

The Esports Sponsorship Landscape

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Navigating the esports landscape can be a daunting task. For sponsors seeking to leverage this fast-growing category, there are many entry points and opportunities to connect with a devoted audience. Here is a primer on the esports ecosystem.

Leagues/Tournaments

Could be run directly by the **publisher** (i.e. Overwatch League), or could be third parties (i.e., ELeague).

- Pays licensing fees directly to **publishers** for rights to use and feature games.
- **Sponsors** must pay leagues to be featured as tournament sponsors, or oftentimes to license tournament footage.

Publishers

Game creators and rights holders to the games, and in-game content.

- **Sponsors** must pay publishers to be featured directly in games (which allow for such integration).

Sponsors

Sponsors have the ability to interact with every aspect of the esports landscape.

- Who a brand partners with and rights the sponsor will have.
- There is currently not one body, so each **league/tournament** has its own rules of play, and their relationships may vary.
- Sponsors should ensure that the rights they are intended to license are properly assigned to the rights holder.

Teams

A single organization may have several teams across different **tournaments**, with many **players**, playing different **games**.

- **Sponsors** may pay teams to be featured on player's jerseys, custom team content, or other similar sponsorships.
- If a **sponsor** wants to partner with a team but feature their gameplay, a pass through license with the **league/tournament** will be necessary.
- **Sponsors** may be able to use some group **player** name, image or likeness, but most often will require a separate player deal if featuring one player prominently.

Players

Many popular players are paid to join and share in the winnings of a **team**.

- Media platforms may pay players directly for the exclusive right to stream their non-competitive gameplay.
- **Sponsors** can partner with players directly, but similar to deals with traditional athletes, any commercial use of the player cannot integrate the player's team, league and, in this case, publisher/game which the player is affiliated with without further licenses from the aforementioned.

Media Platforms

Streaming services (i.e., Twitch and YouTube Gaming) are currently the biggest broadcast rights holders.

- Media platforms pay rights fees to the **leagues/tournaments** for the ability to stream contests, and oftentimes to the **publishers** for the right to use gameplay.
- **Sponsors** may purchase integrations into a streaming broadcast, but may not grant the sponsor rights to rebroadcast or distribute footage to the event, without further licenses from the **leagues/tournaments** and/or the publishers.

Integrate themselves in almost
landscape.

will dictate what licenses
have access and rights to.

major league or organizing
tournament, the games they
with the **publishers**

at they are receiving the
receive, and that no other
e negotiated with a separate