

Boca juniors: Competing on the global playing field

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Boca has transformed into an exciting modern brand, maintaining its traditional ties while scoring associations with successful companies.

When Mauricio Macri took over the board of Boca Juniors club in 1995, there was little to cheer about. The beloved Argentine soccer team was at its lowest point in its nearly 100-year-old history: four presidents had come and gone since the late '80s, and the popular "La Bombonera" stadium that had been its home since 1940 was temporarily closed. Boca was bankrupt.

A decade later, Boca is again winning goals and the hearts of a new generation of fans. Since 2000, the team has won the Intercontinental Cup twice and the Libertadores Cup four times, among others, and is fit to compete toe to toe with Europe's powerhouse clubs. How this extraordinary turnaround has come about is the subject of a new case, "Club Atlético Boca Juniors: Creating a Leading World Club," prepared by IESE Prof. [Antonio Dávila](#) and IAE Prof. Alberto Ballvé.

A strategic plan

Macri's first job as president was to devise a strategic plan consisting of four objectives:

- create an "administration of excellence" that would optimize revenues coming from members and season ticketholders;
- enhance the club's commercial operations;

- expand internationally;
- centralize management processes.

Aiming for excellence meant getting international certification (ISO 9001) for all club events. Meanwhile, efforts were made to optimize the resources coming from members and season ticketholders via telephone service centers, a decentralized ticket sales system and, for companies, a special section with corporate box seating at the stadium. A professional management system akin to that of a private company was instituted, while the club, in accordance with Argentine law, remained a nonprofit organization.

Forever committed to the humble Buenos Aires neighborhood of La Boca where the team was born in 1905, the club proceeded to refurbish "La Bombonera." It built practice fields, residences and new auxiliary buildings around the stadium, and offered club members free healthcare in these new facilities. In addition, it opened the Museo de la Pasión Boquense in 2001, the first of its kind in Latin America, which in a short time has become a top tourist destination for the city of Buenos Aires, attracting more than 500,000 visitors a year.

Winning sponsorship deals

The club's commercial operations received a boost through various sponsorship deals with everyone from UNICEF to Megatone, the country's largest home-goods chain. Nike, in particular, has been a key sponsor, supplying the players' apparel and planning to invest up to 4 million Argentine pesos by 2010. Jersey sales, advertising and 238 merchandising licenses bring in another 16 million pesos annually.

With a view to expanding internationally, the club embarked on tours of Europe, Asia (in 2004 and 2005) and North America (in 2004 and 2006). Boca also signed agreements with several youth teams from Asia and the Americas, and renegotiated its television rights.

Finally, the launch of a slick new website, a new Boca TV channel, numerous institutional publications and even plans for a theme hotel in Buenos Aires, among other projects, helped solidify the loyalty of its fan base and lifted the club to "near total operational balance."

In 12 years, Boca's commercial resources increased by 230 percent, and the Boca Juniors' equity by 1,000 percent, thanks in part to the 100 million euros brought by the sale of some of its best players: Abbondanzieri, Tévez and Gago. Despite letting go of its stars, the club continued to win titles: five national and 10 international between 1995 and 2007.

After serving three times as president of Boca Juniors, Mauricio Macri in 2007 was elected

mayor of the City of Buenos Aires. He took with him much of the management team that helped transform Boca Juniors over the past decade.

Macri's departure leaves many questions: What are the sporting, social and economic challenges awaiting the next person chosen to succeed him as club president? How should the future board of directors manage the development of Boca Juniors, in Argentina and in the global football industry? Perhaps some bright leader out there is ready to take his best shot at finding out.

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