through Covid-19 and beyond? [Click here to speak to Storm's Power Platform solution specialists](#)



Contact Us

Dublin

The Capel Building,
Mary's Abbey,
Dublin 7
D07 FK22

Galway

Galway Bus. Park,
Upper Newcastle Rd,
Dangan
H91 RWF1

T: +353 1 416 1226

E: info@storm.ie

W: www.storm.ie

Microsoft
Partner



Gold Application Integration
Gold DevOps
Gold Data Analytics
Gold Data Platform
Gold Project and Portfolio Management
Gold Application Development
Gold Collaboration and Content
Gold Cloud Platform
Silver Cloud Customer Relationship Management

