

5 Ways to Connect With Consumers in the Esports World

76% of fans prefer this over linear TV viewing

The human attention span is now eight seconds, less than that of a fish. Couple this with the rise of ad blockers and multiscreen viewing. How can brands possibly grab the attention of consumers in such a short window of time? One category is rife with marketing potential and built for these short attention span: esports.

By 2020 there will be 500 million esports fans worldwide, and 76 percent of esports enthusiasts say that their esports viewing is taking away from the time they used to watch traditional sports. More importantly, esports fans are consuming less linear television and sitting and watching sessions for an average of 90 minutes.

For a while, many non-endemic brands – brands not tied any specific performance or functionality in gaming – have rolled their eyes at the notion that esports had longevity and is a worthwhile investment. Now brands are starting to see a lift across the board in brand engagement over traditional sports in brand sentiment, consideration, purchase intent, purchase conversion, brand recommendation and brand loyalty.

If esports isn't part of your consideration set you're missing out. Here's how you can get in the game today.

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Be authentic

If you have heard anything about esports in the past year, it's "be authentic or they'll sniff you out." Authenticity actually avoids logo slapping and finds ways to contribute to the space. Enhance the fan experience and improve the landscape. Similar to the Boy Scout code of honor, "leave a place better than you found it." Brands should find a way to add value and make the experience better than if they hadn't been a part of it.

Twitch's director of global sponsorship and sales, Nathan Lindberg, has traditionally pointed to #ad as a badge of honor in esports and on Twitch. The reason we're seeing this trend is because esports fans

appreciate seeing brands actively involved with their favorite esports leagues, teams and players. They know it is vital to the success of the space they love.

The key is integrating your brand into how people communicate with each other, becoming part of the lexicon of their dialogue. Authenticity is really more about altruism and being there to bring valuable experiences and improvements.

Capitalize on real-time engagement

Brands need to be agile and able to capitalize when memes and cultural moments happen. Work with the team organization or publisher to get creative direction because they know their fans. If there is something you can create in the moment, esports fans will go nuts spreading the content. Mercedes Benz did a great job of this through their ESL and Dota2 Finals partnership. Their slogan was “Nearly as amazing as the new Mercedes-Benz E-Class Sedan,” which came from a spur of the moment plug from an announcer. Reddit had a field day making tongue-in-cheek posts teasing Mercedes for the campaign, but Mercedes proved they belonged in the space, posting a humorous response in reply to the comments. The key: Mercedes trusted its partner, ESL and was able to turn a potential PR crisis into a huge win and acceptance among the community.

Make them laugh

To reach a fickle audience adverse to traditional ads, get creative. Spots are supplemental, but an entire campaign is not. Slapping a logo on a stream is only a support element to a campaign. Figure out what is important to esports fans. They want to be part of a community, connect with friends, get closer to their favorite players and improve their skills at their game. They also love to laugh. How can you as a brand make that possible for them while staying true to your brand?

Don't be intrusive

Brands must find a way to be the hero rather than the villain. As consumers, we are so accustomed to brands getting in the way of our content, but in gaming and esports, brands have the opportunity to add value and enhance the UX. Advertising doesn't have to be a toll booth. The most successful brands find ways to provide discounts/free items, create exclusive content to bring fans closer to teams and participate in the conversation with fans.

Activision Blizzard (creator of Candy Crush) built a way for advertising to be inherently positive, something that consumers actually want to engage. They recently did a study with iMotions to look at the difference in cognitive response between a user when looking at an ad on popular social media and



video streaming apps in comparison to Candy Crush. When it came to exposure performance and neurological and biometric metrics, ads on Candy Crush performed higher in ad recall, correct message association, emotional arousal and approach motivation than the social media and video streaming apps across the board.

Elevate your game

When it comes to marketing in esports, building a relationship between brands and consumers by providing value to the community is paramount. If your marketing mix in esports does not provide steps for you to have an authentic voice adding value, then it does not matter how many CTRs, impressions or views of content you have. You become an accepted member of the community and the metrics like brand awareness, engagement, loyalty and sales will follow.

By Chad De Luca, Head of Gaming & Esports