



By [Blink Staff](#)

Seattle loves their professional sports teams. The Seahawks have their 12th man. The Mariners have a \$150 million retractable roof. The Sonics.... well, no need to go there. But perhaps no team in Seattle has a more passionate fan base than the [Seattle Sounders FC](#). Established in 2007 as a Major League Soccer expansion team, the Sounders have consistently set MLS attendance records and have served as a clarion call that soccer can become a leading sport in the U.S.

Attending a Sounders game is truly unique, boisterous, and sensory-rich experience. From the [March to the Match](#) to the [Emerald City Supporters](#), one of the largest supporter groups in the US, the Sounders have succeeded in building and nurturing their fans like few other sport franchises.

So we were thrilled when the Sounders approached Blink to help them design their new MatchPass loyalty program in late 2012. There were three major components to the project: 1. Conduct primary [end-user research](#) to learn what fans wanted in a Sounders loyalty program and 2. Design an intuitive and engaging website and 3. Conduct usability testing for the MatchPass website prototype.

The objective for the Sounders wasn't to sell more merchandise or to boost attendance. Instead, they simply wanted to give something back to the fans that have made their club so successful. Specifically, they wanted to understand: what *experiences* do Sounders fans crave the most and how can we reward fans with more of what they want?

The project kicked off in the research lab and out in the field (and in this case, "the field" was quite literal). Our goal was to understand fans' needs and motivations regarding a Sounders FC rewards program which would then inform program features and the design of a rewards website. We conducted close to 30 interviews to gauge what type of experiences resonated

most. Here are a few of the key takeaways from this research:

- Almost all Sounders fans interviewed liked the idea of having a team-specific rewards program.
- Many different types of rewards were valuable to Sounders fans, but unique experience-based rewards—such as pre-game sideline passes or meeting a favorite player after a match—were particularly valuable.
- Key features fans desired on the website included:
  - The ability to manage and redeem their reward points
  - Seeing information that explains reward tiers
  - Seeing personal reward-earning history, and
  - Learning about reward-earning opportunities.

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