

## Sports Geek Nation AMA with Johannes Wohlert

Johannes Wohlert is a Sports Geek podcast alum and Marketing Manager of Swedish Basketball Federation.

Johannes' experience in sports business ranges from working with top league clubs, PR, marketing, youth development, contract negotiations and event planning. At present, he is the one in charge of the marketing strategies for Swedish Basketball Federation.

Swedish Basketball Federation also called Svenska Basketbollförbundet or SBBF is the one responsible for the development and promotion of basketball in Sweden.

Connect with Johannes Wohlert on Twitter [@johanneswohlert](#), [LinkedIn](#) and Slack [@Johannes Wohlert](#)

Find out more about Swedish Basketball Federation at [basket.se](https://basket.se)

Here's the full transcript:

Links to names will link you into Slack community, if you are not a member [please sign up here](#).

**Q. [seancallanan](#):** @Johannes Wohlert I'll kick things off asking you to brag a little about your success in 2018 in getting the \*cheeks in the seats\* Can you please run us through the key numbers and some of the tactics that were most effective?

**A. [Johannes Wohlert](#):** Thanks Sean, delighted to be here. This is a great place to learn and get inspired as well as connecting with fun people.

At the beginning of 2018 basketball was the 26th most consumed sport in Sweden. Given that basketball often is described as the number 2 sport globally we are painfully behind in the north where focus is on soccer, ice hockey and all kinds of winter sports. Actually team handball is a big sport too. Since Sweden hasn't won that much lately (the men's national team has participated in one European championship in 16 years winning a total of one game during that time span) results is not what's going to attract neither spectators nor media. And without that, good luck finding sponsors.

We do have a few stars, mainly Jonas Jerebko who plays for the Golden State Warriors, but he can't participate due to his games in the NBA. We have two players in Euroleague, but their club teams wouldn't release them since their in a conflict with FIBA so they couldn't play either. There we were: no results, poor general knowledge about the game of basketball, no stars and we averaged 1500-1700 spectators a game historically. Also no marketing budget really.

We came up with a plan that included:

1. Find an emotional story - in this case it was the venue in downtown Stockholm, a classic ice hockey arena.
2. Double down on youth teams, youth clubs and their parents.
3. Invite the opposing teams fans (like go out of our way to invite them) to create a great atmosphere.

Nothing of this is ground breaking or new ideas. But if you have a good story and know your audience well enough to deliver an emotional message I think a lot can be done even without a big budget. We know all the youth teams and their leaders so we went to them first. It gave us so many sold tickets that the average Joe in Stockholm who likes sports noticed that something big was coming up. We sold 8045 tickets and the gym was sold out.

**Q. [joshuaduboff](#):** @Johannes Wohlert why do you think basketball has not historically been as popular in Sweden as in other areas around Europe? I'm sure it's a combination of many factors

**A. Johannes Wohlert:** For some reason basketball has not caught on in a lot of northern European countries. Basketball is in a similar position in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and the UK. In Sweden and Finland obviously ice hockey has taken a huge position and in Denmark and Norway team handball is way more popular. I do think with the globalization, urbanization and the big boost of women's sports basketball is very well equipped to be the sports of the 21st century all over the globe, even in Scandinavia!

**Q. [liamednarski](#):** @Johannes Wohlert you mentioned creating an 'emotional connection' which helped sell out an event.

How do you use this strategy on a day to day basis in your digital communications?

Who do you find are the best people to spread the messages of Swedish Basketball at the youth level? (Admins, team managers, coaches, parents or the players themselves?)

**A. Johannes Wohlert:** Historically there's been a fair amount of marketing through guilt..."you should support" the national team. I think a lot of clubs use this rhetoric to get youth teams to come to the games too. I know some clubs forbid practice for youth teams game day so that they won't have that as an "excuse". When I say emotional connection I mean that we are never seeing it as an obligation for youth players, coaches or whomever to attend the game. We try to push the buttons that make them want to come to the game really focusing on the atmosphere and the experience more than stars. If we had NBA-players on our roster I'm sure we would focus a lot more on that but still not too much.

We've identified team parents and coaches as the most important people to drive these group sales. That's why we've focused on Facebook as a channel, that's where they are. If you check [www.facebook.com/basketlandslagen](http://www.facebook.com/basketlandslagen) you'll find some examples. Obviously we're on IG too but we're not on Snapchat. We're too small an organisation to deliver on all channels.

On game day we really try to connect with the youth players and make their experience great, if they're having fun the youth coach/team parents is a hero for bringing them there. Our national teams stay on the court for 1-2 hours after the game to sign autographs and take selfies until the last kid in the gym has gotten one. We bring up food and drinks of course and give out candy to the kids waiting in line. Our players are marvelous at this and I'm very grateful for that.

## What is Sports Geek Nation?

Been forwarded this from a colleague? That's great we love seeing our members get credit for sharing their knowledge. Sports Geek Nation is a curated sports business community in Slack and Facebook which will help you learn from the very best in the world. Sports Geek Nation was founded by Sean Callanan in 2015 (as #SportsBiz Slack), it connects sports executives who work in digital, data and technology.

Sports Geek Nation has members from (in alphabetical order) Australia, Canada, Denmark, India, Lithuania, New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States working in sports such as basketball, football, ice hockey, baseball, AFL, horse racing, golf, rugby league, netball and more.

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