



30 WAYS TO

# BRING THE LIVE GAME EXPERIENCE TO FANS AT HOME



# Introduction

Sports leagues around the world are making their way back from an unplanned hiatus and plotting their post-pandemic return to play. Fans are waiting in anticipation to have games back, and escape and immerse themselves in the entertainment that sport provides. Many fans relish the chance to unleash their emotions with cheers and jeers at a live event, enjoy the fun of a mascot race, try their best to get on the Dance Cam, and stimulate all their senses as they enjoy a game. Attending a sporting event is an experience, and one that most fans will miss in the near future, even as sports resume.

It's hard to truly replace being at a live game, feeling close to the action, other fans, the athletes, and the emotion. Some teams are thinking 'outside the box' and have created unique communities during games with [drive-up watch parties](#), letting their fans 'attend' games with [a seat via Zoom](#), or with [cardboard cutouts](#). But there's more to being a spectator than having your face there; it's about the experience.

With these challenges comes a great innovation opportunity for leagues, teams and governing bodies. It's time to reimagine the experience for fans stuck watching at home and help them feel closer to being in the venue.

This guide is a followup to Greenfly's earlier publication, [120 Ways to Engage Fans Without Games](#), for those who may be looking for inspiration before your sport gets underway again.



# Ideas & Inspiration

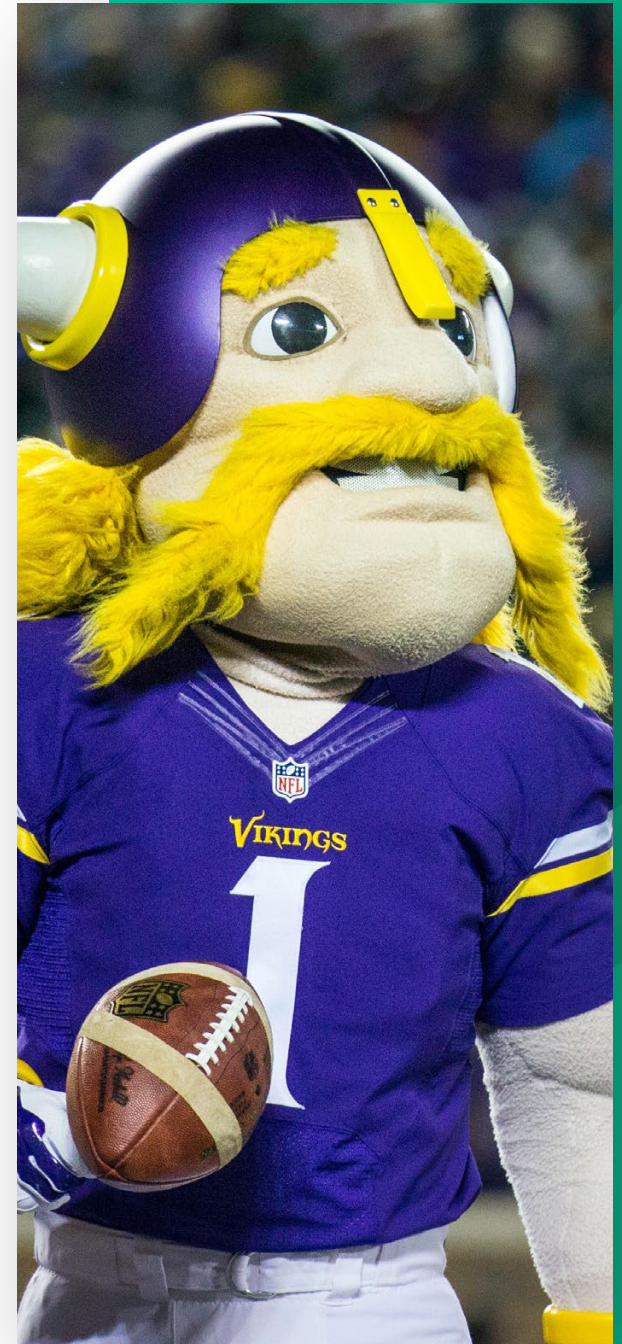
With innovation and inspiration in mind, here are 30 things that marketing and front office staff can do to bring the excitement and engagement of attending a live event to fans who can't be there.



1. Build exciting player introductions on social media. Use Twitter and Instagram Stories to run the same intro video and/or graphics that would run at the arena, along with your public address announcer. Get fans even more engaged and creative by inviting fans to submit their own player intro videos in advance of the game. Then, share out the most creative ones on social media.
2. It's not a game without the National Anthem. But don't just post a YouTube video of Whitney Houston singing it; let one of your talented fans have a moment to shine and showcase their talent. Invite fans that think they have the chops to submit their rendition of the National Anthem or reach out to a previous anthem singer and have them send in a video that can be played prior to the game. Then fans can 'Stand and remove their caps' just like they would in person before the game commences.
3. One of the surest signs that someone is a fan heading to a match to support their team is a painted face. For many, it's part of their matchday uniform, along with their team shirt and scarf. While fans may miss the atmosphere of a live game, full of chants and cheers, clubs can still celebrate their dedication. Teams can collect photos and videos of fans with their gameday garb — face paint included — to share on social media and invite fans all around the world to showcase their fandom. Clubs could even engage directly with their supporters groups to recreate gameday traditions and songs.



4. In some sports, fans are accustomed to the carefully curated playlist of in-venue music that provides the soundtrack to a game. Let fans experience it themselves at home. Share a Spotify playlist and/or YouTube playlist of in-arena music and sample from it on social media throughout the game.
5. Team mascots are always having fun at games, often interacting with fans. So make the mascot part of the show on social. Go live during a media timeout or halftime and do a quick skit, game or challenge. Or have willing fans privately message their viewing location and have the mascot surprise some lucky fans with a gift pack or even a pizza party from the team's official pizza sponsor.
6. Honoring an active military member or veteran is always a stand-up, feel-good gesture, and this is often associated with a sponsor. Teams can recreate this on social media and can crowdsource it. Have fans submit a video with the military member or local hero (and this can be extended to include all emergency responders and essential workers) in their lives. A family member, friend, or significant other can then introduce them and tell their story, which the team can officially share on social to honor them and highlight the partner, too.

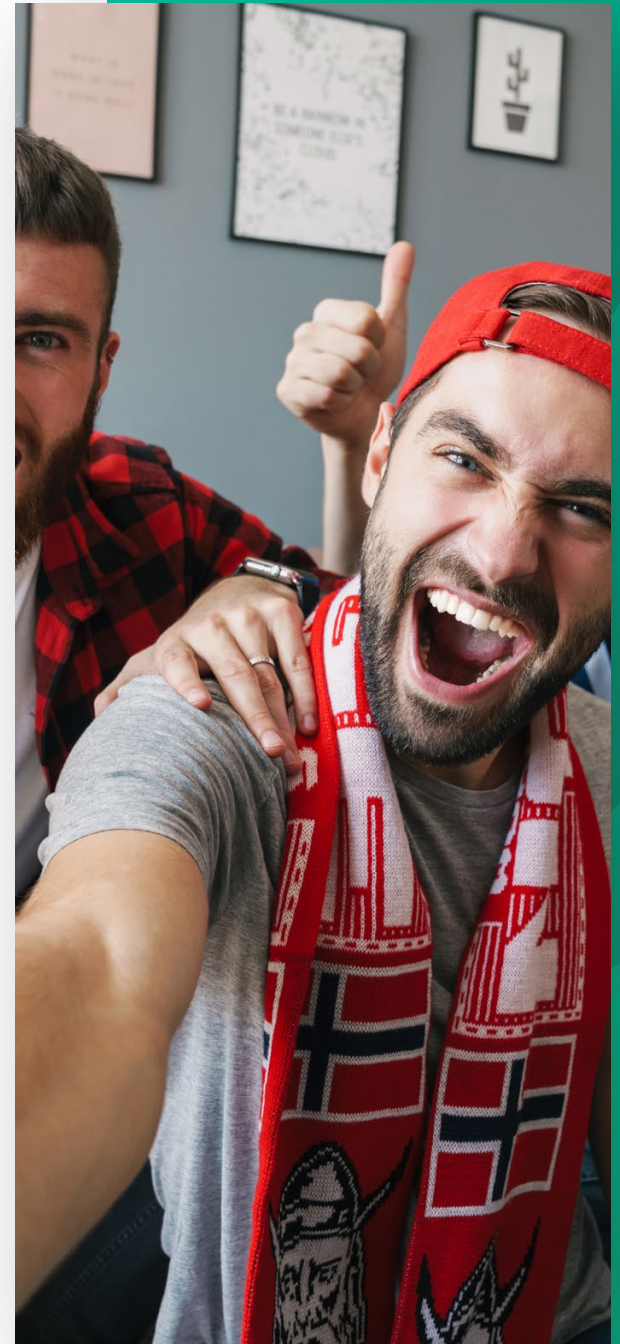




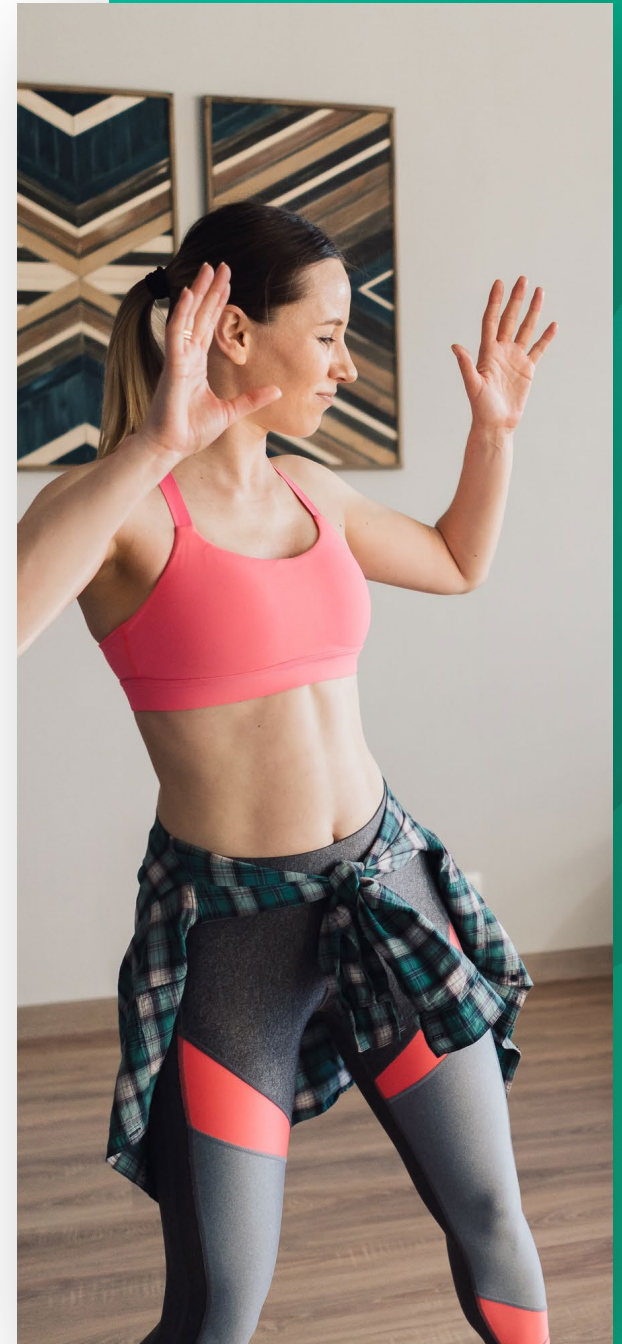
7. Turning players not on the active roster into digital content assistants isn't a new idea, but now is the time to turn this into a fan engagement program. WWE pro wrestling is sticking non-participating wrestlers into the stands to [cheer during the matches](#). Other sports can do the same by placing their reserve players and injured players in the stands...with their mobile devices. Let fans hear directly from these players and get their first-hand narratives and perspectives.

Using a [brand advocacy platform](#) like Greenfly, team staff can remotely direct these video assistants to create quality content to post on their personal social channels — or to submit to the social media team to post on the team's social feeds or stories. Multiple [pro sports leagues use Greenfly](#) to mobilize real-time correspondents to produce on-the-ground, up close content for the league and team social channels.

8. One of the highlights of an in-stadium fan experience is the chance to get all the attention on the video board during a Fan Cam. So why not recreate this? Do a Dance Cam, a Karaoke Cam, a TikTok challenge, or a Kiss Cam by inviting fans to submit their own dances, karaoke routines, or Kiss Cam entries. Then share a few of the best on social, reproducing that feeling of being on the big board for those lucky few fans.that feeling of being on the big board for those lucky few fans.



9. What about the talented members of your official Dance Team? Invite them to submit their own dances, whether part of their pre-choreographed routine they'd perform at the live game or ad-hoc dances these creative individuals come up with on the spot, as their own TikTok-type performance.
10. Trivia and animated shuffle videos feel like a natural part of the in-game experience. These fun, interactive games can be reproduced in a number of ways on social media — whether playing the same video board video, using a Twitter poll or the Instagram Story quiz sticker, or even going further and running a more formal trivia contest (in which teams can also capture fan information). You could also get pre-recorded video from your team MC or PA asking the questions. These can certainly involve a sponsor and sponsor prize, too.
11. It wouldn't be a game without a T-shirt toss. So...run a virtual T-shirt toss! Fans could throw their hands up to snag a free shirt by tweeting a hashtag, replying to a tweet with a picture or video of themselves, and the team could even enlist multiple parties to 'toss' free T-shirts to them, just like they do at games. Share T-shirt toss creative and copy across all the organization accounts — the mascot account, the venue, the account for the T-shirt toss sponsor, and even some local influencer accounts like radio hosts or news anchors.



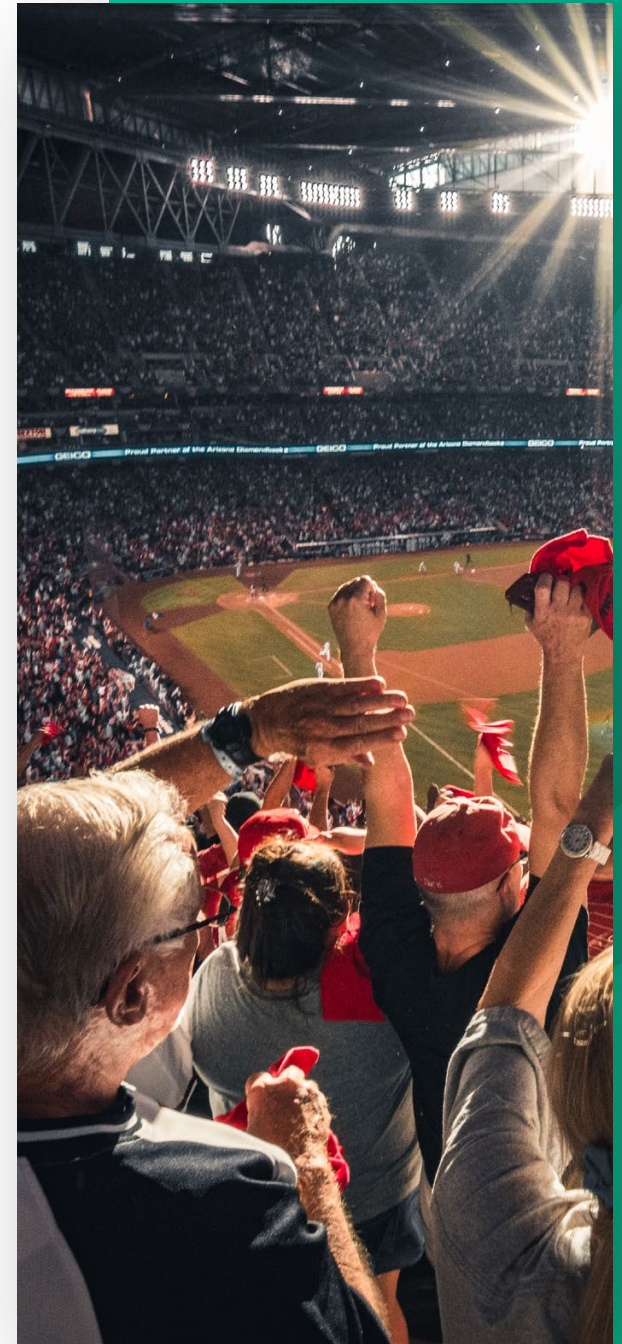
12. Sponsors are a big part of the game presentation, often with chances for fans to win by taking part in onsite contests. Instead, invite sponsors to do giveaways during the game with a fun social media contest! Teams can share or prepare the creative for them — just like they would for a live game presentation — and even have the sponsor get some love by hosting the contest on their own social media account.
13. Fans expect some halftime entertainment, so give them some at home! Go live on social media during halftime/intermission and interview a broadcaster, reporter, an alumnus, or even a staff member. Or live-stream a feature video that the team already has prepared. Could each game feature a guest performer? Or take a cue from the Chicago Cubs and have a 7th Inning Stretch guest to sing “Take Me Out to the Ballgame.”
14. In-game marriage proposals are perhaps a bit much, but fans love a video board shout-out — whether it’s their group or a special occasion like a birthday or graduation. Remember, being on the video board is among the most memorable moments fans can have at a live game.

So, similar to the Fan Cam above, give them a chance to share their shout-outs in original ways even if they’re not there! Invite fans to submit videos with their own shout-out. It could be creatively saying “Hi” to mom, or the team could get more targeted each game or media timeout. They could ask fans for videos shouting out the same groups that are often recognized at games, such as teachers, scouts, volunteers, students, coaches, or fans with birthdays. They could even invite fans to submit their best pet pictures (because who doesn’t love cute dog pics?).





15. Some fans may yearn for that ambient noise of the court, ice, or field, the musical tones inviting fans to clap, and all the other sounds of the game. To recreate that aural experience, teams can prepare and offer fans a livestream of something like in-arena ASMR and sound effects that fans can stream live on YouTube if they want the full effect of the pump-up sounds and more that make up the sonic experience of attending a game. Or even share a collection of sounds and videos for fans to download and share themselves when the time is right.
16. The 50-50 drawing is a staple of many sporting events, and these raffles are usually a great way to raise money for the team's foundation. There are [online solutions](#) that exist to execute these, and fans can donate to a good cause and cross their fingers they're lucky that night just like they would at the stadium or arena. The same can be done with live auctions.
17. It seems like almost every team has a car giveaway happening at their venue. Typically seen in the concourse, fans are invited to check out a car from a corporate partner and enter their name to win. Fans at home can be given the same opportunity to enter to win by submitting their name and info to the partner electronically, using a simple online form.



18. Fans are often given the chance to text to win at games or to otherwise join a text club. These messages, whether from the team or a sponsor, are often seen on LEDs at games, with a public announcement or two to reinforce it. Teams can similarly activate on social media. Run a text-to-win promotion using your social platforms and grow your text club (or your sponsor's) while engaging your fans.
19. While 'The Wave' can be a polarizing subject, it remains a consistent part of the fan experience at games. How can you recreate it on social media? Invite fans to post a wave emoji, respond to a thread, post GIFs, wave on a Facebook Live feed, or put on your creative hat and think about how the team can bring that communal feeling out on other channels.
20. There are some songs that fans expect to hear at games: classic rock songs or pop music or the like. How can teams recreate this experience for fans at home? Invite fans to participate and have them submit videos of them doing the YMCA, performing the Macarena, screaming "Sweet Caroline", making their best dancing-based TikToks, or lip syncing Journey's "Don't Stop Believing." Bring the fun of the venue to fans at home.
21. There is often a 'lucky section' for fans at the game, where just for getting seated in a section, fans can take home a small prize. How can this be reimaged? Here's one idea (that also helps a team generate data capture): Have fans submit a form with their name and birthday, then the fans whose birthdays end, for example, with the number '2,' win a sponsor prize! There are lots of possibilities here that are fun for fans, and valuable for the team, too.





22. Part of the fun of going to games for fans is eating their favorite in-venue munchies. Team can work to help fans get their food fix during games, too, and activate partnerships at the same time! Collaborate with delivery services like DoorDash, UberEats, et al., and even bring in restaurant sponsors to offer a promotion during games. Teams can even run a contest on social media to win free food from a restaurant and/or free delivery from a delivery partner. Or, perhaps there is a limited time window during the game when a promo code for Postmates is available for fans to use. Fans want to eat while they watch the game, so help them!
23. What if fans just want beer and a hot dog? That's another opportunity to activate partners and take advantage of modern technology. Work with a beer and/or grocery partner to run a beer and snacks promotion for game day. This could be implemented either in-store, via store delivery, or an alcohol delivery app like Drizly to help fans get their game-viewing accoutrements to which they're accustomed.
24. What if fans are at friends' or families' houses to watch the game, or at a local sports bar to watch alongside other socially distanced fans? This is another opportunity to activate a partner. Most teams and venues by now have one or more rideshare and/or public transportation partners, so making fans aware of a promo code, for example, is certainly an apt opportunity as fans watch the game away from the venue.
25. For some fans, it's not gameday without putting on their game faces. Digital and social offer teams a great opportunity to let fans face-paint and show their 'fan face.' Create a facial effect for Instagram and/or a filter for Snapchat and make fans aware of (or add) GIFs and GIF stickers like foam fingers, signs, etc. onto platforms like GIPHY and Tenor, so fans can show off their fan spirit digitally.



26. A time-honored tradition at sporting events is the fan sign. Fans shout out a player, the team, or chirp the opponent with a sign of their making. Why not bring that to life even if fans aren't at the venue holding those signs up? Have fans submit photos of their sign for the game and curate and share the best on social media. Or, empower them to create digital signs and memes to share for the game. It could be a fun way to share and enjoy the cleverness and enthusiasm of your fans!
27. For sports fans attending a live game, it's ultimately about creating an opportunity for a shared experience. Reimagine how this could be accomplished when thousands of fans can't be in the same building. Maybe it's a live-stream on Twitch or YouTube (not of the game itself, but perhaps scoreboard elements or just a static graphic). Create a place of community where various fans can chat with each other as they watch the game and virtually high-five after big plays for their team. Help fans experience the game together even if they can't be together.
28. A staple of live events is corporate hospitality. It's a big reason why businesses spend money every year on suites, catering, and other comforts. But without events to help conduct business and entertain clients, how can teams still help partners continue with exclusive entertainment?

This is a huge opportunity to innovate with corporate hospitality. What could a carefully planned evening built around the game look like for a partner and their clients? Maybe it involves a message from a popular former player — a live session with a team legend that also allows business people to informally chat after. It could be a partner summit on Zoom during the game, or even a special delivery of food and team merchandise couriered to selected homes. Sponsors are still focused on winning business, and through their partnerships teams, can still help them outside of premium suites.





29. Live games are where fans are built. [Studies have shown](#) that getting kids to a game before the age of 6 can mean a lot for their future fandom, so it's essential to make the most of the family and youth experience around a game. With fans — parents and their kids — stuck at home watching, could there be a special broadcast or complementary live programming available for the young fans?

Think interactive games for them to play while their parents watch the regular broadcast on TV. Or, record your mascot in advance and leverage your promotions team or MC to engage kids during the games. Efforts here will help teams continue to reach and engage those vital young fans while giving their parents the chance to kick back and watch the game.

30. Whether the venues are packed, empty, or something in between, fans at home still crave a taste of the up-close access. Teams may have a skeleton production team on site and there may be stands filled to 10, 20, 30% capacity or more. Mobilize social media staffers— or recruit loyal fans—to be informal venue videographers.

Have them feed live video or video clips back to the social team to post on brand channels. Provide this authentic, non-broadcast video of players interacting on the bench, a close-up of players after a big play, or just a different fan perspective of a play — keeping that feeling of FOMO strong even as fans are limited in their ability to attend in-person.



# Bonus Ideas

You thought there were only 30, but we couldn't help ourselves — that's the kind of over-the-top commitment to new ideas we have here at Greenfly. Here are two more bonus thoughts:

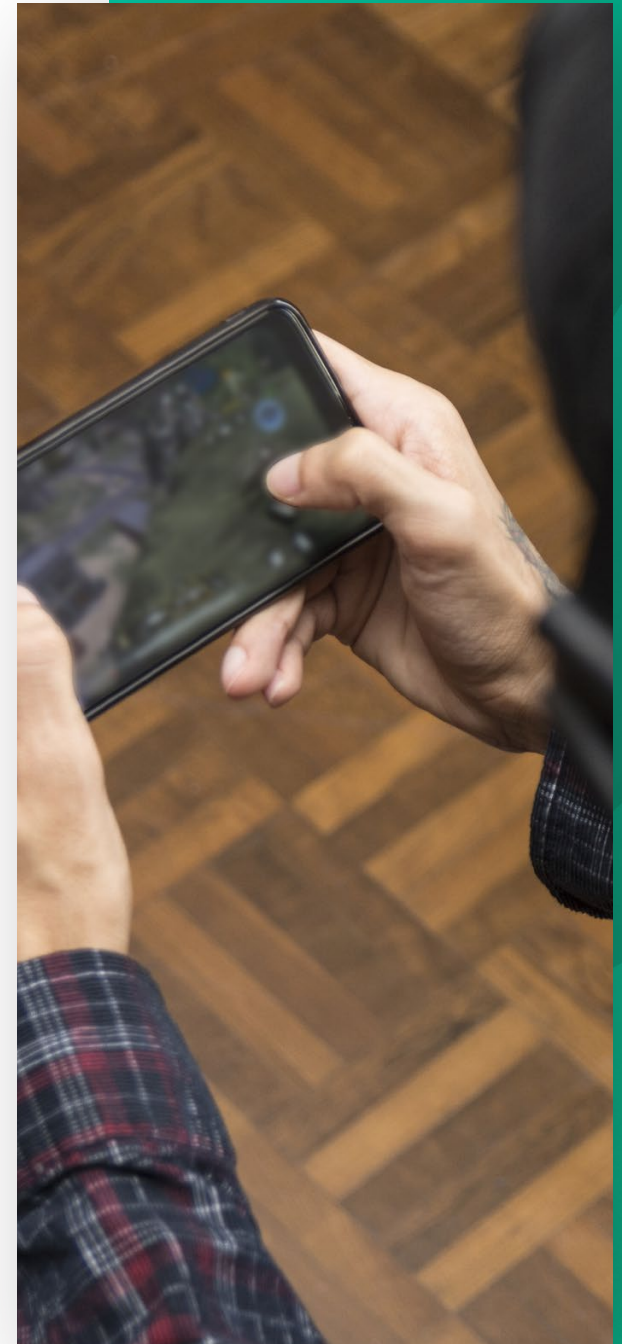


- 31.** In the last several years, experiential marketing has grown as a staple in the sports business. Millennials don't want 'things,' they want experiences. Partner activations are moving from product to experiential as well, whether it's games, VR experiences, photo booths, or the like. Instead of using sponsor resources to spend on cool and complex onsite activations, push those efforts to digital.

Now may be the time to experiment even more with augmented reality, real-time gaming, social media filters, special guest experiences, and so much more. Partners can still enhance the gameday experience for fans, the ways they do so will just need to be adapted for this environment.

- 32.** The last decade-plus of sports event sales has seen an increased focus on group sales. There can still be value in group experiences, whether helping to bring companies together for employee engagement, celebrating a birthday, or any number of other opportunities for groups to have fun together.

How can teams reimagine group experiences for the remote gameday? Perhaps mini-sweepstakes for fan groups, a meet and greet with a player or broadcaster before the game, or an intra-group contest? As with everything else mentioned in this guide, there is no precedent to follow, so use your creativity and recreate the value of gameday for fans.



# Final Thoughts

As sports associations, leagues, and teams do what they need to do to stop the spread of coronavirus, sports marketers have the opportunity to try new and innovative ways to digitally connect with fans, and connect fans with each other.

The entire sports industry is hoping for the best, but it's during such challenging times that creativity is often unleashed. If there's anything redeeming about the uneasy time ahead, it's the opportunity to reimagine fan engagement and repackage it for every fan that can't attend a live event.

Inspired after reading this? Several of the ideas presented in this guide can be executed, streamlined, facilitated, and activated with Greenfly. In fact, Greenfly's sports industry customers have actually done many of these things already. Learn more about Greenfly [here](#).

And, if you also need ideas for engaging fans while you ride out this period of no games, check out our guide, **120 Ways to Engage with Fans When There Are No Games**:

[www.greenfly.com/120ways](http://www.greenfly.com/120ways)





# Discover Greenfly

Greenfly, the leader in brand advocacy, enables organizations to fuel brand love through authenticity. The company's brand advocacy platform and mobile apps enable organizations to transform their advocates into brand builders across social media and digital channels.

Sports organizations depend on Greenfly to both share media as well as direct and collect original photos and videos from their athletes and advocates. This authentic content helps both advocates and the brand build deeper, more personal connections with their fans around the world and increase sponsorship value.

If your sport is coming back from hiatus without fans in attendance, let us know. We'll be happy to help you keep fans engaged as they watch from home.


[hello@greenfly.com](mailto:hello@greenfly.com)

[+1 \(310\) 620-8565](tel:+13106208565)

[www.greenfly.com](http://www.greenfly.com)
