

# The Analysis on the Management of Charlotte Hornets

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**Abstract.** This paper focuses on the topic of team management and uses the case of an NBA team, Charlotte Hornets as an example. The research wants to discover the relationship between the successful operation of a sports team and its actions as well as the management system. In the body part, it analyzes the team's current situation, evaluates the actions it has taken and makes plans for the future of the team. It turns out that the team has almost got rid of the difficult situation and it is on the right track right now. The research applies qualitative approaches and specifically utilizes the methods of observation. It turns out that though Charlotte Hornets used to struggle with their performance in the league, it is on the right track towards the playoffs now. The result shows that whether a team can be successful is closely associated with the team's management and planning.

**Keywords:** Team management; Charlotte Hornets; NBA; Evaluation; Risk Management.

## 1. Introduction

As one of the best-known leagues in the world, NBA has always attracted a large quantity of fans. According to the latest reports, the playoff games in 2022-23 season have reached an average of 5.47 million views per game, and the final game has reached about 12 million views just in North America continent. From the statistics shown, the popularity of NBA can be easily seen. In general, audience can get pleasure from the excitement of the games and that is the main reason why NBA is so popular. People can never know the result of the game unless they watch until the end, and the whole process of watching especially playoff games is quite thrilling and attractive. However, some teams may never make it to the playoffs. The research aims to talk about this time is exactly an example of this, and it has only entered the playoffs for three times throughout the team's history.

## 2. Current Situation

### 2.1. Background Overview

Charlotte Hornets is a professional basketball team located in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA. Its predecessor, the Charlotte Bobcats, was founded in 2004 and joined the National Basketball Association (NBA). It is the youngest team in the league and is currently a participating team in the East South Division of the Eastern Conference. In 2002, after the Charlotte Hornets left Charlotte and relocated to New Orleans to become the New Orleans Hornets, the NBA promised Charlotte City the right to form a new team and participate in the 2004-05 NBA season [1]. The newly established team was named the Bobcats. However, it did not have a satisfying performance. Furthermore, the local fans did not actually support the new team as much as the previous one, and they still considered the Hornets as their preferred team. On May 21, 2014, the Bobcats held a press conference and officially announced that the team would be renamed the Charlotte Hornets. In the 2014-15 season, the team will compete in the NBA under a new name, which means that the Bobcats, who have been playing for 10 seasons, would become history. In addition to the team name, the history of the Hornets from 1988 to 2002 has also been officially assigned to the Charlotte Hornets team. The new Charlotte Hornets came back with a new spirit and they successfully entered the playoff in 2015-16 season after a season's adjustment and training with the efforts of both players and the coaching team.

## 2.2. Recent Difficulties

However, recently the team went back to struggle again because of a failure in team management and strategic planning. It has gained only a little amount of fans in America, not to mention the amount of fans in China. It has got nearly the smallest amount of views among all 30 teams in NBA, and some people even do not know such a team exists. Moreover, the team lacks of superstars. Unlike LeBron James in the Los Angeles Lakers and Stephen Curry in the Golden States Warriors, Charlotte Hornets has only one All-Star player which is Lamelo ball. Comparing to others' jersey sales, Hornets can gain much less from it. It also has a hard time selling team-related products such as towels and hats.

The fall of the team actually started in the 2012 season, at that time, Charlotte Hornets selected Michael Kidd-Gilchrist. The NBA draft lottery may seem an odd spectacle, but it can affect the future of franchises for years to come [2]. His strange shooting form has caused an instability in shooting, resulting in a 22.2% field-goal percentage in three pointers. In addition, he also suffered from serious shoulder injuries. Injuries are a serious problem to the whole team as well, and it has caused great effect to the performance of the team. It seems to be a common situation that players cannot attend the games and have to do recovery exercise. Since every audience wants the team they support to win, there is no wonder that Charlotte Hornets cannot win much fan base.

Furthermore, the Charlotte Hornets team has suffered from scandals recently. Many of the team members face serious charges.

In addition, the basketball atmosphere here in Charlotte is not as good as that in other cities which own NBA basketball teams, such as New York and Los Angeles. At those places, the basketball facilities can be seen everywhere, enabling people to play basketball at their leisure time. While the city government here have not done a good job here to raise the popularity of basketball and advertise the local team. For example, the Los Angeles city is really good at marketing the local team, because it takes advantage of the highly-developed economy of the city to advertise the team all across the globe, it puts up posters of the team all around the city and put the team introduction videos on the jumbotron, promotes graffiti of the team around the city and so on. It also takes the advantage of the rich history of the team. Since the Lakers have got many championship trophies, it uses the bright history memories like the Kobe and Shaq partnership as well as the leadership of Magic Johnson to attract more fans. In this way, Lakers has become the most popular team across the globe. People can see basketball courts everywhere in Los Angeles, such as on the streets or in the city parks. However, people may need to pay in order to enter the very few indoor basketball stadiums in the city. This can cause a huge decline in people's passion for the sports. As a result, people turn to participate in other sports.

What is more, people should take economic factors into account. Cities with NBA teams like New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco have developed economy and the citizens there consider watching NBA games a usual thing in their lives. The living standards of people vary from places to places. Though Charlotte is relatively developed in its nearby region, when comparing to the places mentioned above, it apparently has huge disadvantages. It cannot invest much money into entertainment due the plans the city construction and development as well as the financial condition of the city government. People here have relatively low incomes, so from their perspectives, they may regard watching NBA as a luxurious thing. This leads to a straight decline in the sales of tickets.

Last but not least, the team has not done well in online marketing and investment. Instagram has become an increasingly popular tool for sport organizations to share visual content [3]. The team's official social media account on Instagram has only got 2.3 million followers, while the Los Angeles Lakers has got more 20 million followers. The Hornets hardly invite social celebrities to gain clout, and it has lacked of participation throughout the posts. The situation is almost the same in China, resulting in a failure in strategic planning. People can hardly see videos relating to the Hornets when browsing through TikTok or Twitter, this decreases the team's possibility to be exposed to the public and the possibility of gaining potential fans on the Internet.

### **3. Actions Taken and Evaluations**

#### **3.1. Careful Choices in NBA Draft**

Luckily, the situation is not that bad since the team has already taken action. Firstly, success in the NBA Draft is the likelihood of a franchise, particularly for small-market teams who struggle to attract free agents [4]. The team has selected Lamelo ball in the third pick of 2020 NBA Draft. He comes from the well-known Ball family, and his brother Lonzo Ball is also a famous NBA player. He has been playing basketball at a young age and has played in an Australian league before. As a huge celebrity with more than 10 million followers on social Medias, the content he posts on the social media can definitely gain much attention and clout. For example, when he posted one of his pictures training in the Hornets suit or during the game, people can not only learn more about him but also get to know more about the whole team. It is clearly a good way to advertise the team. Furthermore, Lamelo's flashy way in playing basketball including awesome assisting skills and high-standard three points shooting talents help him win many fans among the NBA audience. In this way, more and more people can notice the Hornets team and finally become part of the fan base after being attracted.

#### **3.2. Designs on the Price of Tickets**

Secondly, the team has set the lowest ticket price in order to attract more audience to support and cheer for the team. According to Bookie.com, a family will spend on average \$158.72 at a Hornets game for four of the cheapest available tickets, a parking spot, two beers, two sodas and four hot dogs. The team also has other innovations on the setting the price. It even practiced given-away tickets in the 2022-23 season, reselling for as low as \$1 [5]. In addition, the team follows the general trend of the NBA league in selling season tickets. People who buy such kind of tickets can watch all regular games at a relatively low cost. This action is beneficial to both parties, fans can enjoy more games at lower prices and teams can get more sales as well as gain profits in this way. It is also a good way to gain fanatical and loyal fans. More local fans are also able to come since the ticket price has fallen much.

#### **3.3. Developing Depth of the Team**

Thirdly, in this off-season, the team has done a lot in increasing the depth of the team. Free agency provides teams with an opportunity to inject their rosters with elite talent, as long as they spend their money in the right places [6]. It has signed several player with much experience and strong leadership, such as Ishmael Smith and Frank Ntilikina. They can help the team become more organized and disciplined, and their role is to be efficient in scoring and connecting the team in a limited time. Additionally, the Charlotte Hornets has selected Brandon Miller with the second pick of the 2023 NBA Draft. So far, it turns out to be a wise choice. Miller is a player with confidence, his high talent and hard work can definitely bring the team youth power. The team has also renewed PJ Washington's contract, ensuring the aggressiveness in both offense and defense.

### **4. Future Planning**

The team's current moves are on a right track, then it should do some future planning in order to keep itself competitive in the future league. It can do following things.

#### **4.1. Cooperation with Brands**

Though the previous biggest shareholder of Hornets Michael Jordan has agreed to sell his majority stake in the team to a group led by Gabe Plotkin and Rick Schnall for an approximately \$3 billion valuation and ended his 13-year run as majority owner, the team can still gain profits from some his influence. Michael's sale of a majority in the Charlotte Hornets to a group led by Rick Schanall and Gabe Plotkin has been finalized [7]. However, the jersey of this team is supported by Jordan's brand. The team can still collaborate with this brand and keep a good commercial relationship. The process

provides much suggestions on correlating the hard and soft sides of risk management with project success, understanding the moderating effect of project complexity [8].

#### **4.2. Improvements on the Training System**

Secondly, the team should make improvements to the training and operating system of the team. From a lack of star players and the long bothering injury problems, here comes to a conclusion that there is still much space for the enhancement of the team's structure and training methods. It ought to employ more top trainers and dietitians in order to ensure the attendance and health of players. A team can never go on smoothly without everyone's participation, from management part to human resources section, from players to trainers. For instance, Brandon Payne is the trainer of superstar Stephen Curry. Unlike other normal trainers, he uses innovative techniques to position athletes to get better and faster. Since 2011, he has worked diligently as Curry's professional skill trainer and his continual effort pays off. He succeeds in raising Curry's games to a new height by adding creative basketball training tasks like two-in-a-row shooting drills, footwork exercises and so on. Stephen did not become the best 3-point shooter by sheer talents alone, a skillful and caring trainer is necessary for a player and the entire team. What is more, a training recommendation would be: to dedicate more power attention to short-term maximum-intensity activities [9].

#### **4.3. Community Services**

Thirdly, recognizing the benefits that accrue from having a loyal customer base, firms have been actively seeking ways to develop and maintain closer relationships with their customers [10]. The team should organize more community activities, like helping poor families with monetary support, providing summer training camps and providing free team jerseys or towels. In the process, it can not only gain trust and respect from local fans, but also advertise the team to the local region. More fans can be collected and the reputation of the team can be much better than right now. These activities can be a good content for the team's daily posts on social media, then more people can realize that the team has done a lot in helping people in its region.

### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, while the Charlotte Hornets' team management has showcased commendable efforts in branding, evaluation, and risk management, addressing the identified weaknesses becomes imperative for sustained success. The journey of the Charlotte Hornets' team management and branding reveals a nuanced tapestry of strategic decisions, calculated risks, and continuous evaluation. The organization's commitment to redefining its brand identity and solidifying its position in the highly competitive realm of professional basketball stands as a testament to their resilience and vision. Throughout this paper, we delved into the intricacies of the Hornets' branding initiatives, exploring how they meticulously crafted an image that resonates with fans. Though there have been difficulties during the process, it manages to go through them successfully. A holistic approach that integrates lessons from both successes and setbacks will be crucial for the Hornets as they continue to navigate the dynamic landscape of professional basketball, striving for a balanced and resilient future in the eyes of fans and stakeholders alike. There is still a long way to go in order to be a truly successful and famous team not only in the league but also all over the world.

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