

GREENFLY GUIDE | SPORTS

Eight Ways to Demonstrate Value to Sponsors Through Social Media



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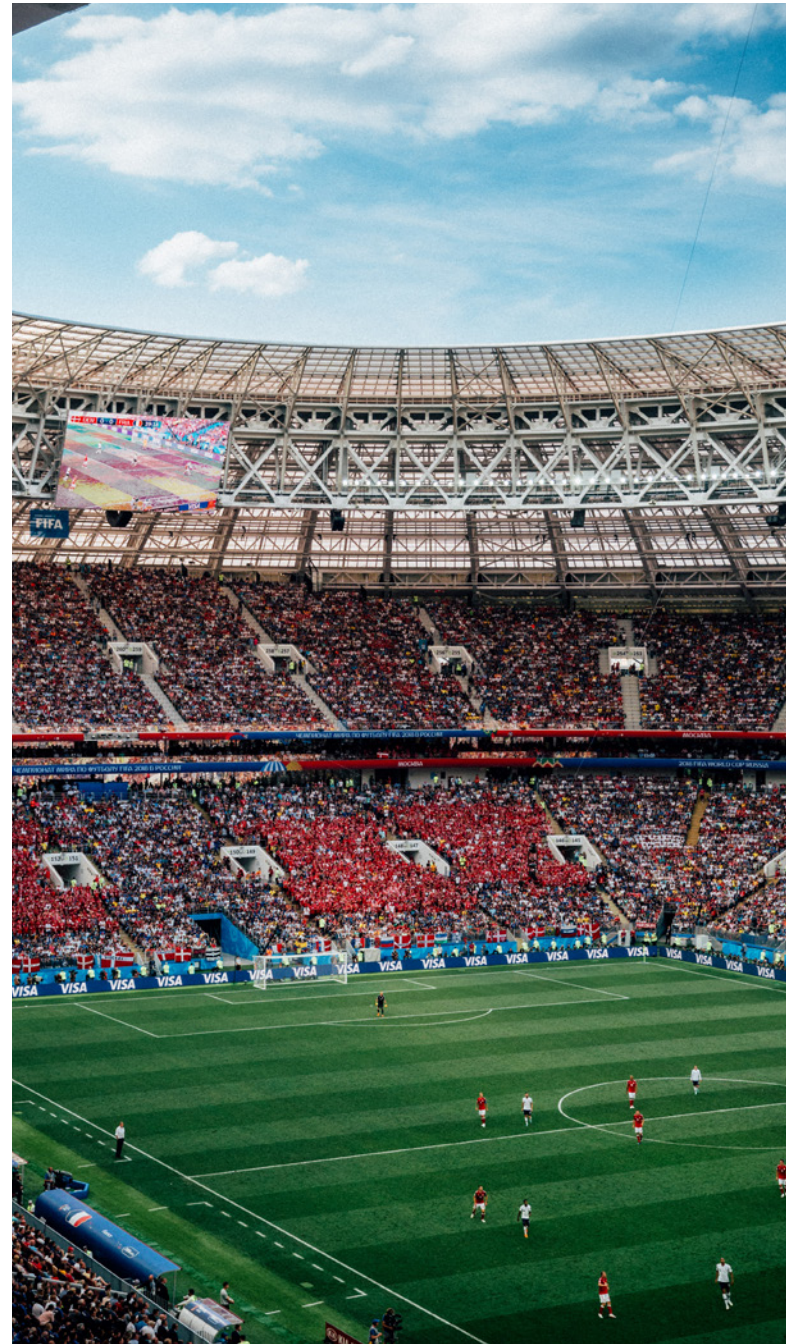
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Introduction

Social media has been asked to do a lot for sports organizations in 2020. As sports hit 'pause', teams and leagues have turned to social media more than ever to keep fans informed and engaged. And as sports have come back, with virtually no game day receipts, social media has been asked to help fill in the revenue gaps.

This shift has highlighted the rising importance of social platforms to sports organizations and their sponsors. As social media teams have grown larger and more sophisticated, with new tools and platforms popping up daily, the monetization of social media for sports organizations hasn't quite kept pace. [Sponsored social media posts and content](#) are among the most important present and future methods to make money from all that investment in social and all that content created daily. Because sports content stops thumbs in social feeds, sponsors are eager to borrow some of that attention.

Those sponsors are increasingly demanding more proof of a return on their investments, and visibility into how their business is being helped by social media is becoming a louder demand of teams. There are a number of ways teams can show that ROI, while still delivering content and experiences that fans will enjoy. We'll explore each of them below.



How to Think About ROI for Sponsorship in Sports Social Media

The question “What’s the ROI of social media?” is not unanswerable. Sponsors demand it. The key is to always keep the sponsor’s objectives in mind when building campaigns. It’s not terribly complex, as most partner goals center around three core stages of converting your fans into customers:



These stages provide a framework for how you can demonstrate real social media ROI to sponsors. Within these, here are eight common sponsor goals that teams can deliver against through social media, and our in-depth look at each of them.

Eight Ways to Demonstrate Value to Sponsors Through Social Media

1. Generate Leads
2. Drive Direct Sales
3. Increase Active Brand Awareness
4. Build Passive Brand Awareness
5. Activate Passionate Fans
6. Activate Athletes
7. Activate Sponsor Social Channels
8. Promote New Products

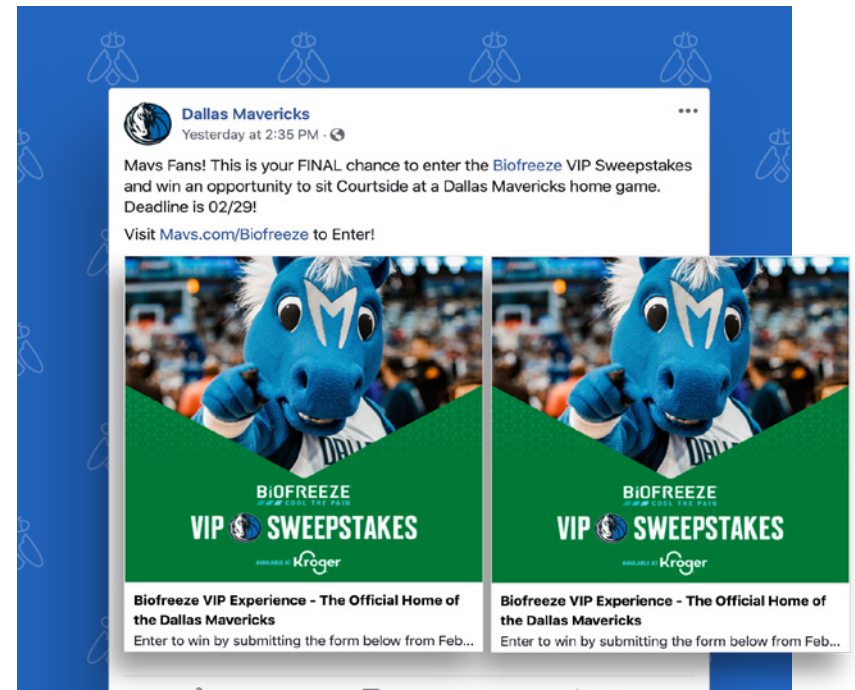
Generate Leads for Sponsors

The end-game of every sponsor is to find more customers. Sports teams and leagues can use their social media channels to generate new leads for their sponsors. Let's look at some of the ways they can do that.

Run Contests and Sweepstakes: This is a tried-and-true tactic that can directly drive new, engaged, prospective customers for a sponsor. Fans want to win that signed ball, that special experience, or that novelty item or merchandise, and they're eager to do what it takes to enter to win. By driving fans to submit their name, email and/or phone number, you help the sponsor acquire the information of a potential customer. Sponsors will work with you on these activations because they want to turn your fans into their customers. These businesses know their cost per lead, so every lead you deliver has real monetary value to their organization.

Drive Fans to the Sponsor's Digital Properties: Sponsors value traffic to their website or social properties because even just a website visit or a video view has value for them; it allows the business to retarget those individuals through digital and social ads in the future. Get your fans to a partner's app? Even better—they know what the value of an app install is for them: it's real money!

A few ways teams can do this? Host or embed content on the partner's social or site or app, make an exclusive offer available through a partner, or, put that sweepstakes mentioned above on the partner's own digital real estate.



How to Measure It

Social reach and engagement on the posts, number of names acquired or sweepstakes entries, site traffic, app installs.



Show Me the Money

The value of a sponsor lead, the value of unique traffic the sponsor can retarget moving forward, the value of an app install.

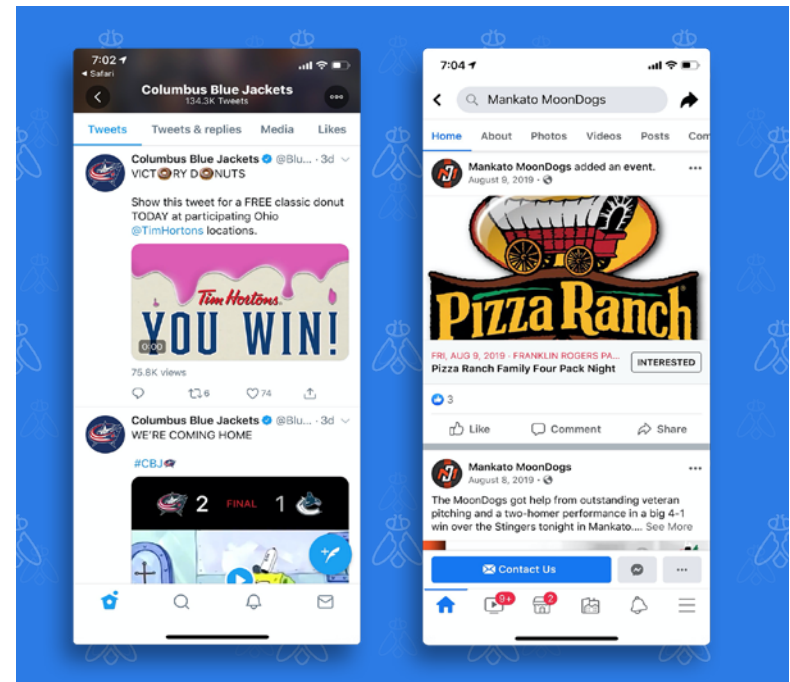
Drive Direct Sales for Sponsors

It doesn't get any more straightforward than when you can show a social media post led directly to a sale. And there are instances every day of a social media post in sports that leads to a sale for a sponsor. It's an opportunity to organically integrate an offer into the exciting moments that fans enjoy with their favorite teams and athletes.

Distribute Coupons and Special Offers: If you follow any sports team on social media, there is a good chance you've seen one of these after a win, a scoring play, a threshold being hit, or any number of things that can happen in a game to trigger a sponsor coupon. Pick your favorite team on social media, and, next time they win, there's likely one or more partner deals that have been activated.

Create Branded Ticket Packages: Teams sell tickets every day [and will again when fans are back in seats], but more and more they're adding value to tickets through promotional packages or add-ons to create unique fan experiences. Sponsors can be integrated into these deals, whether it's a holiday-themed promotion, a beer pack, or a deal that includes dinner after the game—among loads of other examples. Teams get to drive more ticket sales while activating sponsors, and fans get a ticket package full of extra goodies. There may even be more innovation in this space with virtual tickets, experiences, and packages amidst the pandemic-affected attendance restrictions.

-  **Ticket Sales +**
-  **Value for a Sponsor +**
-  **More Goodies for Fans to Enjoy =**
-  **All Parties Win**



How to Measure It

Offer redemptions, new customers (if redeemer exchanges data when making purchase), repeat customers



Show Me the Money

The value of the sale, the value of a new customer, the value of a returning customer

Increase Brand Awareness

A quick but important qualifier: Slapping a logo on something or tagging a partner on an otherwise unrelated social post is not **active** brand awareness. The distinguishing factor for this more valuable form of brand awareness is that fans come away understanding what the brand actually does or is all about. A logo by itself doesn't do that. But an effective sports social media program certainly can.

Develop Branded Content: This is content that effectively integrates the brand's product, service, or promise. The "Play of the Game presented by Honda" is not active brand awareness, but "Canucks in Cars presented by Toyota" (and actually featuring a Toyota vehicle) is, and that has far greater value for the sponsor. Fans are exposed to the brand and the product. This is where the creativity of the content team can come into play, in finding a way to create great social content that drives active brand awareness—which can drive benefits for fans, the team, and the sponsor. These branded content plays can be amplified even further by sharing them with the sponsor to share on their own platforms, and, even more when the players involved in the content distribute it to their followers. There's a ton of value that can be driven against this sponsor objective!



How to Measure It

Views, reach, specific audience demo reached, brand lift, increased consideration, increased market share among fans of the team/league/sport



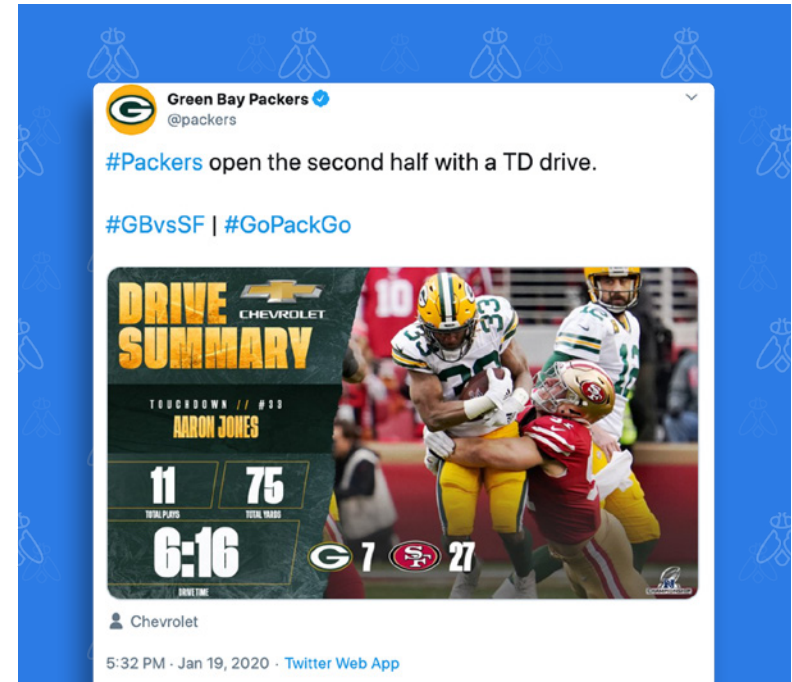
Show Me the Money

Brand exposure, brand sentiment, active awareness (i.e. they know what the brand does), consideration [surveys can play a role here, too]

Grow Passive Brand Awareness

This is more like the billboard form of awareness for a sponsor. This type of awareness is why they value all the exposure on the LEDs in the arena or the billboards in the ballpark. They want the eyeballs and they want their name, logo and brand to be inculcated through exposure into fans' heads. Sports social media has the attentive eyeballs, so there is ample opportunity to drive valuable "passive" brand awareness for a sponsor, and ways to add value beyond what they'd receive from a billboard.

Build Sponsored Content: In contrast to branded content, sponsored content is more in the realm of "brought to you by." The #KiaMVP in a NBA game may not have any readily relevant association with a car, but it will ensure Kia is seen more, and its association with the team or league as a partner will be reinforced with each and every impression. There is a hybrid version of brand awareness, too, where the product or service may not be directly integrated into the social media content, but it's implicit because the content relates to the brand. This can be accomplished through a pun ("Keys to the Game driven by Ford" or a "Chevrolet Drive Summary") or through the type of content ("SAP Statline of the Night"). And, yes, this is also where the accumulation of logos and sponsor-tagged posts can add up. Brand awareness remains a key objective for many businesses, and sports social media can help drive real value at the top of the marketing funnel for their sponsors.



How to Measure It

Views, reach, impressions



Show Me the Money

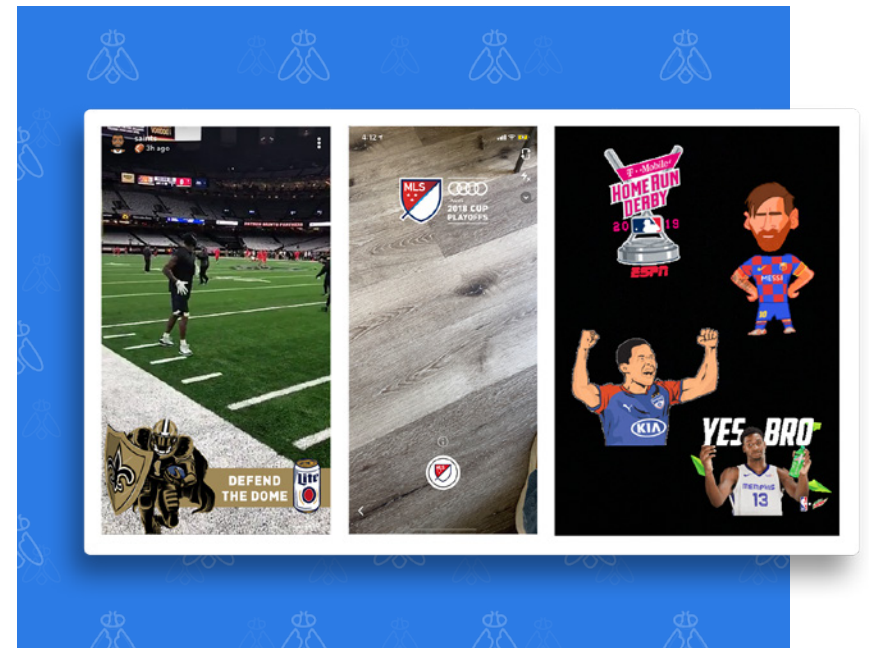
Brand awareness, brand association

Activate Passionate Fans

There is no better marketing for a brand than when customers and fans are doing marketing for them. [People trust other people more than brands³](#), even the sports organizations and athletes they love. And it's why [sports businesses greatly value user \[or player\] posts⁴](#) about their brand on their own personal social channels: They provide genuine content and authentic social proof. There is no shortage of opportunities for sports social media to drive and facilitate fans in posting real content that integrates a partner brand.

Run User-Generated Content (UGC) Contests or Campaigns: Not every contest or sweepstakes needs to involve an entry form; instead, they can revolve around asking fans to create and post guided content on their personal social channels. And, using what you learned earlier, these UGC campaigns can drive both active or passive awareness of the brands asking for UGC posts. There are ample examples of brands and teams working together to find the biggest fans to win a prize, or fans being asked to post partner and team-related content for the chance to be recognized or featured. Whether the brand is actively featured in the contest or campaign, or just sponsoring it to drive passive awareness, the value of each post is enhanced because it's made and shared by a fan.

Equip Fans with Content Enhancements: Something often overlooked or underappreciated is that fans want to post more. They want to post cool content related to their favorite athletes or teams. Sports organizations that lean into this can realize a lot of value for themselves, and for sponsors.



Activate Passionate Fans (Continued)

There's a valuable opportunity in content enhancements such as branded filters and lenses, and even GIFs and stickers, to activate the team's brand and incorporate their partners' brands. When fans are given the opportunity to enhance their feeds with quality content, partners can be included, too. There's great value in that added, authentic reach.

Source Fan Content: Similar to the aforementioned UGC campaigns, which are asking fans to post content in their feeds, sports social media can provide a ton of value to sponsors by helping them acquire real content from their fans for the brand's channels. Such genuine content is far greater (and certainly more credible) than any sponsor could create on their own at any photo shoot or production. This often takes the form of contests, but the beauty with sports is that it doesn't have to take that form. Fans are often eager to express themselves through content, and, more importantly, feel like they have a direct relationship and throughline with the team. Whether it's asking fans to dress up their pet in team garb to fuel the feeds and channels of a pet partner, or having them show their fan spirit alongside a particular auto brand, there is value when this content is coming from real fans that the sponsors acquire and can repurpose elsewhere.

Sports social media can foster such fan activation, but gathering their content is hard. A content collection platform like Greenfly can facilitate this interaction and enable brands to capture content in an organized and consistent way, enforcing instructions and rules on content type, length, size and other submission guidelines.



How to Measure It

Submissions/posts, reach, impressions, engagements



Show Me the Money

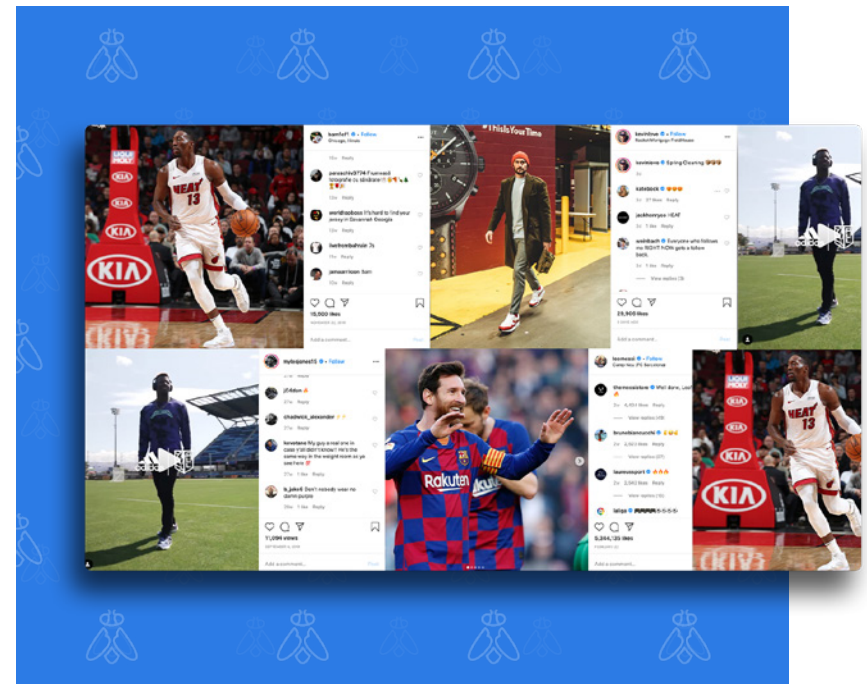
Branded impressions, content production

Activate Your Athletes

Just like activating fans to create branded content, teams and leagues can also facilitate their most powerful influencers — the athletes — to post content that drives value for sponsors, too.

Empower Athletes to Post Content: Similar to the fans, athletes want to post more content, too. They want to grow their own brands and followings. The key is to equip athletes to amplify the content that can include brands, by providing them the pics and videos to post to their followers. It can help augment the reach of an apparel partner or kit sponsor, sponsored content, or even get the backdrop of sponsor signage extra eyeballs—when athletes are entering the venue or playing in the game. There is a lot of value for sponsors to reach those engaged eyeballs, within the framing of real, organic content posted by athletes.

Sports teams and leagues can activate and empower athletes at scale by utilizing a content distribution platform like Greenfly that can connect them to the places where that content already lives. By funneling photos and videos to athletes in an organized, personalized manner, [it makes it easy for athletes to post more content](#)⁵. This activity benefits them and their personal brands, while delivering value to the team, league, and sponsors.



How to Measure It

Submissions/posts, reach, impressions, engagements



Show Me the Money

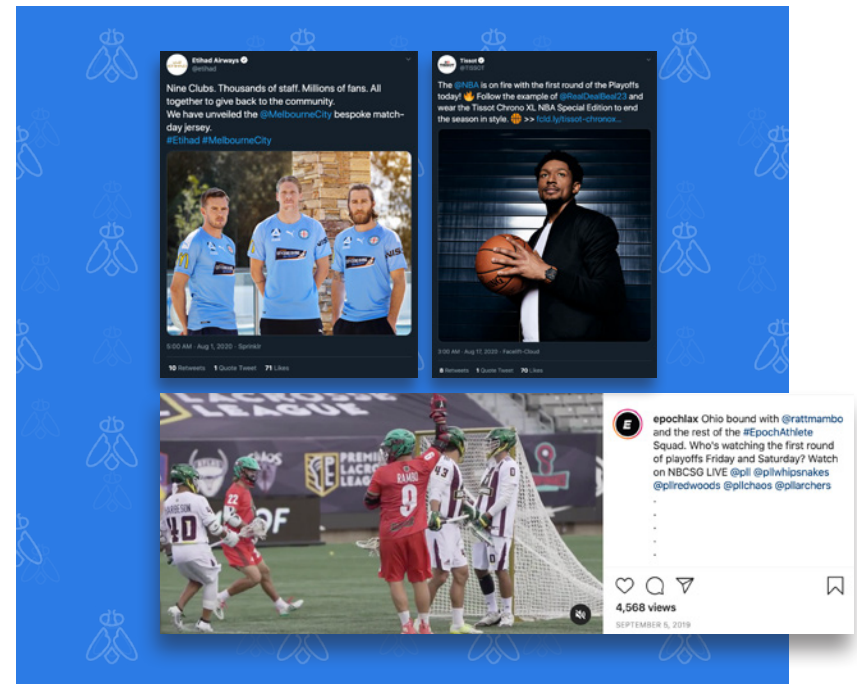
Branded impressions, content production

Activate Sponsor Social Channels

There are plenty of ways to drive value for a sponsor on your brand's social media channels, but what about the sponsor's own social and digital accounts? Teams spend a lot of time, money, and resources to build their social media presence, and sports properties can deliver meaningful value to their partners when they help them improve and engage sponsors' branded channels. Providing great content, showcasing games, athletes, and events proudly showcasing the sponsor's logo also helps sponsors save the cost and hassle of finding and licensing images and videos themselves.

Grant Access to the Content Firehose: When sponsors partner with an organization, they are often granted access to the organization's IP. But this is typically confined to sticking a logo on the website or calling themselves the official 'x' of the team or league. However, sponsorships are evolving into true partnerships and now partners can have frictionless access to content showcasing their logo in action. There may be in-game photos where a brand's logo on a shirt or signage in the background is visible. Or a picture from practice where an athlete is using a sponsor's product.

A modern, digitally-enabled partnership presents easier, more open access for sponsors to the highlights and photos that fans want on social media. They enable sponsors to grab a photo or video directly from a curated [Greenfly Gallery](#). It saves them time and money, adds value to the sponsorship, and makes them feel like a part of the organization — a true partner.



How to Measure It

Number of assets shared with partners, or used by partners, reach and engagements accrued from posts, follower growth on sponsor's social media channels



Show Me the Money

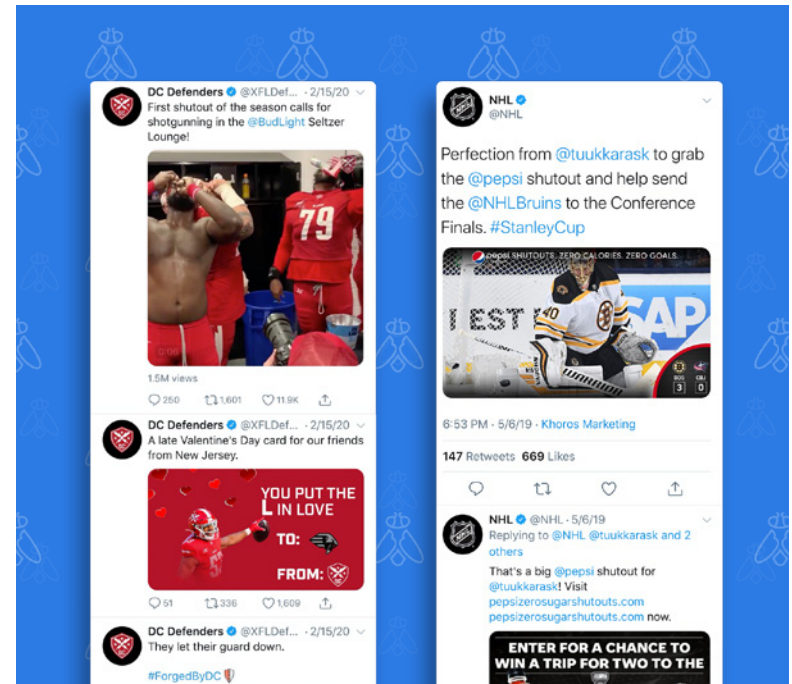
Elimination of costs for licensing assets, cost per impressions and engagements

Promote New Products

Businesses spend a lot of time, effort, and money in go-to market strategies for new products, and they recognize the potential for their partners in sports to help introduce those new products to the masses. Sports social media can be tremendously valuable to drive active awareness of those new products by integrating the sponsors strategically into their social media posts. This activity is already happening quite a bit, and providing great value to the sponsors.

Branded Content: As you'll recall, branded content is that which involves the sponsor's product or service directly, and the sports social media campaigns that do this well execute with quality content that fans don't feel has any scent of advertising. That's the sweet spot for sponsored social media. A fantastic, recent example played out in early 2020 in the XFL. Teams shared postgame celebration videos from inside the locker room (after victories), featuring players celebrating wins with cans of Bud Light Seltzer. It's the kind of behind-the-scenes access that fans crave, while being the most authentic and effective advertisement for the company's new Seltzer product. [And even better when [the players post it themselves](#)⁶]. Talk about authenticity and value.

Sponsored Content: Sports teams and leagues can also help sponsors promote their new products through memorable sponsored content. One of the best recent examples of this has been the NHL's work with Pepsi to promote their new rebranded Pepsi Zero Sugar product. Whenever there's a shutout in the league, the NHL posts about it as a "[Pepsi Zero Sugar, Zero Goals shutout](#)⁷", which also includes a call-to-action for fans to enter a sweepstakes. It's hard for NHL fans to not think of Pepsi Zero Sugar now whenever they see a shutout. That's the kind of active brand awareness Pepsi wanted in this piece of sponsored social (which also extends to their website and NHL Network videos).



How to Measure It

Submissions/posts, reach, impressions, engagements



Show Me the Money

Branded impressions, content production

Summary and Final Thoughts

There's a lot of value being created every day on sports social media, and that value can be appreciated (and paid for) when it is developed and shown to tie back to specific sponsor goals. When these goals are clearly defined, the social team can build content or integrate the partner into existing content to execute a strategy that produces the measurable value the sponsor seeks in their partnership, while being a part of a successful overall social strategy for the team or league.

We're not that far removed from the days when sponsors would send in post copy and creative to cut and paste onto the team's social channels. But that wasn't helping anyone. Thankfully, the industry has evolved, and continues to evolve, to the point today where there's less advertising and more sponsorship, less borrowing attention and more earning it, less social media as a throw-in and more key, strategic sponsorship pieces that can help the partner accomplish their goals.

Greenfly works with major sports organizations around the world to connect them and their content with athletes and fans, driving value for sponsors. Want to learn more? Reach out to us!



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