

The Batting Lab

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Advertiser(s): **SAS**

Lead Agency(s): **McCann New York**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Batting Lab was a smart batting cage that showcased SAS' innovative analytics technology to a skeptical audience while improving kids' data literacy skills under the guise of helping them improve their swing. It improved SAS' innovation perceptions by 285%, consideration by 399%, and recommendation by 258%. Every child in the program improved their confidence with data AND their swing.

THE CHALLENGE & OBJECTIVES

Kids think learning math and data is hard and boring.

THE INSIGHT

When something is hard, we only stick around if it's something we truly enjoy.

THE STRATEGIC IDEA

Trojan horse math and data literacy lessons into something kids enjoy and are already good at.

BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE

A batting cage packed full of tech to teach kids data literacy under the guise of improving their baseball swings.

THE RESULTS

Every child became more confident with math/data AND improved their swings. Meanwhile, technologists saw SAS as more innovative.

THE CHALLENGE

STATE OF THE MARKETPLACE & BRAND'S BUSINESS

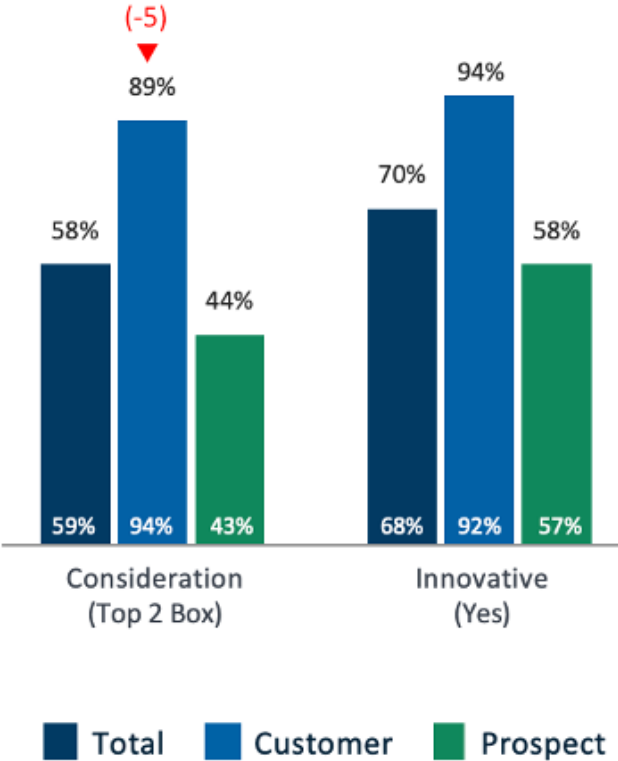
SAS is *the* O.G. in the analytics category. They invented it back in the 70s, and for decades they were the defacto standard. Even to this day, they're still used by 90% of the Fortune 100.¹ But in many ways, SAS has become a victim of its own success. As

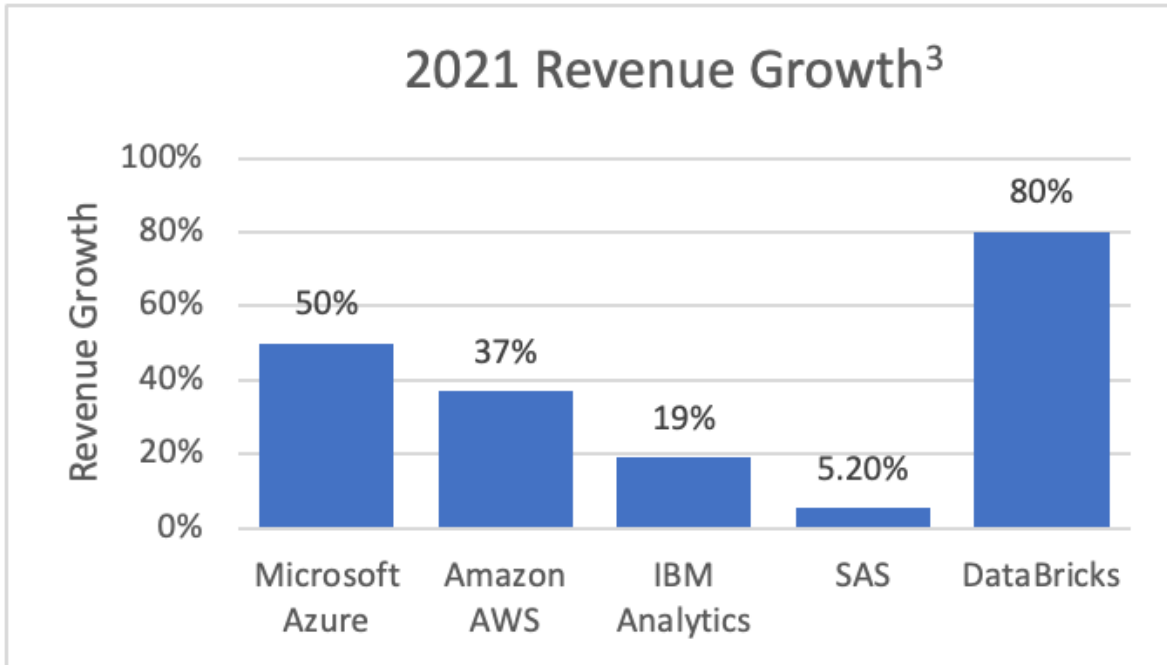
the analytics industry evolved to open-source tools and AI-driven automation, SAS came to be viewed as overly complicated and expensive.

Their business was being disrupted by household names like Microsoft, Amazon, and SAP along with a host of upstart companies like DataBricks and C3AI, all of whom were viewed as more innovative, easier to implement, and more user-friendly. These brands came along in the age of, well, brands. They knew how to balance humanity with tech in a way that SAS, who had only ever talked to their audience in category jargon, was less practiced.

But the truth of the matter is that SAS *has* evolved with the category and *is* still the technological leader. Their most recent products accommodated open-source programming, and for years SAS has been pouring 25% of revenue back into R&D, more than 2X any of their competitors.¹ They had the most capable analytics platform in the market, powered by the most advanced AI. But a whole generation of technologists and data scientists had already written SAS off. To win them back, SAS needed humanizing, tangible demonstrations of their innovation credentials.

SAS Brand Health Metrics by Customer vs. Prospect²





THE OBJECTIVE & RESULTS

| OBJECTIVE OVERVIEW | RESULT OVERVIEW |
|--|--|
| <p>Business Objective 1</p> <p>Showcase SAS' innovation credentials in a way that fosters reconsideration.</p> <p>KPI: An improvement in SAS innovation perceptions, consideration, and recommendation</p> <p>Rationale- Technologists want to work with the latest tech. If they don't think you're innovative, they won't consider you.</p> <p>Since they were primed to ignore SAS, we couched our tech in a feel-good story, hoping to grab their attention and earn their consideration.</p> | <p>Business Result 1</p> <p>SAS innovation perception improved by 285%²</p> <p>SAS consideration improved by 399%²</p> <p>SAS recommendation improved by 258%²</p> <p>Context- SAS' innovation perceptions had been trending down for years. While we'd begun to stem those losses with the previous year's Curiosity Forever campaign, The Batting Lab did more in one execution to drive positive innovation perceptions- a critical first step to reconsideration - than years of</p> |

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| <p>SAS had never done work like this before, so our only benchmarks were to outperform our brand metrics from the previous year:²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Innovation grew 2.9% □ Consideration dropped 1.6% □ Recommendation dropped 3.7% <p>Measurement:</p> <p>We ran surveys among technologists before and after viewing The Batting Lab’s hero video to gauge the lift in innovation perceptions, consideration, and recommendation of SAS.</p> | <p>previous marketing efforts. (see table below)</p> |
| <p>Marketing Objective 1</p> <p>Earn outsized media coverage</p> <p>KPI: Coverage of The Batting Lab by national media outlets</p> <p>Rationale- SAS’ media budgets are small and largely devoted to lower-funnel, demand-gen tactics that are all too easily ignored. We needed to tell a story with SAS’ platform at the center that elevated beyond traditional category media and helped humanize a brand that has traditionally communicated in ones and zeros..</p> <p>Measurement- SAS’ in-house media team monitored coverage via Carma (media analysis tool) and Google.</p> | <p>Marketing Result 1</p> <p>72 earned media stories and counting,¹ including a 4:00 segment on NBC’s Today Show, which averaged 625K viewers/day the week the segment aired.⁴</p> <p>Context - This was the first time SAS broke into the mainstream conversation. For a company that had only ever talked about numbers to a niche audience, this humanized the brand and took them into the mainstream in a powerful way.</p> |

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| <p>Marketing Objective 2</p> <p>Grow SAS' online audience</p> <p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Increase in YouTube subscribers □ Increase in LinkedIn followers <p>Rationale- This is a rare case where growing your social audience is actually important because these are platforms where you can still reach your followers organically and they're where our technologist audience goes for information. SAS' internal studio creates hundreds of pieces of content each year and most of it goes unseen. The more technologists opt-in to receive that content, the more aware they'll become of the amazing things SAS' technology can do for their businesses.</p> <p>Measurement- We'd measure follower/subscriber growth via the social platforms themselves.</p> | <p>Marketing Result 2</p> <p>Over 8200 new YouTube subscribers, >10% growth¹</p> <p>Over 20K new LinkedIn followers, 2.5% growth¹</p> <p>Context - SAS pours significant resources into its content studio each year. Growing their online audience is huge because it helps them realize more value from that investment. More technologists exposed to the steady stream of content SAS produces means more technologists becoming aware of how awesome SAS' technology is, which means more technologists considering SAS for their business. Double-digit increase in conversion and loyalty²⁰ was further proof of full- funnel effectiveness.</p> |
| <p>Activity Objective 1</p> <p>Improve kids' understanding of math and data</p> <p>KPI: An improvement in data confidence after going through The Batting Lab program</p> <p>Rationale- In the U.S. we're failing to prepare people of all ages to navigate today's data-driven world. 90% of</p> | <p>Activity Result 1</p> <p>Every child became more confident in their understanding of data.³</p> <p>9 of 10 had extreme confidence they could accurately read charts and graphs, up from 3 of 10 before the program.³</p> <p>Context - The importance of improving kids' data literacy skills cannot be overstated as it has a profound impact on their trajectories as they grow. They</p> |

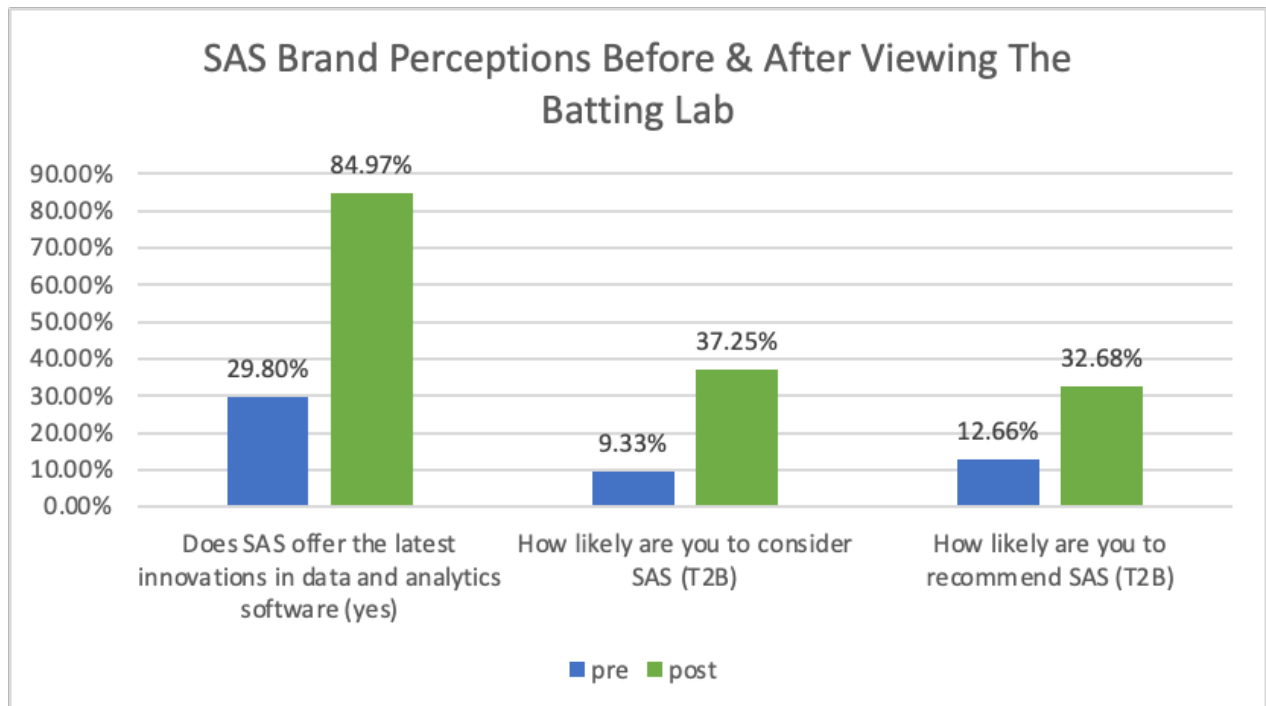
business leaders cite data literacy as key to company success, but only 25% of workers feel confident in their data skills.⁴ Only 43% of 16-21 year olds consider themselves data literate.⁵ By improving data literacy, SAS is helping people become better problem solvers, citizens, and eventually...customers.

are more likely to maintain an interest in STEM, become better problem solvers, express themselves more clearly, recognize false information, and be better equipped to contribute to their communities.

Our benchmark was for all participants to improve their data skills.

Measurement- Kids were given surveys and quizzes gauging their confidence and ability to interpret data before, during, and after the program.

BUSINESS RESULT 1 - TABLE



RESULTS OVERVIEW

When we set out to create The Batting Lab, we knew only a small number of kids would be directly impacted by it. Its primary role was to serve as a signal to

technologists that the SAS you thought was old and stodgy is actually at the forefront of advanced analytics innovation. Those technologists would engage with The Batting Lab through video of the kids' experience and media coverage. In that regard, The Batting Lab delivered. Paid media drove 51.3MM video completions and 41,413 unique visitors to SAS.com where they could learn more about what SAS can do for businesses.¹ For SAS, those are big numbers. Not only that, The Batting Lab's tech broke through and impressed as SAS' innovation perceptions improved nearly 3X among our core audience.²

As for the goal of improving data literacy among children, every participant of The Batting Lab became more confident with math and data. By the end of the program, 9 out of the 10 participants had extreme confidence they could accurately read charts and graphs. Up from only 3 out of 10 at the beginning of the program.³

Now, while we trojan-horsed math and data lessons into The Batting Lab program, the kids were there to improve their baseball swings, because, for them, Little League is life. So, were they successful? Absolutely. Every child who participated believed their swing had improved - and the data showed it.³

In the end, The Batting Lab worked on two levels. We got technologists to reconsider their perceptions of SAS, a crucial first step toward earning their business. AND we showed kids that math and data applied in the real world don't just solve problems, but are interesting as well.

ADDITIONAL RESULTS

While we didn't set out to drive leads or sales with The Batting Lab, SAS has seen customer interest in their offerings as a direct result of it. Three major prospects across retail, government, and consulting reached out to SAS after seeing how the tech in The Batting Lab could drive better decision-making in their organizations. While no deals have closed just yet, conversations are ongoing.

Given the size of SAS enterprise contracts, if even one of these closes, it will pay for The Batting Lab several times over.

OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Other marketing for the brand, running at the same time as this effort

One year prior to launching The Batting Lab, SAS had launched their first brand campaign in several years, "Curiosity Forever." The Batting Lab was designed to accomplish many of the same objectives as "Curiosity Forever" - improve innovation perceptions, tell more emotional stories, and appeal to a younger technologist

audience that wasn't using SAS. "Curiosity Forever" was the first time SAS had gone to market with a consistent, full-funnel campaign. It worked well to help SAS "punch above the weight" of its media buy, but more importantly for The Batting Lab, it planted the seed among our audience that SAS had changed, priming them to pay attention to further innovations and brand actions from SAS.

Objectives Sources:

1. SAS business and competitive analysis
2. SAS Brand Tracking Report, Dec. 2021
3. 2021 Revenue Growth chart sources:
 - a. Microsoft 2021 Annual Report: <https://www.microsoft.com/inve...>
 - b. Amazon 202110K filing: <https://d18rn0p25nwr6d.cloudfr...>
 - c. 2021 IBM Annual Report: <https://www.ibm.com/annualrepo...>
 - d. SAS 2021-'22 Annual Report: https://www.sas.com/en_us/comp...
 - e. Saxon Webber Group: <https://medium.com/@saxonweber...>
4. HBR: How Data Literate is Your Company: <https://hbr.org/2021/08/how-da...>
5. TechRepublic: Data Literacy Gap Among Young People Could Impact Businesses: <https://www.techrepublic.com/a...>

Results Sources:

1. SAS The Batting Lab Overview and Performance Report: June 1, 2022 - Sept 6, 2022
2. Perksy Pre/Post Exposure Survey: fielded Sept. 30, 2022 - Oct. 7, 2022
3. SAS The Batting Lab Participant Survey Response Insights Report: May 23, 2022
4. Adweek: Q2 2022 and Week of June 20 Morning Show Ratings: <https://www.adweek.com/tvnewse...>

THE INSIGHT & THE BIG IDEA

AUDIENCE

While The Batting Lab execution was designed for Little League aged kids, we were trying to reach technologists at large with a bullseye on the data scientist. "Technologist" is a broad handle for people who work in and around technology at their companies. They may work in IT, data management, analytics, or even the marketing department. They are the decision-makers with the budget to purchase SAS and the users of analytics software across an organization.

The data scientist is like the ultimate analytics power user and is particularly important to SAS. They're the ones responsible for developing the complex models that help businesses make decisions about everything from creditworthiness to what SKUs stores need to stock. Their unique set of skills blends computer science, mathematics, and business acumen. They're incredibly curious; always looking for a better way to

do things; and optimistic, they have a deep belief that their job, when done well, can make the world better.

Data scientists are important to SAS because of their ability to influence budget holders in their own companies as well as the rest of the technologist community. If they want to work in SAS, their companies will buy SAS and others will follow suit.

THE INSIGHT

As a country, we are failing at data literacy. 85% of executives believe data literacy will become as vital in the future as the ability to use a computer today,¹ yet 48% of kids don't feel their education has given them the data confidence and skills they need.² To SAS, this is unacceptable. The future of their business depends on people understanding math and data. It's also important to data scientists who know firsthand the ability of data to help the world make better decisions. It's why data literacy has been the focus of SAS' education outreach for years. They've always focused on taking math and data concepts out of the textbook and applying them to the real world, but that only gets kids so far. At the end of the day, unless you're a savant, math is hard. **When learning gets hard, we only stick around if it's something we truly enjoy.**

We knew we had to repackage math and data lessons into something kids enjoyed so much they wouldn't even think of it as work. It also had to be something heavily steeped in data and analytics. As far as sports go, there's none more data-heavy than baseball. So we worked with SAS' Data for Good and product development teams to concept a batting cage that would teach kids math and data literacy skills under the guise of helping them improve their swing.

THE CORE IDEA OR STRATEGIC BUILD

Demonstrate SAS innovation by trojan horsing math and data literacy lessons into something kids already enjoy and are good at.

Sources

1. Data Literacy: The Upskilling Evolution, ClikTech International, 2022
2. How to Close the Data Literacy Gap to Power the Future World of Work, 2022

BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE

ACTIVATION STRATEGY

The main element kids engaged with was The Batting Lab cage itself. Over the course of 12 sessions, kids took batting practice with the cage capturing more than 50K data points per swing. Their experience and improvement was documented in a hero video that was cut down for placement across the web and social.

Other elements included:

- PR outreach
- Paid and organic social
- Digital banners
- Influencer content
- SAS.com landing pages
- Downloadable content - The Data Playbook

BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE

Data scientists want to work with the latest tech, so SAS' had to be front and center. We worked with SAS data scientists and North Carolina State University to build AI analytics models of elite players' swings that captured more than 50K data points in real time. Those models were then used to show kids how to swing more like the pros. All that tech was built into a batting cage experience that was equal parts engaging and educational.

RATIONALE

The Batting Lab was rolled out via an integrated comms plan over the course of two months. During the kids' twelve sessions in the batting cage, footage and interviews of their experience were captured. Midway through, a teaser video was posted to SAS' Facebook page, alerting their most engaged fans that something cool was coming. A teaser landing page was also created on SAS.com to drive further intrigue. While the hero video was being finalized, earned media outreach began. Dozens of outlets produced stories on The Batting Lab. Among the most impactful was a 4:00 segment on NBC's Today Show. This reached well beyond our technologist target to help establish SAS' role in culture as an advocate for data literacy. We also worked with YouTube data science and sports analytics influencer, Ken Jee to produce a video for his 217K subscribers. Ken's content carries weight with the technologist, so having him speak to SAS' innovation capabilities was incredibly powerful. Once the hero video asset had been finalized, it was cut into :06s, :15s, and :30s for social and OLV paid placements. These video assets as well as digital banners all drove back to a SAS.com landing page. Once there, people could further explore

The Batting Lab's tech via an immersive flythrough experience and download The Data Playbook, a tool for parents, teachers, and coaches that uses the same data and methodology as The Batting Lab to teach the same lessons kids learned in the cage. The Data Playbook was crucial to expanding the impact of SAS' data literacy efforts beyond the kids lucky enough to use The Batting Lab directly.



Phase 1: Experience



The Batting Lab Rollout Plan

Phase 2: Teaser Content



Phase 3: PR, Earned Media, & influencers



Phase 4: Paid Media Launch



OPTIMIZATION OF CREATIVE WORK AND CHANNEL PLANS

A faster-paced edit of the video was posted to SAS.com leading to 2X as many people watching the video.

INVESTMENT OVERVIEW

Paid Media Expenditure (Current Year) - \$1-2 Million

Paid Media Expenditure (Prior Year) - Under \$500,0000

Compared to other competitors in this category, this budget is: Less

Compared to prior year spend on the brand overall, the brand's overall budget this year is: About the same

The SAS in-house media, comms, and social teams executed a cross-channel creative mix at best-practice frequency levels to ensure sustained exposure throughout the campaign. Strategically placed media buys increased the reach and visibility of the program among key audiences. YouTube preroll accounted for the majority of the media buy, followed by paid social, and targeted digital display. Earned media was maximized through key media relationships and helped amplify the program above and beyond what was achieved through paid media alone.

Production & Other Non-Media Expenditures - \$500-999 Thousand

The agency and SAS really bootstrapped the production of The Batting Lab, leveraging in-house resources for the vast majority of the production. We were able to keep production budgets low by using SAS data scientists to develop the SAS software that powered The Batting Lab. SAS in-house event resources helped with the on-site build and an in-house, agency-led production team captured content during the twelve-week experience.

Owned Media

Yes : SAS leveraged their website and social channels to help promote The Batting Lab. Teaser videos were posted organically to their social channels ahead of the paid hero video. SAS.com served as a hub that housed the hero video, an interactive fly-through of the cage, stats on participants' data literacy improvement, and The Data Playbook.

Sponsorships and Media Partnerships

Sponsorship - Talent or Influencer

We worked with Ken Jee, a data scientist YouTuber with a concentration on sports analytics - we couldn't make up how great of a fit he was. Ken has over 217K subscribers to his YouTube channel, so not only was he a good fit, but he fell right into that sweet spot of being big enough to be effective, but not so big as to be inauthentic. He has a highly engaged audience that matched our technologist target nicely.

Sources

1. Paid media figures provided by SAS' in-house media team
2. Production costs provided by SAS' in-house events team as well as the agency's production arm.

CREDITS

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