



# Benfica: Lifting the 'fan engagement trophy' with their new Google Cloud-based app

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## GOOGLE CLOUD RESULTS

- ✓ Rapid development: New cloud-based app tailored to Benfica's needs in under six months
- ✓ Global success: 30K downloads in six hours, and Top Sports free app for five weeks on iOS
- ✓ Mission accomplished: App ensures fast stadium entry, eliminating delays and errors
- ✓ Fan-driven app: Users can now share their ideas for improving the app directly with Benfica
- ✓ Unlocking fan potential: Fans can become active participants in the show through [Gemini](#) and LLM

With over 14 million global supporters, Sport Lisboa e Benfica aimed to boost fan engagement partnering with Google Cloud and Deloitte to build a redesigned cutting-edge app using an event-driven architecture to enhance the stadium experience and foster closer fan connections.



## There are no limits for fandom in the cloud

**“Google Cloud was our first option to help us develop this part of the app from the start. We knew that if we wanted a real-time completely scalable solution, Google Cloud was the preferred partner to do it.”**

**João Copeto**  
Chief Information  
Officer, Benfica

The way people consume sports is changing, and professional football club Sport Lisboa e Benfica (the largest sports club by membership in Portugal and one of the top three in the world) is determined to lead the way. Founded in 1904, Benfica realized that, in order to reach all the fans around the globe, they had to go beyond their physical 65,000 seats in the stadium. They needed a digital transformation to bring the club and the fans closer together, both in their venue and at home.

In 2017, they made their first move toward this vision when they revamped their institutional website and created their first app for the fans that allowed them to buy digital tickets and merchandising, and be

informed about the club's  
upcoming matches.

Though it was well received by the fans, over time the performance of the app turned out to be less than ideal, mostly because of its API centric design. This meant that all content was obtained directly from the Benfica production systems, making it hard to escalate for high-demand peaks, which lead to delays and errors, especially during the days of the matches.

It was clear, then, that if the club wanted to expand its fan base and ensure a great experience, they had to break the paradigm and avoid making a single call to the Benfica APIs. To achieve this, they needed a new event-driven architecture that could also be scalable to cater to their 14 million fans around the world. With this in mind, they envisioned the opportunity to launch a completely redesigned app that could work in real-time to deliver immersive engagement and increase reach and monetization. A game changer, to open up to a world of possibilities. And this is where Google Cloud came into place.



## Scalability and reliability: The "striking duo"

In June 2023, Benfica teamed up with Google Cloud and Deloitte to develop not only a new version of the app, but a completely different architecture in less than six months. This meant implementing a hybrid strategy of cloud and physical data centers, and bringing all the different parts together into one app.

This event-driven architecture, built on by [Firebase](#) and [Firestore](#), allowed the "Benfica app 2.0" to respond to every action in real time as much as a football team celebrating a goal. Also, it has changed the

**"In terms of reach, we achieved exactly what we expected. Also, we're able to run our technology in real time without being concerned. We believe that Google Cloud is one of the bigger players in terms of**

mindset of internal teams.

"Before, we had to scale all the infrastructure to announce the 11 players that will go for the next match. Now, the guy in the newsroom goes into the back office, says who they are, they push the button, and everybody instantly gets the information on their phones," explains João Copeto, Chief Information Officer of Benfica.

**scalability, and  
it's the way we  
want to work."**

**João Copeto**

Chief Information  
Officer, Benfica

Additionally, it has improved user experience. In this new version, fans can now actively contribute by sharing feedback and suggestions, while Benfica leverages [BigQuery](#) to understand behaviors and make data-driven improvements. But what has made the difference was reliability, ensuring it's accessible to fans whenever they need it. Through the Benfica app, people get discounts, go to the stores, and the most important thing: they buy and receive the tickets to enter the stadium. "So, there's a heavy business component that needs to perform right. And it's mission critical. We cannot ask the referee and the teams to wait half an hour because we still have 30,000 people outside of the stadium and the app doesn't run," says Copeto.

That's why Benfica has done something slightly different from what they were used to: instead of deploying public-facing apps, they've prioritized alpha and beta testing. During this stage, they've allowed around 10,000 people to use the app, and the features behaved perfectly. "We finally launched it on May 23 at 19:04 hours (because, you know, Benfica was founded in 1904) and from that moment until midnight, we got 30,000 downloads. That was huge for us because it was a weekday, at night, and without any special event going on," reveals Copeto. This explosive growth propelled the app to the top of the iOS and Android sports category for five consecutive weeks, and has now reached more than 200,000 downloads worldwide.

Beyond the impressive download numbers, the collaboration with Google Cloud has empowered the marketing team to foster a deeper one-to-one relationship with fans. As a proof of concept, Benfica has begun exploring Gemini and other AI models to enhance their engagement. These tools will enable them to participate in interactive experiences, such as quizzes, music selection, and goal predictions, both at the stadium and from home.

Benfica has understood that fans might feel more involved and part of the game if they can connect with them in real time. And this is the first technology step to still being part of the game.

Founded in 1904, **Sport Lisboa e Benfica** is the most decorated club in Portugal, and one of the most decorated in Europe, with 83 official trophies. It is the Portuguese club with the most members (278 thousand) and the largest number of supporters worldwide. The club is largely connected with Portuguese communities all over the globe, particularly in Europe, the Americas, and Portuguese-speaking African countries.

**Industry:** Media & Entertainment

**Location:** Portugal

**Products:** [Firebase](#), [Firestore](#), [BigQuery](#), [Cloud Run functions](#)

### About Google Cloud partner- [Deloitte](#)

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