

# IDEAS. WORK. RESULTS.

Strategic Insights On:

## **Sports Marketing**

1485 International Parkway | Third Floor | Heathrow, FL 32746 | (407) 302-4416

orlando+tallahassee+memphis+los angeles



# Sports Marketing

Sports marketing is a true team effort. Yes, sports are a passion – it's fun – it's exciting, but when clients turn to us, it's because they realize it's a business. And, the business of sports can include professional athlete branding, increased ticket sales, merchandising, grants to support travel and tourism and a host of other related opportunities, strategies and tactics.

We hope you enjoy this content and evok's commitment to the sports industry. If you would ever like to be a guest writer or suggest blogs for us to write, please contact us at [info@evokad.com](mailto:info@evokad.com).





## ADVERTISEMENTS SCORE BIG WITH SOCCER FANS

### Advertising Globally and Locally During the Games

Many here in the states like to call it the Super Bowl of Soccer, but with over 3 billion viewers in 2014 against the Super Bowl's comparatively paltry 112 million that same year, the World Cup is definitely in a league of its own. And if we think Super Bowl advertising is a big deal, imagine how big of a deal a 30-second spot reaching nearly half of the world's population is.

Sports advertising is and has always been where some of our most iconic, conversation-starting and unforgettable ads emerge. Every four years, advertisers scramble to find ways to reach the billions of global soccer fans—or just how to market their sports bar as the place for local fans to gather for the Cup.

### Big Spending, Big Results

We can't expect the opportunity to reach 3 billion to come with a small price tag. The last World Cup in 2014 showed us just how hefty of a price tag you can put on the captive attention of billions of soccer fans: brands shelled out a total of \$600 million to be Cup sponsors on Brazil's premiere TV network. A 30-second spot was projected to cost \$260,000 to \$570,000 depending on game outcomes and the popularity of certain matches, which is a steal compared to the \$5 million you'd drop to air the same spot during the last Super Bowl.

Winning and happy teams mean winning, happy and apparently spending-happy fans. One day after Germany's big win in 2014, the proud home country saw a 74% increase in online shopping transactions. When your target consumers are spending up a storm, it's a wise investment to make sure that your brand was one that they saw before the winning goal.

### For Local Crowds and Smaller Budgets

Maybe your brand isn't ready to dedicate half a million in advertising to a single spot. Maybe you're just hoping to sell a few more drinks during the World Cup run. There's a million reasons why you may be looking for World Cup marketing ideas on a smaller level. Sales promotions during the Cup are a great way to drive traffic to your store, restaurant or website in the afterglow of big wins. Your consumers are already ecstatic that the U.S. men's national soccer team won, and they'll be even happier to get a free appetizer, free shipping or whatever fan promo you're running after the game.

Whether your brand is looking to reach around the globe or just across the street, the World Cup is an advertising opportunity that can't be missed. And it's never too early to start thinking about 2022!





# HOW BRANDS AND TEAMS BOTH BENEFIT FROM AD PARTNERSHIPS

## Brands and Sports Teams Can Score Big Points Together

Your brand and your favorite sports team have a lot in common. Your office may not look like their baseball diamond or stadium, and their uniforms may not fit within your day-to-day dress code, but you're not as different as you think. At the end of the day, you both have a common goal: to reach as many people as you can.

Your brand knows that what it stands for is worth being heard and that viewers and listeners will be happy they found it. On the other hand, your token team believes in the power of its sport and the quality of their players so strongly that they know that spreading their name is the best way to bring the joy of what they do to the world. And a powerful game plan can tie these two together and score big points for both your brand and a sports team.

## Perfectly Complementary

Some of the most iconic ad campaigns have brought together heavy hitters from the sports and advertising world to create unforgettable content together. There's a reason why brands and teams have been close friends for so long. Where other forms of brand marketing fail, sports partnerships excel.

Take, for example, the issue of demographics. Massive brands want to reach everyone. However, that's much easier said than done. These big brands' marketers must find ways to appeal to broad and niche markets simultaneously. With 63% of Americans saying they're active sports fans, teams provide a clear path to reaching a massive audience. It then becomes important to recognize that, while most Americans identify as sports fans, they're watching a wide variety of sports.

What sport do you think is playing in most American homes on a given day? It's a trick question. There's no single sport that the majority of sports fans claim as their favorite sport to watch. The most popular, American football, is only named by 37% of sports fans as their favorite sport to watch. Basketball is a distant second in the popularity contest, followed by baseball, auto racing and figure skating.

Even without a degree in statistics, it's fair to say that the Venn diagram of football viewers and figure skating fanatics doesn't have a lot of overlap. That's where ad partnerships between brands and teams shine. Big brands want to reach football and skating viewers alike, while teams love the platform brand partnerships give them to pitch the joy of football to a skating fan who's not quite sure what a first down even means. A branded championship can give resources to reach a much larger audience and with that the chance to create new fans.

## Big Events, Bigger Numbers

Brands and teams love dedicated fans that tune in regularly to watch their favorites take home a W, but there's another huge market out there in sports: big championship viewers. Huge events such as the Olympics, World Cup and more earn astronomically high ratings and can be a dream for both parties in an advertising partnership.



With the 2018 World Cup around the corner, brands are clamoring to be a part of the action. In 2014, the competition amassed over 3 billion viewers worldwide. With massive events like this, brands have the opportunity to reach about half of all global humans, and in return, provide financial resources to make these events possible.

Next time you're watching your favorite team (from the grandstands or your not-so-grand living room), take a second to evaluate their partnership potential for your brand. You may be missing out on a great new opportunity.





# HOW TO KEEP FANS CHEERING FOR YOUR TEAM DURING THE OFF SEASON

## Online and Offline Tactics to Connect with Sports Fans Year-Round

The champions have been named, MVPs have been chosen and the stands are starting to clear out. But the sound of the season's final buzzer shouldn't shut down your team's marketing efforts. In fact, the off season is one of the most important times to stay in touch to your fan base and community.

Keeping the connection between your team and its fans after the excitement of the season helps ensure your team has a seat at the table the following year. That is, engaging fans keeps your team top of mind with them, so when it's time to promote ticket and merchandise sales, you've already earned that prime real estate in their disposable income consideration set.

Whether your season is still in full swing or you're coming up on the end of it, keep reading for our insights into off-season marketing for sports teams, both online and off.

## Reaching Fans Online

### Keep Your Social Presence Alive

It's easy to let your team's social channels go dark for the off season. With no upcoming games, scores to report or player updates to share, why keep those channels going while you and your players enjoy some much needed time off? The answer shouldn't surprise you—sports marketing is a year-round job and your efforts during the off season can reflect in your game attendance, fan engagement and even media coverage once your season kicks off.

### Create Off-Season Specific Content

On the note of keeping your social channels updated, it's not enough to publish a Facebook post or tweet a few times each week. You need to give fans a reason to check in with your social feeds when your next game isn't for months. That means creating content that excites and engages even when the stands are empty. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Create an "A Day in the Life" video.** Vlogs, or video blogs, have racked up millions of views on YouTube and other platforms. Get in on that action by having one of your players document their day "vlog style" and take fans along for the ride, then publish your video across your social feeds. Even if their day seems routine, filled with errands and lounging on the couch, fans are likely to appreciate a peek into your player's daily life.
- **Host a Twitter chat.** Start a real-time conversation between your fans and your team using hashtags and invite your audiences to join at a certain time each week. You can structure your chat as a live Q&A, ask a question yourself to get the conversation flowing or simply open up the floor for discussion. With weekly content to look forward to, these chats help fans stay engaged and connected with your team.



- **Find and reward your biggest fans.** Social media, alongside dedicated microsites or applications, make for an ideal platform to host large scale contests and sweepstakes. Put the power of these channels to work for you in finding your team's biggest fan. Kick off your contest by asking for video submissions or stories from your fan base, then open up the entries for voters to choose their favorite. Whether your grand prize is a family pack of season passes or lunch with the team, a contest of this size can get the whole community talking about your team during the off season, both online and off.

## Connecting in the Community

### Host Events and Invite Your Players

In-person events aren't reserved for appearances leading up to a big game. The off season presents prime opportunities to get quality face-to-face time with fans in your community or even nationwide. From fundraisers to block parties, sharing real-world experiences with fans and their friends and families earns your team a special place in their hearts and minds. That means when the season picks back up, you'll have an engaged fan base ready to cheer you on from the stands.

Not sure where to start? Plan the following events within your community:

- **Visit schools and your team's youngest fans.** From classroom visits on career day to shaking hands with the next generation of great athletes at a pep rally, students are a widespread and powerful part of your fan base. Even if the kids themselves haven't quite jumped on your team's bandwagon, it's likely their parents or teachers are fans and get almost as excited as the little ones about your visit.
- **Open practices up to fans.** Once training starts for the new season, invite your fans to join your players for a behind-the-scenes look at what goes into prepping for upcoming games. Arrange meet-and-greet times with players and park a food truck or two outside the gates to make for an all-day event fans will line up for.
- **Raise money for a good cause.** Whether it's helping a junior team make it to regionals or running a 5k to fundraise for a specific cause, your team has the opportunity and ability to make a big impact within your community. The off season, with fewer practices and no games to train for, is the perfect time to give back to those who give your team so much.

Looking for more sports marketing insights? Check out our guide to marketing your upcoming event or game and find out how augmented reality is playing a part in the sports fan experience. And, as always, our sports marketing team is here to help if you need a bit of help devising a winning strategy for your team or brand.





# HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT INFLUENCERS FOR YOUR SPORTS BRANDS

---

## Expand Your Brand's Reach with Influencer Marketing

When it comes to sports marketing, today's consumers are looking for brands to be real and relatable. Although A-list celebrities or Olympic gold medalists promoting your sports gear may prove highly effective in some formats—think Nike's KD 9 TV spot featuring Kevin Durant—on lifestyle-focused mediums, like social media, non-celebrity influencers take the lead by leveling the playing field to match your brand's target audiences.

These social media influencers typically have a large audience on several different platforms. Their followers see them as an authentic and trustworthy source of info, particularly when it comes to product recommendations. Because they are not professional athletes or movie stars, these influencers are “just like you,” making their feedback and support all the more impactful as 70 percent of people trust other consumers over branded messaging.

## Start with a Social Search

Research is the first step to any successful marketing effort. Connecting with the right influencers means you'll have to scour social media platforms to identify those whose message and follower base would be a good fit for your sports brand. On Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, you can see who's talking about your brand or related terms using hashtag searches.

Remember, numbers aren't everything. Your influencers don't need to have millions of followers—look for someone creating great, engaging content.

## Focus on Transparency and Relevance

With the goal of influencer marketing being to have real users of your product or brand showcase its benefits, transparency is key when finding the right sports influencer. You'll want to confirm each influencer's content is aligned with what your brand represents, ensuring your message will be relevant to their audiences—something they'd naturally expect to see on that influencer's feed.

## Look Beyond Your Target Audience

Real-time analytics on social media means you can stay on top of trends from the moment they emerge. So, if mommy bloggers are raving about your games as a great way to keep the kids entertained, this could be an opportunity to expand your audience and reach new demographics with your messaging. Taking a risk on influencers outside your target audience already engaged with your brand could open the doors to an entirely new fan base.

Influencer marketing has become a powerful marketing strategy for brands to attract customers. When approached deliberately and carefully, it has huge potential to deliver lasting results.





# ONLINE AND OFFLINE TACTICS TO MARKET YOUR UPCOMING SPORTS EVENT

## How to Engage Fans Online and Off

Whether you're getting ready to kick off your season or the biggest game of your team's career is just around the corner, your players want to be able to draw energy from a crowd of cheering fans. But, selling out the stands can often be easier said than done, especially for smaller, local teams.

To get your team the engaged fan base it deserves, you'll need to put in some work both online and off. Here are six strategies to put in your starting lineup for marketing your sports events.

## Online Strategies to Boost Attendance

### Reach Fans in Their Inbox

To generate excitement around your team's upcoming game or season, create and launch an email marketing campaign that brings your event's details right to your fans' inbox. From special, email-only ticket offers to reminders leading up to the big day, you can structure your email campaign to keep your team top of mind with the people you want to see on the stands.

### Perfect Your Social Media Presence

Uploading, sharing, tweeting, hashtagging—these words have become part of our everyday vocabularies. Put the reach and influence of social media to work for your team by supercharging your posts. Create great content by sharing sneak peaks of athletes training, spotlighting MVPs, showing players on and off the field, and offering special offers for fans and followers.

### Make Info and Tickets Available on the Go

Keep your team's website up to date with upcoming event info, game schedules and player stats and ensure your site is fully responsive so fans can find the information they're looking for across any device. Above all, make purchasing tickets for your event as simple as possible with clear calls to action throughout your site.

## Increase Event Visibility with Offline Tactics

### Plan Pre- and Post-Game Activities

While your main event deserves a bit of extra attention, what happens before and after the buzzers can often be just as important for fans. Tailgating, pep rallies, live performances and even parades encourage fans to show up early and be part of more than just the game, while awards ceremonies, player meet-and-greets and press conferences are fantastic at keeping fans engaged following the final score.

### Alert the Local Media

From traditional outlets like radio, newspapers and magazines, to websites and blogs, never underestimate the power of media coverage. To get your team on air, in print or online, write up a press release, connect with local journalists and prepare a perfect pitch to gain the coverage you want before, during and after your event.



**Involve the Community**

Teams are made up of more than athletes. Getting your community involved in your sports franchise can help you make the big plays you're looking for. Have players visit local schools, partner with a nonprofit to raise funds for a worthy cause or sponsor a little league team—the possibilities are endless, and the impact of these efforts has potential to extend far beyond game attendance.



### 3 Proven Instagram Strategies for Athletes to Score on Social



# 3 PROVEN INSTAGRAM STRATEGIES FOR ATHLETES TO SCORE ON SOCIAL

## How Athletes Can Strengthen Their Personal Brands on Instagram

From finding a dinner recipe to keeping up with current events across the globe, we turn to social media for just about everything. Beyond a seemingly endless pool of content, platforms like Instagram also present equally vast opportunities to cultivate a strong personal brand, particularly when it comes to professional athletes and other public figures.

When leveraged strategically, social media can be a game-changing tool for fan engagement and personal brand growth. But there's more to a winning social strategy than meets the lens.

Whether you're in the big leagues or still training to get there, check out our top three tips for athletes ready to make plays on Instagram.

### Take Your Feed Off the Field

As an athlete, tweeting from early morning practices or sharing shots of the packed stands at your big game will undoubtedly play a big role in your social presence. Although fans cheer for a behind-the-scenes peek into the world of professional sports, they're just as interested in getting to know the person behind the player.

Maybe you're a foodie or amateur chef who spends every free moment whipping up feasts for friends. Or, perhaps your case of wanderlust has taken you around the world a few times over. Maybe, like Stephen Curry, there's nothing you treasure more than a day with the family. Wherever your passions lie, sharing peeks of what you love to do once the final buzzer goes off gives fans, and even recruiters looking for their next star, a better idea of who you really are.

### Hold Authenticity Above All

Sponsored posts and paid brand partnerships are a vital part of any athlete's social strategy. After all, it's you, and other influencers like you, changing the way brands promote their products.

But, remember, when it comes to social media, authenticity is key. If you're posting about products you don't believe in, your followers will catch on. Protect your status on social by carefully considering every brand partnership you are offered to determine if it's a good fit. A good rule of thumb to get you started is to only share what you would buy yourself.

When it comes time to hit publish on that post, ensure you're presenting the partnership in a way that's true to you, whether it's through humor like Tom Brady's promotion of TB12 or by tying it back to your goals like Simone Biles did for Hershey's Gold.



**Stay Consistent**

Like practicing for the season, consistency is key to building an engaged social following. With changes to platform algorithms focusing on engagement over other metrics, ensuring your followers are consistently seeing you in their feeds comes down to keeping your profiles active.

However, with 3 a.m. wakeup calls to keep up with a demanding training schedule, replying back to comments or direct messages on your social channels might be the last thing on your mind. And, during these busy seasons, there's nothing wrong with enlisting a little help.

Hiring a social media agency to manage your profiles means you can continue to showcase your personality, fan appreciation and lifestyle across social networks, minus the hours spent tapping away on your phone. It's a win-win.





# GETTING GREAT DRONE FOOTAGE THAT DOESN'T IRK THE FAA

Capturing the best drone footage during any event takes a good bit of skill and a whole lot of luck. Although the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) long list of regulations don't make it any much easier, that hasn't stopped sports brands from getting creative and capitalizing.

Even if your team doesn't have the resources of a professional one, that shouldn't stop you from getting the footage you want. So, here's how you can capture extraordinary angles and out-of-this-world perspectives while still keeping the powers satisfied.

## Drone Rules, Regulations and Guidelines to Consider

Once you've successfully passed your FAA exam and received Part 107 certification, grabbing photos and images will depend on how well you can abide by certain drone regulations and guidelines including:

- Flying at or below 400 feet.
- Keeping your UAS (unmanned aircraft system) within sight.
- Never flying over groups of people.
- Never flying over stadiums or sports events (without explicit permission).
- Never flying near emergency response efforts such as fires.
- Never flying under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Be cognizant of any restricted airspaces.
- Maintaining at least a five-mile distance from any designated commercial or government airports.
- Avoid using drones in any national parks as they have banned the use of them within their confines.

Other than the aforementioned, there's really no limit to what you can achieve with a well-manned drone.

## Follow the Pros

There are so many talented brands (and their respective drone pilots) who have revolutionized the way we look at (and above) the world. Do your research and adapt what others are doing to suit your organization's respective needs. It also helps to be mindful that not every drone works for every type of situation or even brand. Take a nice, long look at what your company or team is doing to determine whether or not drones are even in your wheelhouse.

If they are, you can start by using an authorized drone to run simple "carpet bombing" promotions. For example, the Orlando Magic promotions team regularly drops coupons and other promo items from a custom blimp drone inside the arena. Other teams have also used this tactic, but you can also get even more interactive, depending on the capabilities of your aircraft.



Alternative sports companies have also turned the drone itself into a revenue-producing machine. Competitive drone racing has become a highly sought-after sport where skilled pilots use specialized glasses to navigate custom drones through obstacle courses.

### **Take Flight with the Right Tools**

Getting the right drone footage not only helps to enhance your in-house file art collection, but it also gives fans a more robust and dynamic consumer experience. Knowing the rules of the sky is merely the first step in a process that can yield incredible results if done the right way.

If you're looking to add more oomph to your current sports content marketing plan, feel free to contact us at 407-585-8231, or email us at [info@evokad.com](mailto:info@evokad.com), to learn how we can help your advertising efforts soar to new heights.





# WHY ENHANCING THE FAN EXPERIENCE WITH AR WILL HELP YOU SCORE BIG

Augmented reality (AR) has seen resurgence over the last five years or so. With people nearly falling to their deaths by the dozens, thanks to AR games like Pokémon Go, there's no denying the power of AR.

In the sports world, AR can be used to engage fans, motivate athletes, and ultimately enhance the brand experience. Here are some ways in which sports marketing can take advantage of this ever-evolving technology.

## The Augmented Reality Evolution

Before jumping into all that AR can accomplish, it helps to get a side-by-side comparison of the three foremost technologies driving the modern user experience:

- **Virtual reality**—One of the most familiar technologies, multiple sports teams have already designed robust fan experiences around this tech. With the help of video headsets, VR transports people to worlds that allow them to experience, well, virtually anything they choose.
- **Mixed reality**—A combination of synthetic content and real-world settings, MR merges the real and the virtual to create hands-on digital experiences. Examples of this include holograms, 3D video projections and more.
- **Augmented reality**—This is where content is typically overlaid unto the real world but not anchored to it. GPS coordinates serve as a temporary anchor point where users can activate video, sound and more but are not limited by the point of activation.

Now that we know the difference, we can then examine some of the inventive ways in which sports brands have used AR to give their fans priceless experiences.

## In-Your-Face Brand Interactions

Sports teams and franchises, both professional and amateur, spend millions each year to get their fans excited about their brands, so AR is the next logical step in building that excitement and adding engagement.

For example, the Sacramento Kings are using it to enrich the fan experience by allowing them to take pictures alongside players in their new uniforms. Professional soccer has found a way to bring the jumbotron to every fan with a smartphone.

Moreover, visitors to Wembley Stadium in London are able to tour the venue using a 360-degree view and augmented reality video guide. This is just the tip of the iceberg as to what AR can do to shift the sports experience in favor of the fans that love them.



**Focusing on the Future**

We've gotten to a point where many brands have access to a wide range of tools and resources that deliver multi-sensory experiences appealing to all of the five senses. This, coupled with major advancements in AR and virtual reality's capabilities, have opened the door for brands to deliver one-of-a-kind visual experiences to consumers.

The sports brands that will rise to the top of the competition will be those who invest in well-planned experiential marketing campaigns that delight the senses, while still delivering on-brand content that fans truly enjoy.





# SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMS

The biggest challenge for many sports organizations is finding an acceptable balance between the action and the advertising. More often than not, sports fans get turned off by the idea of sponsors and brands getting more face time than their favorite teams do. This could lead to fans becoming disenfranchised, or worse, disengaged altogether.

This is why it is more important than ever for sponsors and the products they seek to promote are seamlessly integrated into a strong social media marketing strategy, enhancing the fan experience.

## **Content Is (Still) King**

The key to creating ongoing fan interaction well after the final whistle is integrating rich, relevant content into the social media conversation. This could include everything from highlights and post-game video interviews with players and coaches to serving related video ads and even offering special deals and coupons.

Getting fans to share sponsor-branded content with other likeminded fans can help bolster brand recognition while enhancing the conversations that fans have with one another about your brand. For example, Tough Mudder produces and distributes a weekly series of training videos to all of its members through social media.

This approach not only extends the amount of brand visibility TM experiences well after the end of an official TM event, but it also encourages interaction between fans of the sport, creating communities that appreciate brand-to-fan relationships.

Ultimately, creating good, sharable content that's tailored to the audience will always be a great launching point for sponsors to get their message across without mucking up the essence of the sport in question.

## **Endorsements and Co-Sponsorships**

The idea of the celebrity endorsement is no stranger to most major sports leagues, but long gone are its primitive, see-say approaches to promoting products and services. Nowadays, athletes and teams are joining up with sponsors to deliver more interactive, immersive brand experiences for the fans.

Whether it's a "Play of the Week" video sponsored by a toy company, or series of dribbling tutorial videos featuring Stephen Curry sponsored by Gerber, sponsorships are becoming more diverse to keep up with the changing social media landscape. What does all this mean for marketers and advertisers that have to create and eventually monetize these interactions?



## Future Implications

With nearly 95% of properties creating social media content alone on behalf of their sponsors, there's plenty of images, video and more to go around. The true challenge will be finding ways to both segment and optimize this content to accommodate the ever-diverse sports fan community.

For example, as alternative sports like eSports continue to gain traction, there's going to be a demand for more experiential and hyper-custom sponsorship experiences to compliment the highly interactive nature of eSports. Also, as technologies like augmented reality, artificial intelligence and voice command become advertising staples, professionals will have to stay ahead of the curve by beefing up their tech staff while still maintaining a strong sense of both creativity and customer service.

Until then, the goal is still very clear: utilize existing content to enhance the fan experience—via relevant social media platforms—while keeping a close eye on how future innovations can help sponsors gain credibility without losing the message.

Receive the latest industry insights from the evDk team in your inbox by signing up for the evoker, our monthly newsletter or contact us to explore ways we can partner.





# REAL-TIME ENGAGEMENT WITH SPORTS FANS: A NECESSITY FOR ALL TEAMS

Social media is impacting fan interactions with their favorite sports teams, and the fans are expecting more engagement than ever before. According to Nielsen, 87% of American adults now own a cell phone, and social media reached almost 200 million people each week in the final quarter of 2016. Americans are looking to their favorite teams to provide them with immediate updates, ability to purchase items on their phones and interact with the players. The more technology advances, the more the fans expect. Professional sports teams need to start providing their active followers with real-time engagement, or they may find they will have less fans in the future.

## Real-Time Social Media: What It Does for the Fans

Real-time social media, as it relates to sports teams, is providing fans with current and up-to-date information. Real-time information is a must for the most loyal of fans; however, teams have to be willing to accept the bad with the good. Not all news is positive, yet it still needs to be disseminated with the same speed and intensity, or a team could look like they are hiding from their fans—the expectation level is high for all news and information.

Advancing technology allows players and coaches to answer any questions from fans in real time and significantly impacts fan loyalty. When a fan gets a response from their favorite player, it just validates their importance to the team and builds a strong relationship. And, it's not just team-to-fan, social media also opens up discussions fan-to-fan before, during and even after the games.

## Importance of Real-Time Marketing

Sporting event attendance has decreased in the recent years, and fans are not as loyal as they once were, so the interaction makes them feel part of the team. It's also not just one connection or one interaction, it is an engagement process that teams create—over time, the fans will begin to trust in your brand and be loyal to the team, win or lose.

## How to Improve Engagement

There are many ways to improve your engagement, but one of the most important is timeliness—most fans expect answers within four hours. Fans that expect instant gratification will build trust in the brand when they routinely get timely responses.

Authenticity is also an opportunity for most teams. Relying on the 19-year-old social media intern to be the voice of Cam Newton isn't always the best policy. It is important to have the actual players engage with the fans through social media; fans want to hear from the players themselves to create those personal connections.

It is important that the content is genuine and not conflicting with the team brand. It is a strong rule of thumb to have brand managers approve all content before it is posted.



Collaboration is a great way to extend brand message. Teaming up with sponsors or companies that also cater to your fans can heighten interest from new and old fans alike. When the NFL teamed up with EA Sports, video game developer for Madden NFL, which has an exclusive deal with the League to bring football excitement to video game players, they also teamed up with local charities and provide financial assistance to their communities.

Lastly, to improve the overall experience and fan-brand engagement, many teams are providing contests, some even to win apparel, tickets to a game or the ultimate experience of traveling with the team for a road game. Thank those fans that do engage as it has never been so important.

In recognition of these engaged fans, the Seattle Seahawks named their fans the 12th man on the field, and a number 12 flag is raised before every home game. The result? The Seahawks' stadium is one of the loudest in the world and has even literally made the earth shake.

### **Trending Topics**

Technology is changing daily and social media marketing is changing in sports. Here are some of the most recent trends we are seeing in sports marketing. Some examples include:

1. Virtual reality is being used so fans can get up close and personal. The fans can ride a horse in the Kentucky Derby, drive a car in a NASCAR race, be on the field at an NFL game or play against their favorite tennis pro.
2. Augmented reality is also being used more by sports teams. The Denver Broncos launched their "Come To Life" campaign where fans can take a photo of a code on a cup and be transferred into an interactive world where they can take a tour of the locker room, go out on the field, take a picture with your favorite player and even win prizes.
3. Real-time social media marketing is very important to a sports team because teams must strike while the iron is hot. Capitalize on this week's win, as one never knows when the next one is coming.
4. Fewer fans are using TV to watch sports in favor of digital channels, finding alternatives that provide a more personalized experience where they can get real-time stats, chat with other fans and stream games, often those blacked out in their local DMA.
5. Mobile notifications are being used with more targeted information, along with engagement activities.

As stadiums across the country struggle to fill their seats, the best sports teams will keep the fans engaged, pre, during and post game, and in return will build an even more loyal fan base.