

ESPORTS NEXT

TRACKING THE INDUSTRY PULSE OF ESPORTS

REVENUE SHARE RISING

DID RIOT CRACK ESPORTS' REVENUE PROBLEM?

MARKET MATURATION

FROM HYPE CYCLES TO SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS



THE NEW ECONOMICS

WHY SOPHISTICATED INVESTORS ARE QUIETLY POSITIONING FOR ESPORTS' NEXT PHASE

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The world of sports and entertainment is constantly evolving. Changes that include new technologies and new platforms continue to impact the way sports, media, and entertainment is created, distributed and consumed. New devices, delivery methods and types of content brings both new opportunities and new risks. Archer's Sports & Entertainment Group provides thorough representation for clients in the entertainment, sports, and media industries while protecting their business interests and creative assets.

Archer's sports law team has long-standing experience in the sports sector providing comprehensive services to athletes and players, sports leagues and organizations, owners and operators of sports facilities, as well as college and university sports programs. We have a deep-rooted understanding of sports from both a competitive and business perspective. Our attorneys are also well positioned to provide a full range of legal services to the emerging esports industry.

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- ✓ Collegiate esports programs, including compliance with national associations and Title IX



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EsportsNext Magazine Mission
As the official publication of the Esports Trade Association, EsportsNext Magazine aims to advance the esports industry through in-depth reporting, insightful analysis, and compelling storytelling. Reflecting ESTA's mission, we strive to unify, advocate for, and promote the broader esports community, providing a platform for professional development, innovation, and industry insights.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

After years of market volatility and industry consolidation, esports is emerging with a clearer sense of what works—and what doesn't. The hype-driven investments of the early 2020s have given way to something more interesting: sustainable business models built on actual audience behavior and proven revenue streams.

Our cover investigation reveals the bright spots that institutional investors are finally beginning to recognize. Fresh research shows gaming audiences demonstrate retention rates that traditional media companies can only dream of, while new revenue-sharing models are creating predictable income for organizations that understand how to engage their communities.

What we're witnessing represents a fundamental shift in how the industry operates. The franchise dreams that initially attracted venture capital were based on assumptions that proved incorrect. The real opportunities have emerged in different areas entirely: creator-focused infrastructure, mobile-first consumption patterns, and direct revenue relationships that align publisher success with team success.

In these pages, you'll discover why gaming's massive audience reach represents a market that's matured from speculation into proven business fundamentals. You'll see how forward-thinking organizations are building diversified revenue streams that don't depend entirely on traditional sponsorship models, creating more stable and predictable income.

Most importantly, you'll understand why the industry's evolution has produced business models designed to benefit from change rather than being disrupted by it.

The smart money has moved beyond questioning gaming's legitimacy as an entertainment category. They're positioning for an industry that's graduated from proving itself to optimizing its returns.

Game on,

Megan

Megan Van Petten
Editor-in-Chief
EsportsNext Magazine



Esports Coming of Age

Gaming has quietly assembled the most loyal audience in entertainment while traditional media companies struggle with declining retention and exploding acquisition costs. The Fall 2025 Issue of EsportsNext Magazine explores how the esports industry has matured beyond venture capital speculation into sustainable business models that reward authentic engagement over financial engineering.

In *The Esports Audience That Isn't Going Anywhere* we take a look at new research that identifies systematic undervaluation where institutional investors still apply traditional media frameworks to an industry operating on entirely different principles.

The Winter Paradox documents how recent market turbulence revealed gaming's true business model rather than destroying it. Through conversations with industry

veterans who've survived multiple hype cycles, the piece exposes how venture capital's franchise-focused approach fundamentally misunderstood audience behavior.

The Publisher's Gambit investigates how Riot Games solved gaming's most dangerous vulnerability: complete dependence on external sponsor relationships. Using real case studies, the analysis demonstrates how publisher revenue sharing provides sustainable foundations that make traditional sponsorships complementary rather than essential, creating business models that strengthen during market volatility.

Together, these investigations reveal an industry that has graduated from proving its legitimacy to optimizing its profitability through alignment of publisher incentives, creator authenticity, and audience engagement.



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Breaking Down Barriers *How Esports is Fighting for True Disability Inclusion*

Educational pioneers and advocates reveal the challenges—and solutions—for making competitive gaming accessible to all players.



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Fiercely Loyal *The Esports Audience That Isn't Going Anywhere*

While media giants hemorrhage subscribers and talent, gaming has quietly assembled a loyal audience in entertainment and the business implications are staggering



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Lessons Learned *The Winter Paradox*

As venture capital fled and marketing budgets disappeared, a new class of investors quietly positioned for the next boom—and they're betting on everything the last bubble got wrong.



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The Publisher's Gambit

How Riot Games Is Helping Teams Build Sponsor-Independent Revenue

Esports organizations have found a way to build sustainable income beyond traditional sponsors. The secret weapon? Sharing revenue from the games they already compete in.



Breaking Down Barriers: How Esports is Fighting for True Disability Inclusion

Educational pioneers and advocates reveal the challenges—and solutions—for making competitive gaming accessible to all players.

By Lindsay Heatley

The unmistakable passion in Alexander “Cristal” Nathan’s voice cuts through the digital static as he describes a harsh reality: “You don’t survive with a disability unless you see the truth.” As founder of Permastunned Gaming—the world’s largest esports organization for people with disabilities—Nathan understands better than most how the gaming industry’s promise of inclusion often falls short of its potential.

A recent Esports Trade Association webinar brought together advocates, educators, and industry professionals to examine the complex landscape of disability inclusion in esports. The discussion, moderated by Nik Turner, revealed both systemic barriers and innovative solutions emerging across the competitive gaming ecosystem.

Lewis Body-Douglas discovered the power of adaptive gaming through painful personal experience. While working as a QA tester at Rockstar Games, he broke his hand and suddenly found himself unable to perform his job—or participate in his primary hobby. “I reached out to Special Effect,” Body-Douglas recalls, referring to the UK

charity that provides gaming access to people with physical disabilities. “They sent me some adaptive gear, and I suddenly realized how isolating this could be if my life had been gaming and suddenly this was the case.”

Body-Douglas’s temporary disability opened his eyes to what many face permanently. Special Effect’s work demonstrates how the right technology can level the playing field—quite literally. Eye-tracking systems originally designed for accessibility now help bedbound players control computers with the same precision as traditional keyboard-and-mouse users. What’s particularly striking is how major console manufacturers have embraced this market. Sony,

PlayStation, and Nintendo now offer adaptive controllers available through mainstream retailers, signaling a shift from niche accommodation to market opportunity.

While physical disabilities often receive the most attention in accessibility discussions, Robbie Woolcock from Prestige Network highlighted challenges facing deaf and hard-of-hearing gamers. The lack of British Sign Language interpreters at gaming events creates immediate barriers, but the deeper issue runs to the specialized terminology that makes esports increasingly inaccessible. “There’s a linguistic barrier when teams import Korean players,” explains Nesli Deniz, Academic Director at Bahçeşehir University. “When they get upset, everyone turns to their mother tongue.” The solution isn’t just translation—it’s creating sustainable communication systems that work across cultural and ability lines.

The discussion also touched on sensory challenges affecting autistic gamers, who may struggle with the loud sounds and bright lights typical of major esports events. These examples illustrate how disability inclusion requires thinking beyond obvious accommodations to address the full spectrum of human neurodiversity.

The panelists emphasized how adaptive technology is transforming accessibility. Major console manufacturers like Sony, PlayStation, and Nintendo now offer adaptive controllers, while eye-tracking technology enables players with limited motor function to compete at high levels. Body-Douglas shared the inspiring example of a girl with cerebral palsy who used adaptive technology to design 3D characters—demonstrating skills that exceeded his own abilities as a games educator. The key insight is that technology designed for accessibility often benefits all players. As Body-Douglas noted, many accessibility

features can improve gameplay experiences for everyone, not just those with disabilities.

A significant portion of the discussion centered on whether disabled players should compete in separate divisions or alongside non-disabled players. Nathan advocated for full inclusion while acknowledging current limitations: “Full inclusion should be the goal, but it’s probably not realistic right now.” The panelists suggested that classification systems similar to those used in Paralympics might be necessary as intermediate steps. Lewis highlighted successful examples like the Quad Gods, a team of power wheelchair users who have competed against and defeated non-disabled teams in various tournaments, proving that integration is possible when games don’t rely heavily on physical reaction times.

Moving beyond individual accommodations requires addressing what Nathan identifies as three critical pillars: game developers, hardware manufacturers, and society as a whole. Government recognition of esports as legitimate sport could unlock funding streams and remove bureaucratic barriers that currently limit disabled players’ access to necessary equipment. In the Netherlands, Nathan explains, disability benefit caps restrict savings to €2,000, potentially preventing players from acquiring gaming equipment. “Recognizing it as a sport could lift some of these restrictions,” he notes, allowing disabled individuals to participate meaningfully in competitive gaming.

The conversation revealed how organizational failures compound these systemic issues. Woolcock emphasized that accessibility is often treated as an afterthought rather than core production element: “We often see interpreting or accessibility being added as an afterthought for these gaming events, not part of the initial planning.” This approach creates cascading problems: last-minute interpreter bookings, inadequate technical setups, and mismatched expertise that makes support feel disconnected from the actual gaming experience.

Megan Van Petten, founder of the Esports Trade Association, provided perhaps the most powerful framing of the entire discussion. “Inclusion is an act of love,” she explained. “When we choose to include others across different abilities, race, gender, culture, background, identity—we’re saying you belong here, you matter, and you’re worthy.” This perspective shifts the conversation from compliance-driven accommodation to value-driven community building. Rather than viewing accessibility as a burden or legal requirement, Van Petten’s framework positions inclusion as fundamental to esports’ identity as a global, digital-native community.

The webinar underscored that building truly inclusive esports ecosystems isn’t just about fairness—it’s about unlocking potential that’s been systematically excluded from competitive gaming. For an industry built on innovation and technological advancement, the path forward requires not just better tools, but better thinking about who gets to play.

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In an industry where yesterday’s innovation is tomorrow’s standard, ESTA’s LinkedIn Live series has become the essential gathering place for esports’ most influential voices.

Where Real Conversations Happen

The discussions featured in this article aren’t one-offs—they’re part of an ongoing digital symposium where industry leaders, academic pioneers, and next-gen innovators dissect how competitive gaming is fundamentally rewiring education, business models, and cultural touchstones.

Mark Your Calendar

Head to members.esportsta.org/events for a lineup of forward-looking panels that track emerging trends, map unconventional career pathways, and spotlight the technological innovations pushing esports into previously unimaginable territory.

Engagement Upgraded:

- Participate in unfiltered Q&A sessions with decision-makers
- Network with the architects of esports’ explosive growth
- Contribute your perspective to industry-shaping conversations

Whether you’re a startup founder, an investor scanning for the next unicorn, or an industry veteran navigating rapid transformation, ESTA’s LinkedIn Live events deliver insights that cut through the marketing noise and PR spin.

Don’t miss the next broadcast. Follow the Esports Trade Association on LinkedIn and join the conversation that’s defining gaming’s future.

Esports for Every Student

How LASEF Is Opening Doors Through Scholastic Gaming

Executive Director Jeffery Harrison on creating an inclusive ecosystem for students across Louisiana



From 4th grade classrooms to college campuses, the Louisiana Scholastic Esports Federation (LASEF) is transforming how students engage with gaming, education, and each other. Under the leadership of Executive Director Jeffery Harrison, LASEF has built a statewide ecosystem that fuses scholastic competition with real-world career exploration. The result? A generation of students discovering that esports can be more than a pastime—it can be a powerful pathway.

Can you introduce yourself and your role at LASEF? How did you get started in esports?

I'm Jeffery Harrison, Executive Director of the Louisiana Scholastic Esports Federation (LASEF). I oversee the growth and support of esports programs for students across Louisiana—whether they're in public or private schools, homeschooled, or part of a community-based group. I got involved because I saw how esports could connect with students who weren't always engaged by traditional extracurriculars. It became clear that gaming could be more than just fun—it could be a powerful way to help students build confidence, community, and career skills.

What does your esports program offer students?

LASEF runs both online and in-person competitions across a wide range of

titles, but that's just the entry point. Through our Ambassadors Program, students step into real-world roles like shoutcasting, video editing, event planning, and IT support. Our statewide Student Government develops leadership skills while giving students an active voice in shaping the league. We also collaborate with schools and community partners to host workshops focused on streaming, content creation, media literacy, and STEM careers—from cybersecurity to drone racing.

How do you prepare students for future careers?

We model our programming on the real esports ecosystem. Students don't just play—they learn what it takes to run a professional event, produce a live broadcast, manage a team, or build a personal brand. That exposure helps them discover career paths

in esports, gaming, and adjacent industries like marketing, production, and tech. Several of our students have gone on to college esports programs, internships, or freelance work—armed with practical experience, a strong portfolio, and a sense of purpose. Most importantly, they do it in an environment where inclusion and empowerment are prioritized.

What inspired the creation of LASEF? Were there models you followed?

We saw how many students loved gaming but had no structure to compete, grow, or lead. National programs like NASEF were influential, but we built LASEF to meet Louisiana's unique needs. Our model is open-access, leadership-driven, and deeply community-oriented. Students don't just join our program—they help build it.



Scholastic Esports

Gaming in schools? A winning combination.



Education as a whole is changing, and so is the way students interact with technology. Original skepticism of students playing video games in school is now challenged as more K-12 and higher education institutions embrace esports programs – a new industry with a rapidly increasing following, competing with professional sports leagues like the NFL and NBA.

There are many reasons to participate in scholastic esports, including:

Esports makes schools more attractive to students and partners.

Educators are taking charge in embracing esports, which has accelerated their educational institutions' digital transformation, brought new levels of student engagement, and connected them to new partners and organizations.

Esports helps students in their professional careers.

Students learn strategic thinking and planning skills, important technical skills such as programming, technology configuration, and setup, and marketing and promotion around their esports program and involvement in various competitions and leagues.

Esports brings a more inclusive approach to education goals.

Physical sports are not for everyone, but esports provides all students with a new outlet to get involved in school-based activities and competition. Studies have shown that students engaged in esports programs have higher high school graduation rates.



SHI Public Sector is a leader in scholastic esports. We help school systems with:

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Why SHI Public Sector for Education

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THE ESPORTS AUDIENCE THAT ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE

While media giants hemorrhage subscribers and talent, gaming has quietly assembled a loyal audience in entertainment and the business implications are staggering

By Jason Allsopp

Something strange is happening in America's living rooms, and it's driving traditional media executives to distraction. Two-thirds (67%) of Americans have played video games in the past year, and more than 4-in-10 (44%) have watched esports content. Yet when you ask most institutional investors about the sector, you'll still hear the same tired refrains: "It's just kids playing video games" or "The bubble's about to burst."

They're spectacularly wrong. And the data proves it.

Fresh research from the Angus Reid Group, surveying 1,870 Americans for the Esports Trade Association, reveals an industry that's not just surviving the post-pandemic entertainment shakeout—it's thriving in ways that would make subscription streaming service executives weep with envy. The findings expose a market that's moved far beyond the stereotypes, creating sustainable business models while traditional media companies hemorrhage subscribers and scramble for relevance.

The Retention Algorithm That Broke the Internet

Here's the number that should terrify every streaming executive: 55% of Americans engaged with gaming content plan to continue consuming it over the next six months; they're actively planning to stay engaged.

Compare that to the churn rates plaguing traditional streaming services, where customer acquisition costs have exploded while retention plummets. Netflix spent \$15 billion on content in 2022 and still watched subscriber growth stagnate. Meanwhile, gaming content creators are building sustainable businesses with a fraction of that investment, generating audience loyalty that established media companies can't buy at any price.

"We're documenting engagement patterns that showcase what sustainable audience relationships should look like," explains Jason Allsopp, Senior Vice President and Managing Director at Angus Reid Group. "When over half your audience is actively planning future engagement, you're not looking at casual entertainment consumption—you're seeing a complete media ecosystem."

But here's the kicker that separates sophisticated investors from the crowd: while retention stays rock-solid, new user acquisition shows deliberate limitations. Only 2% of non-engaged Americans express interest in joining the gaming ecosystem within six months. This isn't market failure—it's market maturation. The industry has identified its core demographic and optimized around maximizing lifetime value rather than chasing unsustainable growth metrics.

Wall Street loves companies that can demonstrate both audience stability and spending power concentration. Gaming just handed them both on a silver platter.

The Creator Industrial Complex

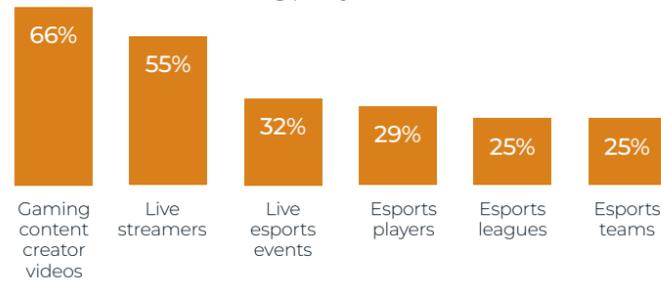
Traditional media executives still think in broadcast terms: create content, control distribution, monetize attention. Gaming flipped that script so completely that most legacy players haven't realized the game changed.

The research reveals that 66% of viewers consume creator-driven content while only 32% watch formal

Watchers Prefer Creator and Streamer Content to Formal Esports

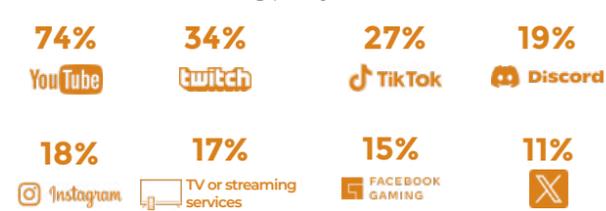
TYPES OF CONTENT CONSUMED

Among past year watchers



PLATFORMS USED FOR WATCHING CONTENT

Among past year watchers



esports programming. This isn't a preference shift—it's a fundamental restructuring of how entertainment value gets created and captured. Individual creators are building audiences that rival major network programming, operating with overhead costs that would embarrass traditional production budgets.

YouTube dominates at 74% viewership among past year watchers, but the platform distribution tells only part of the story. The real transformation lies in direct creator-to-audience relationships that bypass traditional gatekeepers entirely. Creators control their content, maintain audience relationships, and capture revenue streams without surrendering equity to studio systems or distribution networks.

"When it comes to gaming and esports, we are witnessing a clear democratization of content creation," Allsopp notes. "Access to gaming content now faces very few barriers, which fosters a more sustainable relationship between creators and consumers."

For investors, this creator-centric ecosystem offers multiple entry points that traditional media investment simply can't match. Talent management agencies, content production tools, audience analytics platforms, and monetization infrastructure each represent scalable businesses serving a market that grows more sophisticated by the quarter.

The math becomes compelling when you consider that top gaming creators generate revenue streams from multiple sources simultaneously: direct fan support, brand partnerships, merchandise, educational content, and platform revenue sharing. They've built diversified media businesses that traditional entertainment companies are still trying to figure out.

Mobile Disruption Hidden in Plain Sight

Console gaming dominates media coverage, but mobile devices actually lead game play consumption at 42%, with PC/laptop gaming at 34%. This mobile-first reality creates immediate competitive



When it comes to gaming and esports, we are witnessing a clear democratization of content creation. Access to gaming content now faces very few barriers, which fosters a more sustainable relationship between creators and consumers.

advantages that most traditional entertainment investors are systematically undervaluing.

Mobile gaming delivers superior business fundamentals across every meaningful metric: lower customer acquisition costs, higher engagement frequency, and more diverse monetization options through in-app purchases, subscriptions, and integrated advertising. The research shows 63% of engaged users already spend money on gaming-related content, with 41% making in-game purchases and 40% buying downloadable content.

This spending behavior combined with mobile accessibility creates conditions for sustainable revenue growth that doesn't depend on expensive hardware adoption cycles or seasonal content drops. Players engage daily, spend incrementally, and maintain consistent consumption patterns that generate predictable revenue streams.

The infrastructure requirements favor agile companies over established entertainment giants. While traditional media companies struggle with expensive content production and complex distribution deals, mobile gaming companies can iterate rapidly, test new monetization approaches, and scale successful concepts globally within months rather than years.

The Age Arbitrage Opportunity

The demographic data reveals something counterintuitive that sophisticated investors should recognize immediately. While esports engagement skews younger—74% of teens familiar versus 52% of adults—the absolute engagement numbers show mainstream penetration that extends far beyond youth demographics.

67% of Americans played video games in the past year. 44% consumed esports-related content. These numbers represent market penetration comparable to major entertainment categories that command billions in institutional investment capital.

More significantly, teens demonstrate dramatically higher optimism about gaming's technological evolution:

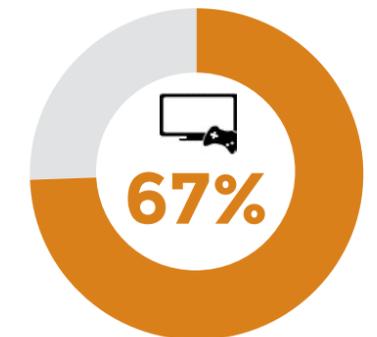


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Esports Familiarity & Engagement

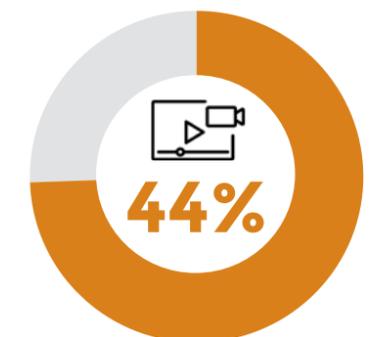
REGENCY OF PLAYING

Played video games in the past year



REGENCY OF WATCHING

Watched esports-related content in the past year



89% expect increased AI integration, 90% anticipate better graphics and realism, 80% foresee more immersive experiences. This generational enthusiasm doesn't represent speculation about future possibilities—it represents informed consumer demand driving inevitable technological advancement.

“The age distribution patterns we're seeing mirror the early adoption curves of every major technological shift,” Allsopp observes. “Younger demographics drive initial adoption and innovation expectations, then usage patterns migrate up through older age groups as the technology matures and becomes more accessible.”

Smart investors recognize this as a classic technology adoption curve with predictable expansion patterns. The market isn't limited to current participants—it's expanding as technological barriers decrease and social acceptance increases.

The Casual Revenue Paradox

Tournament prize pools and professional team valuations capture media attention, but the research points toward a more substantial and stable opportunity: infrastructure serving casual and hobbyist players.

Most players identify as casual (60%) or hobbyists (21%) rather than competitive gamers. They represent recurring revenue bases that operate independently of tournament

outcomes, professional player performances, or competitive season cycles.

This creates investment opportunities in hardware and accessories, streaming technology, content creation tools, community platforms, and educational resources. Each serves the massive casual market that generates consistent revenue without requiring blockbuster tournament viewership or professional league success.

The casual market also demonstrates price sensitivity that signals sophisticated consumer behavior rather than market weakness. When 40% of players cite expensive gaming equipment as their primary complaint, they're not rejecting the market—they're demanding better value propositions.

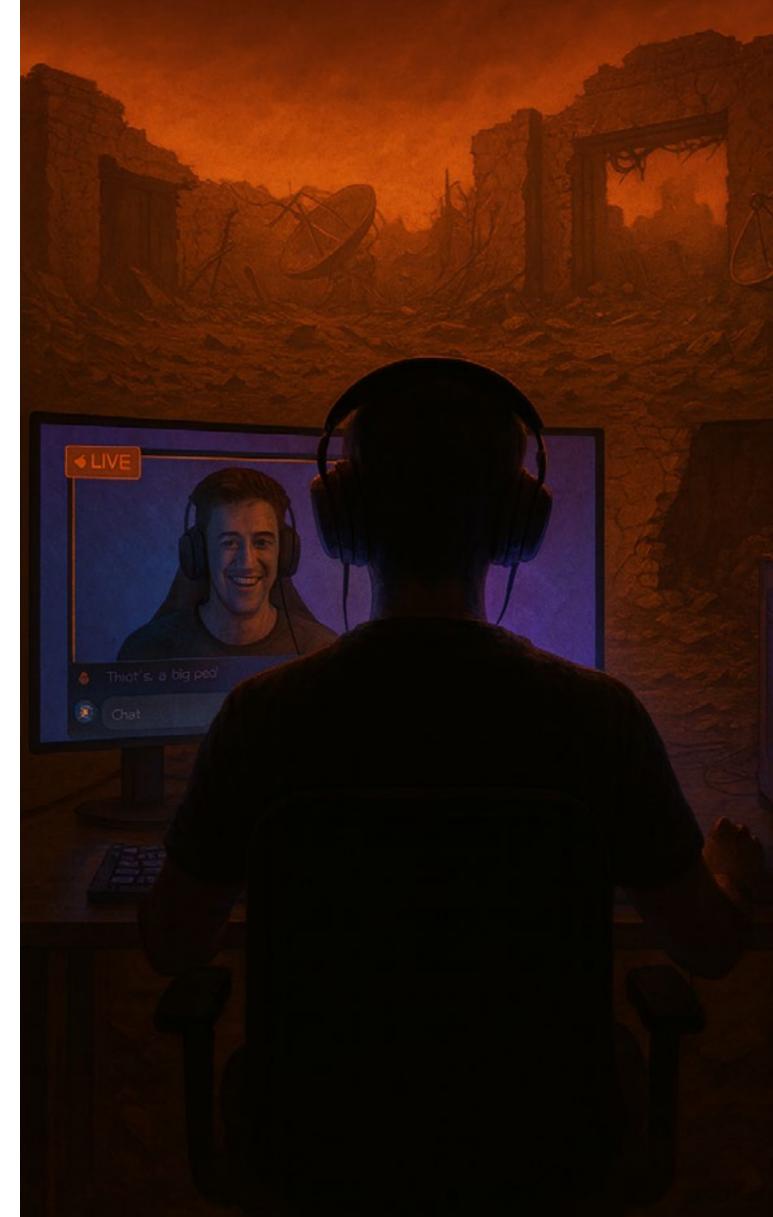
“Cost consciousness indicates market maturity, not market resistance,” Allsopp explains. “These consumers understand the value equation well enough to make informed purchasing decisions. That creates sustainable opportunities for companies that can deliver premium experiences at accessible price points.”

The Content Attribution Challenge

The research exposes a critical insight that separates successful gaming investments from expensive mistakes. Content appeal drives engagement decisions far more than platform features or competitive elements. 51% of lapsed viewers cite unappealing content



Cost consciousness indicates market maturity, not market resistance. These consumers understand the value equation well enough to make informed purchasing decisions. That creates sustainable opportunities for companies that can deliver premium experiences at accessible price points.



as their primary disengagement reason, while 48% simply moved to other entertainment options.

This content-centricity creates both challenges and opportunities that differ fundamentally from traditional media dynamics. Gaming content success depends on authenticity, community engagement, and real-time responsiveness rather than production values, star power, or marketing budgets.

Traditional media companies possess content creation capabilities and distribution resources, but they compete against individual creators who maintain direct audience relationships and can

pivot instantly based on community feedback. The winning approaches combine corporate infrastructure advantages with creator authenticity and operational agility.

Investment opportunities emerge in hybrid models: backing individual creators with production resources and distribution support while preserving their creative independence. This approach leverages corporate operational efficiency with creator community connection—exactly the combination that traditional entertainment companies struggle to achieve internally.

The Perception Gap Arbitrage

Perhaps the most compelling investment thesis emerges from persistent market misperceptions that create systematic undervaluation opportunities. When 53% of Americans still view esports as less popular than traditional sports, it suggests that many are relying on comparison frameworks that may not fully capture the unique ways in which esports generates value.

Traditional sports operate on scarcity models: limited games, restricted access, seasonal schedules. Gaming operates on abundance models: constant availability, global access, year-round engagement. To compare them can be counterproductive for understanding gaming's actual business advantages.

This misunderstanding creates arbitrage opportunities for investors who recognize that gaming doesn't need to surpass traditional sports popularity to generate exceptional returns. It just needs to optimize its unique engagement and monetization advantages, which the research demonstrates it's already accomplishing.

The infrastructure exists, the audience engages consistently, and revenue streams continue diversifying. Traditional sports comparison frameworks miss these fundamentals entirely,

creating systematic undervaluation that sophisticated investors can exploit.

The Network Effect Endgame

The most compelling aspect of the ESTA and Angus Reid Group research isn't what it reveals about gaming's current state—it's what it suggests about gaming's inevitable evolution. High retention rates, mobile-first consumption, creator-driven content, and casual participant engagement all point toward network effects that strengthen rather than weaken over time.

As more creators build sustainable businesses, platform infrastructure improves to serve them better. As more casual players engage regularly, hardware and software companies develop more accessible solutions. As more viewers consume creator content, advertising and sponsorship opportunities become more sophisticated and targeted.

"Our research reveals a highly promising landscape for gaming and esports," Allsopp concludes. "Every

component, from creators to players to viewers, shows enduring strength. They are not going away anytime soon; they are here to stay."

For investors who can recognize mature market dynamics disguised as emerging market speculation, gaming represents exactly the opportunity that generates sustainable returns: proven demand, diversified revenue streams, operational efficiency advantages, and network effects that compound over time.

The question isn't whether gaming represents a legitimate investment opportunity. The research settles that debate. The question is whether institutional investors can overcome their own perception limitations quickly enough to capitalize on an industry that's already moved beyond proving itself to optimizing its profitability.

Smart money doesn't wait for consensus validation. It recognizes value creation before it becomes obvious to everyone else. Gaming just handed sophisticated investors exactly that opportunity.



esports
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From tournament floor to boardroom, the esports industry needs leaders who understand every angle of the business. In 2025, we're launching something unprecedented with ESTA: the first comprehensive digital education platform built specifically for esports business professionals.

Underwritten by EventPipe, the industry leader in the event fan accommodations space, Esports Academy delivers Fortune 500-caliber education with the flexibility today's professionals demand. This isn't just another online course—it's a complete professional development ecosystem, featuring:

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EventPipe's commitment to innovation in esports extends beyond powering the world's largest tournaments. As the founding underwriter of the Esports Academy they're investing in the future of the industry by making professional education accessible to everyone—from curious newcomers to seasoned veterans.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Coaching Meets Code

How Omnic.AI Is Bringing AI-Powered Training to Every Player

CEO Shubber Ali on democratizing high-performance esports coaching through game analysis and personalized insights.



play to help incredible kids.



scan to learn more about how you can play games and make life better for children



From casual players to varsity teams, performance in esports is increasingly defined by more than just instinct—it's about insight. At the forefront of this evolution is Omnic.AI, a coaching platform born out of MIT that uses AI to analyze gameplay and deliver tailored feedback. With a mission to democratize high-level coaching, CEO Shubber Ali is leading a team that's transforming how players improve, compete, and connect with the games they love. In this spotlight, Ali shares how Omnic.AI is building the next generation of esports intelligence.

How is Omnic.AI redefining esports coaching through AI technology?

We built Omnic to bring elite-level coaching to every player. Whether you're a solo competitor or part of a varsity program, our AI watches your gameplay—via Twitch, YouTube, or direct uploads—and delivers personalized insights and strategy breakdowns. We support titles like Valorant, Overwatch 2, Rocket League, and more. At its core, Omnic is about empowering players and coaches to level up faster with smart, scalable feedback tools.

What innovations set Omnic Forge apart from other esports performance tools?

Omnic Forge doesn't just analyze highlights—it watches the entire game at a hyper-detailed level. Our AI captures every pixel of every frame and detects patterns the human eye often misses, like micro-adjustments

in crosshair placement, reaction time inconsistencies, or gaps in map control. It provides round-by-round breakdowns, post-match performance summaries, and over 500,000 insights delivered to date.

But what truly sets us apart is the ability to interact with the data. With "Ask Forge," users can ask open-ended questions—like "Why did I lose this engagement?" or "What's my average time to target acquisition?"—and receive responses powered by AI trained specifically for each title. It's not just a dashboard—it's a digital assistant coach that speaks the player's language, turning raw data into actionable understanding.

How do you evolve your product to meet industry needs?

Feedback from our 12,000+ users drives everything. We release new game support every 8-12 weeks, each one requiring dedicated AI model

training. We're also running live Game Nights—online and in person at our HQ in Maine—where players test features, win prizes, and shape development with real-time feedback.

What breakthrough are you most excited about right now?

"Ask Forge" is a game-changer. By combining conversational AI with deep performance data, we're creating a 24/7 coach that's accessible to anyone, anywhere. It's a huge step toward leveling the playing field in esports training.

How has being part of the Esports Trade Association supported your mission?

It's helped us build meaningful partnerships and stay connected to where the industry is headed. The exchange of ideas and access to forward-thinking peers has been invaluable as we scale.



THE WINTER PARADOX

How Esports' Worst Crisis May Become Its Best Opportunity

As venture capital fled and marketing budgets disappeared, a new class of investors quietly positioned for the next boom—and they're betting on everything the last bubble got wrong.

By Gregory Smith

The wreckage from esports' latest financial collapse is still smoldering. FTX's \$210 million naming rights deal with TSM evaporated alongside

Sam Bankman-Fried's empire. Activision Blizzard gutted the Overwatch League's city-based franchise model, leaving investors holding worthless territorial rights. Even Guild Esports, the David Beckham-backed organization that went public at a £40 million valuation, saw its stock crater 98% before warning shareholders it had only £25,000 left in the bank.

Yet at a Dallas convention center—during the EsportsNext Conference—five industry veterans are talking like they've just discovered oil.

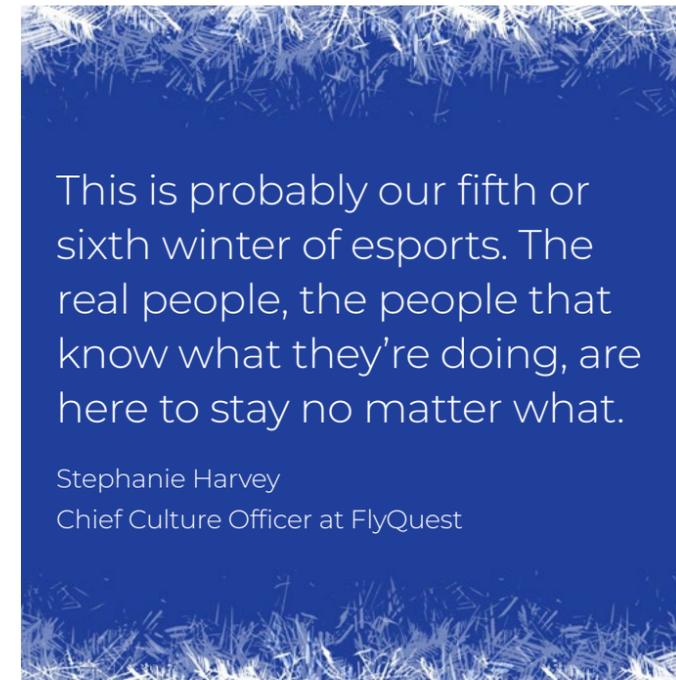
"This is probably our fifth or sixth winter of esports," says Stephanie Harvey, Chief Culture Officer at FlyQuest and a 23-year industry veteran who won Counter-Strike championships when prize pools barely covered gas money. "The real people, the people that know what they're doing, are here to stay no matter what."

This isn't survivor's bias speaking—it's pattern recognition from operators who've weathered multiple hype cycles. And their consensus is striking: the current downturn isn't destroying esports' business model. It's finally revealing what that model actually is.

The \$50 Billion Bet Gone Wrong

To understand where esports investment went sideways, consider the math that seduced Silicon Valley. Global gaming revenue hit \$184 billion in 2023, dwarfing Hollywood (\$32 billion) and music (\$26 billion) combined. Esports viewership reached 540 million people—larger than the Super Bowl's global audience. Demographics skewed young, male, and affluent: exactly what advertisers craved.

The logical play seemed obvious: replicate traditional sports' franchise model, complete with geographic territories, media rights packages, and celebrity ownership. Robert Kraft bought Boston Uprising for a reported \$35 million. Steve Aoki invested in Rogue. Shaquille O'Neal backed NRG Esports.



"Everyone was trying to mimic traditional sports," explains Nicolas Estrup, SVP of Product Development at ESL FACEIT Group, who helped build Astralis during Counter-Strike's first major investment wave. "The pros, the cons of that, and that's what we maybe see in the back end of now—everyone seeing that might not have been the winning formula."

The fundamental error was assuming esports consumption patterns would mirror traditional sports. Instead, esports audiences proved radically different: global rather than geographic, platform-agnostic rather than broadcast-loyal, and creator-driven rather than franchise-focused.

When Ludwig's Chessboxing Championship drew 317,000 peak viewers—more than most professional esports tournaments—or when individual Twitch streamers consistently pulled larger audiences than organized leagues, the writing appeared on the wall in 12-point Helvetica. The franchise model was fundamentally broken: audiences followed creators, not teams, and viewership flowed to authentic personalities rather than corporate-backed organizations.

The Infrastructure Inversion

While venture capital chased franchise valuations, the most sustainable programs quietly inverted the traditional sports model. Instead of building expensive superstructures and hoping audiences would follow, they focused obsessively on game quality and let ecosystems develop organically.

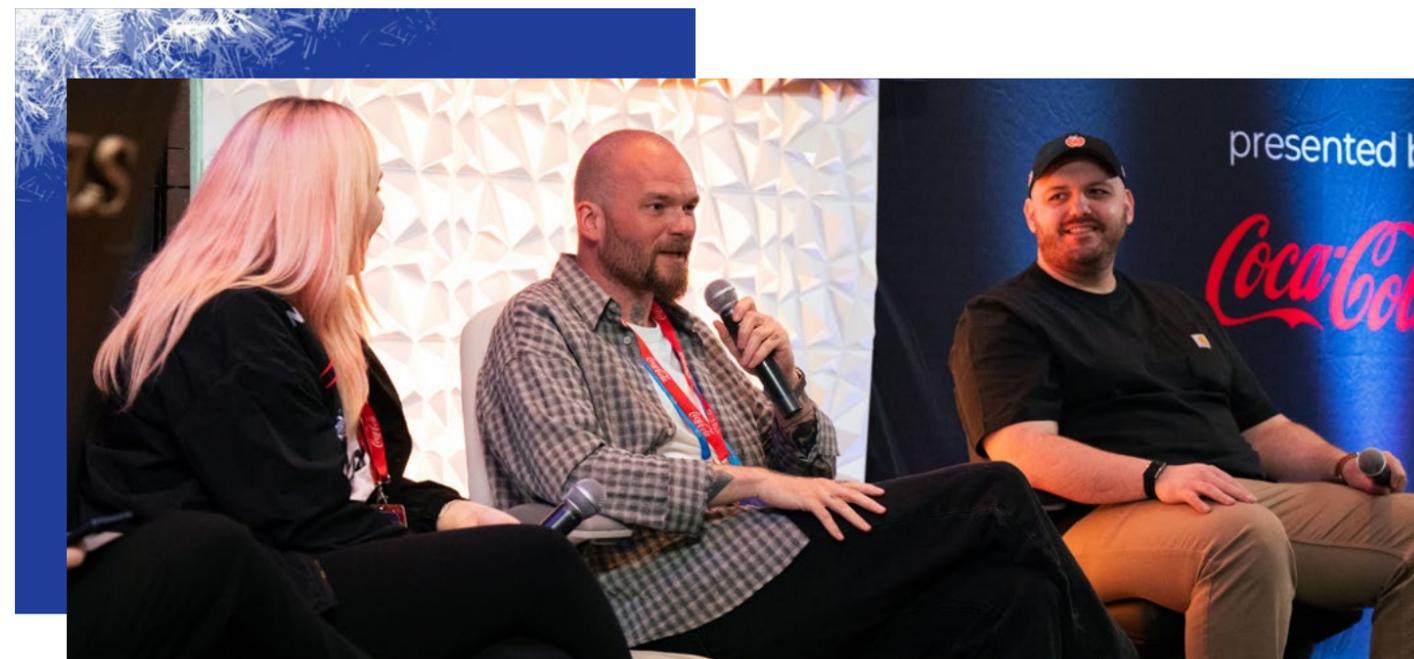
"It all centers around the game," explains Tahir Hasangjekaj, Director of Competitive Engagement at Halo Studios. When Microsoft launched Halo Infinite, they made a deliberate anti-franchise bet: competitive gameplay settings on day one, team skins integrated from launch, spectator modes ready, ranked playlists active. The ecosystem came second—the game came first.

This approach sidesteps esports' core economic problem: unlike traditional sports, where the sport itself is free and leagues monetize access, esports sits on top of commercial products owned by third parties. Publishers control everything—game balance, tournament formats, revenue sharing, even whether competitive modes exist at all.

"Game development is hard," Hasangjekaj notes. "It's getting more competitive, more expensive. The risks developers are willing to take are fewer and further between. If we get it wrong and have a dud of a game, it kills all the businesses around our game."

This dependency relationship explains why esports franchises never achieved the stability of NFL teams. The Cleveland Browns will exist regardless of whether football evolves. But Overwatch League franchises became worthless the moment Blizzard shifted focus to Overwatch 2.

Smart money is now betting on companies that align with publisher incentives rather than trying to extract value from them.



EsportsNext Panelists (from left to right) Stephanie Harvey, Nicolas Estrup, and Tahir Hasangjekaj discussing competitive blueprints for building tomorrow's esports ecosystem

The Creator Economy Collision

Nothing illustrates esports' identity crisis better than the current tension between traditional tournament organizers and content creators launching their own teams. MoistCr1TiKaL's organization lost \$4.2 million over four years, calling esports a "worse investment than Hawk Tuah coin." Shroud publicly discusses the financial black hole of team ownership. Yet their individual streams consistently outdraw professional tournaments.

"For too long we have tried to govern co-streaming a little bit too harshly," Estrup admits, describing the industry's traditional approach to creator content. "The downsides are just too great because we lose out on viewership, we lose out on community sentiment."

The math is unforgiving: traditional esports broadcasts require massive fixed costs—venue rentals, production crews, talent booking, marketing campaigns. A single major tournament can cost \$2-5 million to produce. Meanwhile, a top-tier streamer can generate comparable viewership from their bedroom with equipment worth less than a broadcast camera.

But here's where sophisticated investors see opportunity: the creator economy isn't replacing organized competition—it's unbundling it into more efficient components. Instead of monolithic tournaments, imagine distributed competitions where creators handle production and community engagement while centralized organizers focus on competitive integrity and prize distribution.

"There is no cookie cutter solution," warns Sean Charles, Director of Partnerships at Fissure and a veteran of multiple gaming companies. "The blueprint is being really in tune with your audience and being nimble enough to adapt."

This suggests the next wave of esports investment won't target traditional tournament organizers or team franchises. Instead, it'll flow toward infrastructure that serves the creator economy: automated tournament software, distributed streaming technology, creator-focused sponsorship platforms, and data analytics that help optimize engagement across fragmented audiences.

The Demographic Time Bomb

While traditional investors panic about declining viewership numbers, demographic data reveals a different story. Gen Alpha—kids born after 2012—represent the first generation to grow up with mobile gaming as their primary entertainment platform. They're also the first to view gaming content creation as a legitimate career path rather than an internet curiosity.

"Every single individual who has an app like Candy Crush is a gamer," Estrup observes. "That means we need to think outside the box if we don't want it to be this insular competitive ecosystem."

The implications are staggering. Traditional esports



(From left to right) Tahir Hasangjekaj and Sean Charles discussing competitive blueprints for building tomorrow's esports ecosystem at EsportsNext 2025 in Dallas, Texas.

focused on PC and console games with high skill barriers and expensive equipment requirements. But Gen Alpha's preferences skew toward accessible mobile titles with lower barriers to entry but massive scale potential.

Consider the numbers: PUBG Mobile has 1 billion registered users. Fortnite's most-watched tournament featured amateur players, not professionals. The highest-earning individual gamer of 2023 wasn't a professional player—it was a content creator who built audiences across multiple games simultaneously.

This shift represents a fundamental reframe of esports investment thesis. Instead of betting on professional leagues with limited addressable markets, smart money is positioning for participation-driven competitions where anyone can compete and audiences scale with accessibility rather than skill level.

The Authenticity Premium

Perhaps the most significant revelation from esports' financial winter is that audiences value authenticity

over production value. The most successful content creators aren't those with the highest budgets—they're those with the most genuine connections to their communities.

Harvey's approach at FlyQuest exemplifies this philosophy. Rather than chasing maximum short-term ROI, she's building what she calls "incubators"—programs designed to develop underrepresented talent that might never emerge through traditional competitive pathways.

"Us women in esports, we need these incubators," Harvey explains. "I like to say that the only reason I'm here on this stage is because I'm the most stubborn person."

This isn't charity—it's sophisticated market positioning. As gaming audiences become more diverse and global, organizations that successfully cultivate authentic relationships with underrepresented communities will have sustainable competitive advantages that can't be replicated through financial engineering alone.

The data supports this thesis: women represent 48% of mobile gamers globally, but less than 5% of professional esports competitors. Capturing even a fraction of this addressable market represents billions in untapped revenue.

The Anti-Fragile Bet

Warren Buffett's famous advice to "be fearful when others are greedy and greedy when others are fearful" seems purpose-built for esports' current moment. While venture capital retreats and marketing budgets evaporate, fundamental demand drivers remain intact: global gaming revenue continues growing, mobile penetration expands, and competitive gaming participation increases across all demographics.

The difference is that successful investors are now betting on businesses that benefit from volatility rather than being destroyed by it. Creator-focused platforms become more valuable as traditional

tournaments struggle. Accessible competition formats gain market share as expensive professional leagues contract. Publisher-aligned services prove more durable than franchise models built on licensing agreements.

"Competition and winning—it's just like sports," Harvey reflects. "Play is one of the purest forms of joy as humans. There's nothing more raw, passionate and real than playing."

This behavioral reality creates what Nassim Taleb would call an "anti-fragile" investment opportunity: a market where short-term chaos strengthens long-term fundamentals by eliminating unsustainable business models and revealing authentic value creation.

The current esports winter isn't ending the industry—it's graduating it. And the smart money isn't waiting for spring. It's planting seeds while the ground is still frozen, betting that when the thaw comes, they'll be the only ones ready to harvest.

ESPORTSNEXT

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WHO RULES THE ROOM

Senior executives, strategic investors, and industry decision-makers driving the future of competitive gaming.

WHAT SEPARATES CHAMPIONS

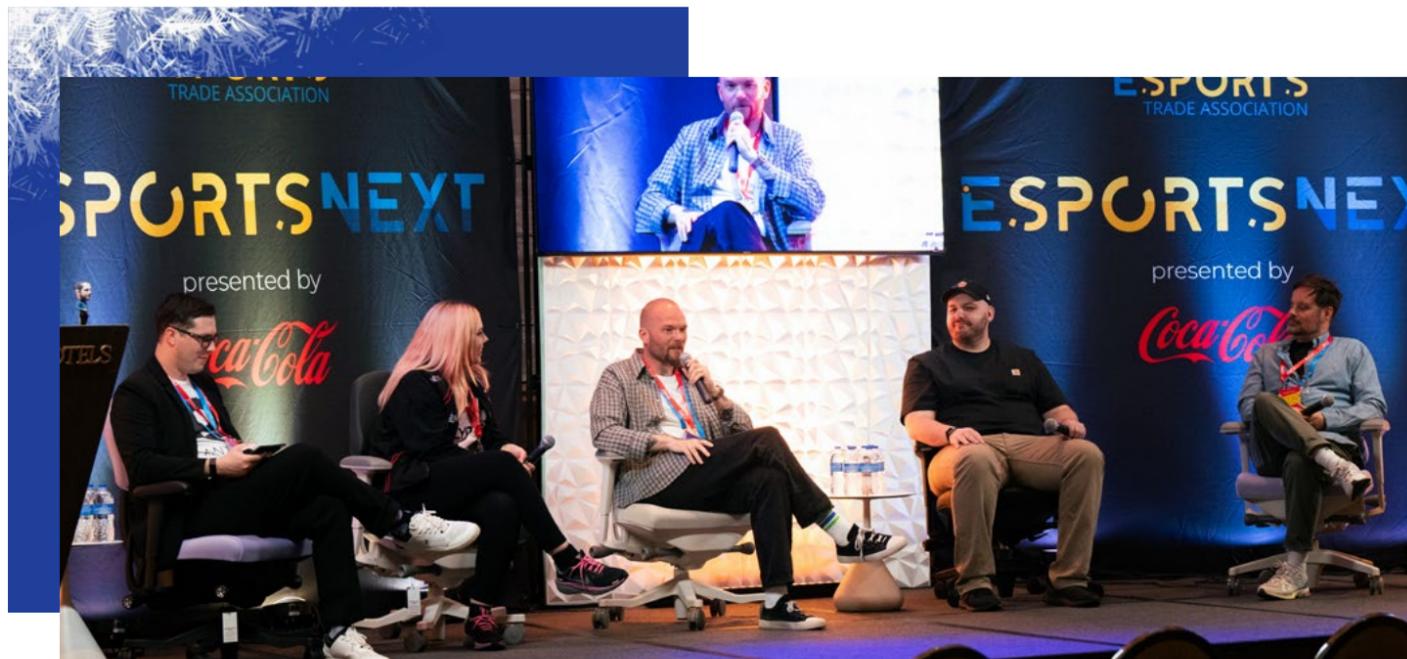
Keynotes from market leaders, executive panels revealing winning strategies, and strategic intelligence that crowns tomorrow's industry champions.

WHERE LEGENDS GATHER

Exclusive behind-the-scenes access to Dickies Arena, VIP networking at ESTA Industry Awards, and deal-making opportunities in esports' most elite setting.

THE ULTIMATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

EsportsNext partners exclusively with BLAST Premier Rivals Tournament. Master the business strategies that create champions, then witness those principles in action as eight elite teams battle for \$1M supremacy.



(From left to right) Jordan Trabue, Stephanie Harvey, Nicolas Estrup, Tahir Hasangiekaj, and Sean Charles discussing competitive blueprints for building tomorrow's esports ecosystem at EsportsNext 2025 in Dallas, Texas.



Do you have what it takes to rival the best?

Don't just attend a conference—experience the future of esports business.



Expanding the Field

How The University of Alabama Brings Esports into the Classroom

Assistant Professor Brandon Harris on bridging culture, media, and industry in esports education



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Educational Resources

Access webinars, industry reports, and member-only content to stay ahead of the curve in esports.



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Enjoy significant discounts on event registrations, certifications, and more as a member of ESTA.



Advocacy and Support

Actively shape the future of esports through advocacy, standards, and establishing best practices.

As esports continues to reshape digital culture, forward-thinking educators are embedding it into curriculum—not just as competition, but as a lens for understanding media, labor, and the creator economy. At the University of Alabama, Assistant Professor Brandon Harris is doing just that. From esports theory to platform studies, his work explores how gaming intersects with the future of media industries and student opportunity.

Can you introduce yourself and your role at the University of Alabama? How did you become involved with esports education?

I'm Brandon Harris, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Journalism and Creative Media at the University of Alabama. My background is in media studies, with a Ph.D. from the University of Oregon, and my research focuses on the creator economy, digital labor, and media production. I started incorporating gaming and esports into my teaching because it sits at the intersection of culture, media, and innovation. The energy and relevance of esports make it a compelling lens for students to engage with critical thinking and real-world applications.

What does your institution currently offer in terms of esports?

At University of Alabama, we're laying the groundwork for a broader esports presence. We have a vibrant esports

club and are currently building a dedicated arena on campus. On the academic side, I teach courses on gaming and esports through a media studies perspective—exploring everything from industry dynamics to cultural representation and societal issues within the space. Additionally, I serve on the board of the university's Beyond Sports Institute, which brings together researchers, educators, and industry professionals to tackle emerging challenges and opportunities in both traditional and digital sports.

How do you define success in esports education?

Success looks different for every institution, depending on resources and student needs. For me, the goal is to ensure esports isn't siloed but integrated into broader learning. It's not just about winning matches—it's about developing transferable skills in journalism, broadcasting, marketing,

and event production. A successful program helps students discover what they love, build tangible experience, and walk away with tools to pursue careers in digital media or the esports industry.

What benefits has your membership with the Esports Trade Association brought so far?

Even in a short time, the networking has been invaluable. Connecting with professionals across sectors helps bridge the gap between academia and industry. It's giving us a real-time understanding of where esports is heading and how we can align our curriculum to meet the future.

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THE PUBLISHER'S GAMBIT

How Riot Games Is Helping Teams Build Sponsor-Independent Revenue

Esports organizations have found a way to build sustainable income beyond traditional sponsors. The secret weapon? Sharing revenue from the games they already compete in.

By Gregory Smith

The warning signs were everywhere. TSM lost their \$210 million naming rights deal when FTX collapsed. Overwatch League franchises paid \$20 million for slots that never delivered promised revenue sharing. During the 2023 “esports winter,” organizations that appeared financially stable suddenly couldn’t make payroll when sponsor budgets evaporated.

The pattern revealed esports’ most dangerous vulnerability: entire business models built around sponsor relationships that could vanish without warning. While the industry scrambled for solutions, one company was already building them.

The \$33 Million Proof of Concept

In 2023, VALORANT teams earned over \$33 million from digital item sales through Riot’s revenue-sharing program. Each partner team averaged more than \$1 million—not from chasing sponsors or begging for brand deals, but from fans buying virtual gun skins.

The money came with a crucial difference: it was predictable, controllable, and directly tied to fan engagement rather than external economic conditions. When fans bought more team-branded items, teams made more money. When economic downturns hit traditional advertising markets, this revenue stream kept flowing.

Riot’s Global Revenue Pool model for League of Legends expands this approach with mathematical precision: 50% of in-game purchase revenue gets distributed equally among Tier 1 teams, 35% rewards competitive performance, and 15% goes to teams that build the strongest fan communities.

“We want to align the financial incentives between teams and leagues,” says John Needham, Riot’s President of Publishing & Esports. The alignment represents more than shared economics—it’s a fundamental solution to the sponsorship dependency trap that has plagued esports for over a decade.

Real-World Results

Sentinels provides concrete evidence that Riot's publisher-controlled revenue sharing actually works. The organization went from \$2.9 million in total revenue in 2023 to \$3.3 million in just the first six months of 2024, projecting profitability by 2025.

The key driver wasn't a massive sponsorship deal or viral marketing campaign. Sentinels achieved the number two position globally in Riot's team capsule sales, demonstrating fan engagement that translated directly to revenue through the publisher's sharing mechanism.

CEO Rob Moore revealed the strategic insight that makes this model so powerful: revenue-sharing success becomes proof of fan engagement for traditional sponsors. Strong in-game sales make it "easier to show a sponsor that we engage with our fan base, and here's what we were able to sell, and we can do the same thing for you and your brand."

Sentinels also expects to sell over \$1 million in merchandise in 2024, more than doubling their previous year's performance. Publisher revenue sharing creates momentum across all income streams because it demonstrates authentic community engagement rather than inflated reach metrics.

The organization's financial trajectory proves that publisher-controlled revenue sharing doesn't replace sponsorships—it provides the foundation that makes sponsorship negotiations sustainable rather than desperate.

Why Publisher Control Works

Riot's revenue-sharing model solves the fundamental misalignment that created esports' sponsorship dependency crisis. Under traditional models, teams competed against each other for finite advertising dollars from brands that could withdraw during economic downturns or strategy shifts.

Publisher-controlled revenue sharing aligns everyone's incentives around game success and fan engagement. When League of Legends grows more popular, everyone benefits proportionally. When teams build stronger communities, their revenue increases directly. When fans spend more on in-game items, teams share in that success.

The contrast with sponsorship dependence is stark. Teams can't control whether energy drink companies decide gaming audiences are worth premium advertising rates. They can't influence external economic conditions that affect marketing budgets. But they can absolutely influence their competitive performance, content quality, and fan engagement—the exact metrics that drive publisher revenue sharing.

This economic realignment explains why Riot has continued expanding revenue opportunities for teams. In June 2025, they opened betting sponsorships for Tier 1 League of Legends and VALORANT teams, backed by \$10.7 billion in betting turnover involving just their two games in 2024.

The betting sponsorship expansion demonstrates how publisher control enables strategic partnership development rather than desperate deal-making. Riot established extensive guardrails: vetting all potential betting partners, requiring teams to develop integrity programs, mandating the use of official data sources, and keeping betting advertisements off Riot-owned broadcasts.

Organizations with diversified revenue streams that include publisher sharing can afford to be selective about partnerships, establishing standards that protect long-term brand value rather than accepting any deal that offers immediate cash.

The Economics of Sustainability

Publisher-controlled revenue sharing creates sustainable economics because it connects team income to metrics organizations can actually influence while reducing dependence on external market conditions.

Consider the revenue stability comparison: sponsorship deals depend on advertiser marketing budgets, economic cycles, and brand strategy changes that teams cannot predict or control. Publisher revenue sharing scales with game popularity, competitive performance, and fan engagement—factors that successful teams can influence through their operations.

When economic downturns reduce sponsorship budgets, engaged fan communities often maintain or increase their spending on games and related content. When teams perform better competitively or create more compelling content, their share of publisher revenue increases proportionally.

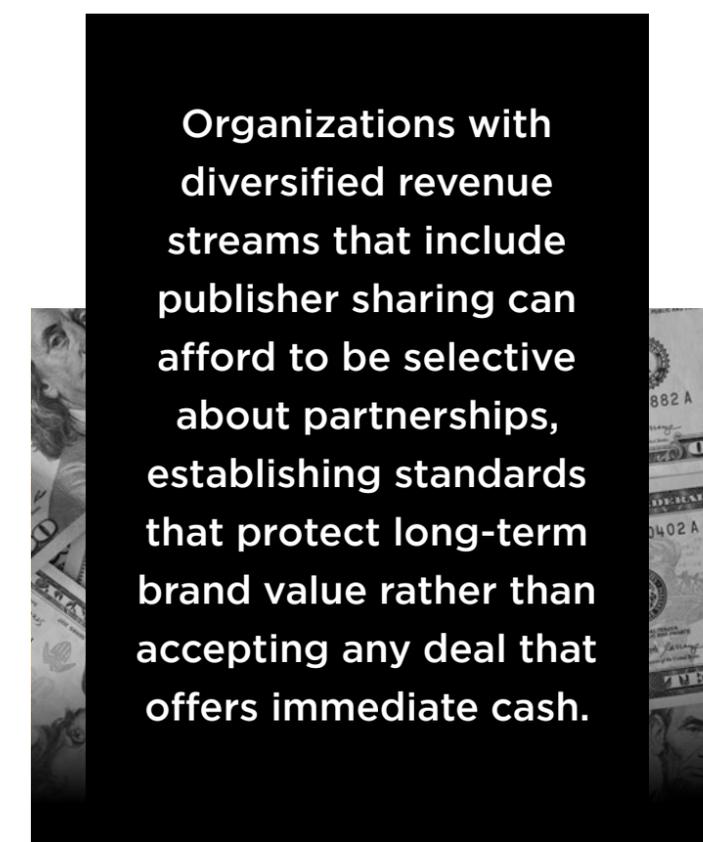
The sustainability equation works because it distributes income across multiple streams that respond to different pressures. Sentinels' projected path to profitability demonstrates this balance: publisher revenue sharing provides the foundation, merchandise sales add direct fan monetization, and sponsorships complement rather than comprise the entire business model.

The Industry Template

Riot's innovation provides a template that addresses the core vulnerability that has plagued esports since its inception. Organizations no longer need to bet their entire futures on external sponsor relationships that can disappear overnight due to circumstances beyond their control.



The organization's financial trajectory proves that publisher-controlled revenue sharing doesn't replace sponsorships—it provides the foundation that makes sponsorship negotiations sustainable rather than desperate



Organizations with diversified revenue streams that include publisher sharing can afford to be selective about partnerships, establishing standards that protect long-term brand value rather than accepting any deal that offers immediate cash.

The model works because publishers have the infrastructure, audience relationships, and economic incentives to create sustainable team revenue. Game companies benefit from healthier competitive ecosystems. Teams benefit from predictable income tied to controllable outcomes. Fans benefit from seeing their purchases directly support their favorite organizations.

Other publishers are watching Riot's success closely. The economic logic is compelling: why allow competitive ecosystems to collapse due to sponsor market fluctuations when publishers can create direct revenue-sharing relationships that align everyone's interests around game success?

The question facing the industry isn't whether other publishers will adopt similar models—it's how quickly they can develop the systems to implement them effectively.

Riot Games solved esports' most dangerous business model flaw by taking control of the revenue distribution mechanism. Instead of leaving teams entirely dependent on external economic conditions, they created direct financial relationships that reward the exact behaviors that make competitive gaming successful: strong performance, engaging content, and passionate fan communities.

The result isn't just more money for teams—it's the foundation for an industry that can survive economic downturns, sponsor market shifts, and the inevitable changes that come with any rapidly evolving sector. Publisher-controlled revenue sharing represents the difference between esports organizations that depend on external good fortune and organizations that control their own financial destinies.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Seating That Performs Under Pressure

How Anthros Is Redefining What It Means to Sit Like a Pro

Jordan Trabue on bringing real ergonomic innovation to the esports stage



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTHROS

Esports athletes push the limits of performance, but one major part of the setup has long gone unchallenged: the chair. Anthros is disrupting the gaming gear status quo by replacing race car-style seats with ergonomics backed by science. In this Q&A, Jordan Trabue, Head of Gaming & Partnerships, explains how the brand is leveling up posture, comfort, and player longevity—one tournament at a time.

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How does your brand engage with the esports community?

I lead Gaming & Partnerships at Anthros, an ergonomic chair company built for performance and long-term health. After nearly two decades in the industry, I joined Anthros to fix a problem I've seen everywhere: players stuck in race car-style chairs that actually hinder posture and performance.

We've partnered with top organizers and teams—ESL, DreamHack, Heretics—to ensure the biggest stages in esports are equipped with seating that reflects the professionalism and physical demands of the scene. We work closely with players, creators, and organizations to make sure their chairs support how they play, not just how they look.

How is Anthros shaping the future of the esports landscape?

We're leading a shift away from aesthetics-driven chairs and toward evidence-backed, performance-first seating. Our chair was co-designed with medical professionals and players, and we offer fully customizable back panels for team branding and creator identity.

Our initiatives include:

- Pro Team Partnerships – outfitting elite teams with our chair for practice and travel.
- On-Stage Integration – chairs featured across major ESL and DreamHack tournaments.
- Official Gaming Chair – recognized across the industry as the new standard for esports events.

Can you share a success story?

Our ESL Pro League debut in Sweden was a turning point. We watched pro players—like one from MOUZ—transform their posture instantly. No slouching. No awkward arm positioning. Just locked-in, aligned, and composed. Even in a studio setting, the shift was visible: sharper focus, better performance, and a clear boost in on-stage professionalism. It wasn't about looks—it was about how players felt.

What benefits has your membership with the Esports Trade Association brought so far?

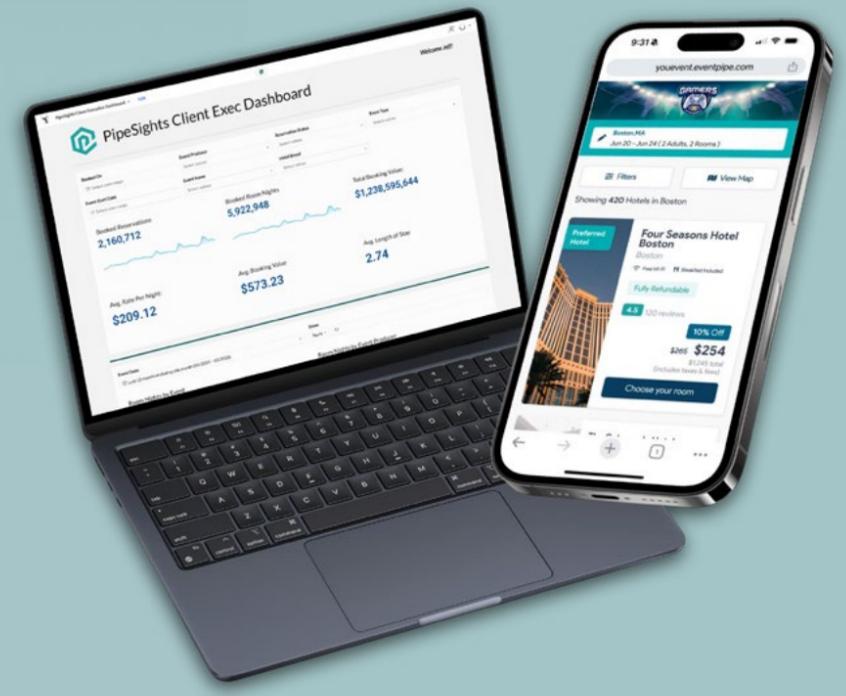
It's opened the door to real collaboration—especially between Megan and me—to connect with innovators across the industry who care about performance, health, and what's next.

ESPORTS' BEST-KEPT REVENUE SECRET

How smart organizers are turning hotel bookings into their next growth engine



“
Hospitality isn't just logistics—
it's your first impression.
Putting the Attendee Experience at the forefront means better margins for you.”



Picture the chaos: 5,000 esports fans descending on your city, scrambling for rooms on Booking.com at marked-up rates while your event sees zero commission. Meanwhile, your players are crashing in distant suburbs, families are bleeding cash on last-minute bookings, and sponsors are quietly questioning your operational maturity.

This isn't just bad logistics—it's leaving money on the table.

The Invisible Revenue Leak

While tournament organizers obsess over stream counts and ticket sales, they're hemorrhaging a revenue source that could fundamentally reshape their business model. Every attendee booking through third-party platforms represents lost commission and diminished control over their event experience.

Smart organizers have already cracked the code. By centralizing housing through platforms like EventPipe, they're not just solving logistics—they're building recurring revenue that scales with their growth.

Why Hotels Matter More Than You Think

Housing strategy isn't an operational afterthought; it's a competitive differentiator. Streamlined accommodations send a clear signal to sponsors about your professionalism, while centralized booking creates trust with teams and fans. Through bulk negotiations, you

secure better rates that improve attendee satisfaction. Most importantly, capturing commission revenue happens automatically without raising ticket prices.

The real advantage? This revenue grows with your event, not with your stress. As your tournament expands from regional to national to global, your housing revenue scales automatically—providing a reliable income stream that funds future growth without squeezing attendees through higher ticket prices.

The Compounding Effect

EventPipe's approach transforms a scattered, stressful process into a strategic advantage. Their live inventory platform handles the complexity while you focus on the competition. As your tournament grows, so does your housing revenue—automatically.

It's a service your customers didn't even know they needed, yet can't imagine living without once

implemented. While competitors wrestle with housing logistics as an afterthought, you're providing a premium experience that strengthens your brand.

While competitors wrestle with housing logistics as an afterthought, forward-thinking organizers are already banking consistent revenue from strategic lodging partnerships. The technology exists. The market demand is proven. The only question is who captures this advantage first.

Esports is growing—shouldn't your operations evolve with it? Lodging isn't just a service anymore. It's part of your brand experience, showing sponsors, partners, and participants that you're ready to scale.

The Bottom Line

Your tournament is already generating hotel demand. The question isn't whether this revenue exists—it's whether you'll claim it or let others profit from your hard work.

Transform your event's hidden revenue stream. See how EventPipe's platform turns lodging logistics into competitive advantage. Learn more at www.eventpipe.com
Advertorial provided by EventPipe

The Game-Changing Solution

EventPipe's live hotel inventory platform makes this transformation immediate and effortless. Launch custom-branded booking sites instantly—no lengthy contracts or commitments required. For events with existing hotel agreements, the platform extends your earning power beyond room block cut-offs, offering below-market rates while capturing every last-minute reservation from fans and guests.

The result? A seamless booking experience that strengthens your brand while building consistent revenue streams.

Where Esports Winners Separate

The next generation of successful esports organizations won't just run tournaments—they'll orchestrate full experiences where every touchpoint, from check-in to checkout, reinforces their brand promise.



THE ESPORTS
INDUSTRY MOVES FAST.
**BUT WITH THE RIGHT
RESEARCH PARTNER,
YOU CAN STAY AHEAD.**

Esports is evolving — and so is the way we study it.

The Beyond Sports Initiative at The University of Alabama

delivers research that goes beyond stats and screens, examining performance,
culture, and industry growth with academic precision and real-world impact.



Beyond Sports
Initiative

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