

COURSE DOCUMENT FOR

Introduction to Esports Industry and Ecosystem

Program	Esports
Code	PRG-101
College	Applied College — Al-Baha University
Number of weeks	15 weeks

Course Description

This course introduces students to the structure, scope, and evolution of the global esports industry. Learners will examine how competitive gaming has evolved from grassroots communities into a multibillion-dollar ecosystem that connects players, teams, publishers, tournament organisers, broadcasters, sponsors, and fans.

Learners will develop an understanding of how culture, technology, and business intersect to shape esports globally and regionally, with a special focus on Saudi Arabia's leadership role in the growth of esports in the Middle East. Through case studies, industry analysis, and collaborative projects, learners will explore the professional and ethical dimensions of esports operations within this rapidly expanding field.

Course Learning Objectives

Production

- Develop professional presentation and storytelling skills when communicating esports concepts and case studies.
- Collaborate in small groups to research and visually map industry ecosystems.
- Apply peer and instructor feedback to improve analytical clarity and communication quality.
- Create engaging multimedia presentations that effectively integrate visuals, data, and narrative to communicate esports ideas.

Knowledge

- Understand key terminology, genres, and operational frameworks within the esports industry.
- Explain the interrelationships among publishers, leagues, teams, and governing bodies.
- Identify the economic, cultural, and technological factors that influence esports development.
- Discuss regional differences in esports growth, with emphasis on Saudi Arabia's ecosystem.

Skills

- Conduct basic esports industry research using credible data and media sources.
- Compare and contrast traditional sports and esports organisational models.
- Analyse the perspectives of players, audiences, and sponsors through written and oral reporting.
- Apply strategic thinking to identify potential areas for innovation or reform in esports.

Values

- Demonstrate inclusivity and respect for cultural diversity in esports communities.
- Exhibit professionalism, integrity, and accountability in research and teamwork.
- Reflect on ethical responsibilities related to fair play, governance, and digital citizenship.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Describe the historical development and key structures of the global and regional esports industry.
- Identify and explain the roles of major stakeholders, including teams, publishers, event organisers, and sponsors.
- Analyse how technology, culture, and media converge to shape esports ecosystems and audience engagement.
- Evaluate the business and governance models that sustain professional esports organisations and events.

- Demonstrate foundational research and communication skills in discussing trends, issues, and ethical considerations within the esports industry.

Knowledge, Values, Skills

Knowledge

- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of esports structures, history, and global ecosystems, including competitive, commercial, and cultural dimensions.
- Explain core principles of esports management, media production, performance support, and community governance within professional and ethical frameworks.
- Analyze interrelationships among technology, audience engagement, and content innovation in shaping the esports industry.
- Evaluate global and regional factors influencing esports development, including cultural identity, policy, sustainability, and educational integration.

Values

- Work independently and collaboratively with professionalism, accountability, and respect for cultural diversity in local and global esports contexts.
- Demonstrate adaptability and resilience in response to technological, organizational, and ethical challenges in the evolving esports landscape.
- Engage in continuous professional development, critically reflecting on individual growth and contributing to the advancement of the esports community.

Skills

- Apply communication, production, and analytical skills to design, manage, and evaluate esports content, events, and campaigns.
- Collaborate effectively within interdisciplinary and multicultural teams, adopting professional roles across event management, broadcasting, and performance environments.
- Utilize data analytics and digital tools to assess performance metrics, fan behavior, and business outcomes in esports organizations.
- Develop and curate a professional portfolio that showcases competence in strategy, innovation, and reflective esports practice.

Assignments

Assignment 1: Esports Organisation Reference Document

Scenario

A new member has just joined the partnerships team at **Falcons Esports**, one of Saudi Arabia's most prominent esports organisations. In their first week, they've been asked to prepare a reference document on a major international esports organisation — one that Falcons is considering as a potential benchmarking partner. Their manager needs the profile ready before the team's strategy meeting at the end of the month. The document will be used to brief senior leadership, so it needs to be accurate, well-organised, and grounded in credible sources.

They have asked you, a new intern on the research team, to draft the profile. This is your first real deliverable at Falcons, and how you handle it will shape the kind of work you're trusted with going forward.

Requirements

Part 1: Organisation Profile

- Identify and name one major international esports organisation (e.g., T1, Team Liquid, Fnatic, or similar)
-

Describe the organisation's founding history, ownership structure, and primary markets (minimum 300 words)

- Identify at least six key stakeholder roles within the organisation (e.g., CEO, coach, content creator, sponsor liaison) and describe each role's function in one to two sentences
- Map the organisation's position within the broader esports ecosystem, identifying at least three external relationships (e.g., game publisher, broadcaster, sponsor)

Part 2: Annotated Industry Timeline

- Construct a timeline of at least eight significant milestones in the history of competitive gaming and esports, spanning from the 1970s to the present day
- Each entry must include: the year, the event or development, and a one-sentence annotation explaining its significance to the industry
- At least two entries must relate to developments in the MENA region or the growth of esports within Saudi Arabia

Part 3: Reflection Note

- Write a one-page reflection (approximately 300 words) identifying what surprised you most about the organisation or the industry's history, and what questions you are now asking that you were not asking before

Submission

Submit a single PDF containing all three parts in order: Organisation Profile, Annotated Timeline, and Reflection Note. The timeline may be presented as a formatted list or visual layout within the document.

Assignment 2: Esports Organisation Operations Brief

Scenario

Apex Media Group, a regional sports and entertainment consultancy based in Riyadh, has been approached by a group of investors interested in entering the esports industry. The investors want to back an existing organisation, but first, they need to understand how esports organisations actually make money, who runs them, and the risks they face.

Apex Media's lead analyst has tasked you with producing a structured analysis of one esports organisation's commercial model and operational structure. The organisation can be the same one you profiled in Assignment 1 or a different one, but this time the focus shifts from what the organisation *is* to how it *works*. It's very clear: the investors are not esports fans. The report needs to be evidence-based, plainly written, and honest about both the opportunities and the challenges. It will be presented at an investor briefing at the end of the module.

Requirements

Part 1: Commercial Model Analysis

- Identify and describe at least four distinct revenue streams used by the organisation (e.g., sponsorship, merchandise, prize money, streaming deals, franchising fees)
- For each revenue stream, explain how it generates income and assess its relative importance or risk to the organisation's financial sustainability
- Identify at least one broadcaster or media partner associated with the organisation and explain the nature of that relationship

Part 2: Operational Structure

- Describe the organisation's internal management structure, identifying key departments or functional areas (e.g., competitive, content, commercial, HR)
- Identify at least two ethical considerations relevant to the organisation's operations, such as player contracts, mental health support, diversity practices, or governance standards and explain how the organisation does or does not address them
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Identify one area where the organisation's operational practices could be improved, with a brief justification

Part 3: Investor Briefing Summary

- Write a 400–500-word briefing summary addressed directly to the Apex Media investors
- The summary must present a balanced view: articulating the commercial opportunity while identifying at least two material risks
- Tone should be professional and accessible, written for readers with business experience but no prior esports knowledge

Part 4: Reflection Note

- Write a one-page reflection (approximately 300 words) on how your understanding of how esports organisations operate has changed since the start of the course, referencing at least one specific moment of changed thinking

Submission

Submit a single PDF containing all four parts in order: Commercial Model Analysis, Operational Structure, Investor Briefing Summary, and Reflection Note. Each part should be clearly labelled with a heading.

Assignment 3: Industry Showcase Pitch

Scenario

Every year, **SAUDIA Esports Week**, a flagship industry conference held in Riyadh, invites emerging talent to present at its **Next Generation Showcase**: a dedicated session where students and early-career professionals pitch themselves to a room of industry recruiters, organisation leads, and media executives. This year, the showcase has introduced a portfolio submission requirement. Candidates must submit a professional portfolio in advance that demonstrates their industry knowledge, analytical capability, and readiness to contribute to the esports sector.

You have been selected to submit. The portfolio will be reviewed by a panel that includes representatives from organisations, event producers, and content studios, all of whom hire across the full spectrum of esports roles. They are looking for candidates who can think clearly about the industry, communicate professionally, and show genuine self-awareness about where they are starting from and where they are heading. A strong portfolio won't just list what you've learned; it will show how you think.

Requirements

Part 1: Industry Knowledge Summary

- Write a 500–600-word synthesis of the esports ecosystem as you now understand it, covering: the core stakeholder landscape, one or two commercial dynamics that shape how organisations operate, and the role of regional markets (particularly Saudi Arabia and MENA) in the industry's current and future growth
- This is not a research report. Include images, videos, and write in a confident, professional voice as someone who has studied the industry and formed a considered view
- Reference at least four credible sources (inline citations or a reference list)

Part 2: Career Pathway Map

- Identify three esports roles you are genuinely interested in pursuing, drawn from different areas of the industry (e.g., not three team management roles, spread across competitive, commercial, content, or operations)
- For each role: name the role, describe its core responsibilities in 3–4 sentences, identify the key skills or knowledge required, and explain in 2–3 sentences why it interests you personally
- Conclude with a 150–200-word statement identifying which of the three roles you would prioritise at this stage of your career and why

Part 3: Curated Resource Portfolio

- Compile an annotated list of at least eight industry resources, including a mix of publications, organisations, platforms, podcasts, or people to follow, that you would use to stay informed and continue developing professionally
- Each entry must include: the name and type of resource, a one-sentence description of what it covers, and a one-sentence explanation of why it is relevant to your chosen career direction

Part 4: Reflective Statement

- Write a 400–500-word reflective statement tracing your development across the course
- Address: what you thought you knew about esports before the course began, what most significantly changed your thinking, one moment of genuine uncertainty or surprise, and where you are now positioning yourself as a developing professional
- Be specific, a generic reflection will not distinguish you in a competitive showcase

Submission

Submit a single PDF or PPT containing all four parts in order: Industry Knowledge Summary, Career Pathway Map, Curated Resource Portfolio, and Reflective Statement. Each part should be clearly labelled. The document should read as a cohesive professional portfolio, not a collection of separate tasks, consistent formatting and presentation are expected.

Modules and Weeks

Module 1: Profiles

- Week 1: What Is Esports? Industry Origins and Global Reach
- Week 2: The Esports Ecosystem - Stakeholders, Roles, and Structures
- Week 3: Competitive Gaming Formats - Leagues, Tournaments, and Titles
- Week 4: Esports in the MENA Region and Saudi Vision 2030
- Week 5: Industry Profile Project

Module 2: Operations

- Week 6: Business Models - Sponsorship, Broadcasting, and Revenue Streams
- Week 7: Organisations and Teams - Management, Ownership, and Operations
- Week 8: Esports Media - Content, Streaming, and Audience Engagement
- Week 9: Ethics, Governance, and Player Welfare
- Week 10: Organisational Analysis Project

Module 3: Portfolio

- Week 11: Career Pathways Across the Esports Ecosystem
- Week 12: Research Methods for Industry Analysis
- Week 13: Emerging Trends - Technology, Publishing, and the Future of Esports
- Week 14: Reflecting on Professional Identity and Industry Readiness
- Week 15: Industry Readiness Portfolio

Lesson 1: What Is Esports? Industry Origins and Global Reach

Competitive Gaming Industry · Esports Development Eras · Regional Adoption Asymmetry

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will distinguish esports from adjacent gaming activities by the industry features that make it competitive, spectated, and commercial
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will locate significant moments in the historical arc of competitive gaming from the arcade era to the present
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will characterise the global footprint of esports, including its regional asymmetries

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can explain why a given gaming activity does or does not sit inside the esports industry, naming the features that decide it
- The learner can place named milestones onto a chronological arc and describe what each one shifted in the industry
- The learner can compare the reach of esports across two regions and identify the features that differentiate them

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

What makes something an esports industry rather than just a community of people who play games competitively? The question sounds simple, but it turns out that "competitive gaming" and "esports industry" do not mean the same thing, and the distinction matters enormously if you plan to work in this space. At the 2011 League of Legends World Championship in Los Angeles, something specific happened: a publisher, a paying audience, and a sponsored bracket converged in the same event. That convergence was not an accident. It was the result of conditions that had been building for decades, and understanding those conditions is where professional fluency in this industry begins.

The stakes are practical. Organisations operating in esports, including the partnerships team at any major club, need people who can read the industry's structure rather than just name its biggest tournaments. They need analysts who can distinguish between an activity with a large audience and one with a viable commercial model, who can explain why South Korea had a national esports broadcast infrastructure years before North America did, and who can locate any organisation they are researching on the historical arc that shaped it. These are the analytical tools that separate a credible industry reference document from a general-interest article.

The Profiles unit builds the profile of a major esports organisation from the ground up over five weeks. The work begins here, with the historical and definitional foundations that make every other claim in that profile legible. Before you can assess an organisation's market position, you need a map of the industry it operates inside.

By the end of the lesson, you will have a working definition of what places a gaming activity inside the esports industry, a grasp of the arc from arcade-era competition to today's franchise leagues, and an explanation of why the industry took root in some regions decades before others. You will also have a framework for annotating historical milestones with significance rather than description, and five entries of your own in the timeline that will carry through the Profiles unit.

1

Competitive Gaming Industry

distinguish esports from adjacent gaming activities by the industry features that make it competitive, spectated, and commercial

At the 2011 League of Legends Season 1 World Championship in Los Angeles, Riot Games broadcast a structured tournament to a live and online audience with a \$50,000 prize pool and publisher-backed production. That single event did not invent competitive gaming, but it demonstrated something that had rarely been true before: that a game publisher, a paying audience, and a sponsored bracket could converge in the same moment. That convergence is what separates an esports industry from an esports activity.

Core: The Industry Triad

What makes a competitive gaming activity part of the esports industry rather than adjacent to it? The answer is not prize money alone, nor audience size, nor sponsorship alone. The practitioner-standard definition requires three features operating together:

- **Competitive structure:** ranked play, qualification pathways, or bracket formats that distinguish competitors from spectators and determine outcomes.
- **Spectatorship mechanics:** broadcast infrastructure, an audience that watches rather than plays, and revenue generated from that audience (advertising, broadcast rights, subscriptions).
- **Commercial infrastructure:** sponsorship agreements, publisher licencing, media-rights deals, and the organisational apparatus that sustains them.

These three form a system, not a checklist. A local LAN tournament has competitive structure but no spectatorship economics. A charity livestream has an audience but no commercial infrastructure attached to competition outcomes. The esports industry is the zone where all three are co-present and mutually reinforcing. The S1 Worlds event demonstrates each arm: the publisher-backed bracket (structure), the live broadcast with Riot's production team (spectatorship), the \$50,000 prize pool drawn from player purchases (commercial).

Feature

Local LAN

Charity Stream

S1 Worlds

Competitive structure

Yes

No

Yes

Spectatorship mechanics

No

Yes

Yes

Commercial infrastructure

No

No

Yes

Checkpoint

Look at these three activities: a ranked Valorant Challengers qualifier run by Riot with a prize pool and Twitch broadcast; a casual Minecraft server with a self-organised PvP tournament; a Twitch charity marathon where viewers donate to unlock in-game events. Which sits inside the esports industry by the

triad definition, and which does not? Write a one-sentence verdict for each, naming the missing arm where relevant.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Return to the Valorant Challengers example from the Checkpoint. Identify one specific change (remove the broadcast, remove the prize pool, remove the qualification structure) and write two sentences: what the activity becomes after that change, and which arm of the triad it now lacks. Your verdict should be grounded in the triad, not in intuition about whether it "feels" like esports.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Competitive Gaming Industry". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Esports Development Eras

locate significant moments in the historical arc of competitive gaming from the arcade era to the present

Between 2000 and 2012, Ongamenet (OGN) in South Korea built and sustained a national broadcast league around Starcraft: Brood War. Players were salaried. Matches aired on dedicated cable channels. Fans followed team rosters the way North American fans followed baseball lineups. OGN's Brood War era is the practitioner-canonical case study for what it looks like when competitive gaming crosses from event-based competition into an institutionalised broadcast industry.

Core: The Three-Era Arc

The esports industry did not arrive fully formed. It developed through three phases, each defined by the dominant infrastructure model of its time.

Arcade and LAN era (1972 to the late 1990s). Competition existed but was event-based and local. Prize money was modest and irregular. Audiences were physically present but small. The 1972 Spacewar tournament at Stanford and the 1997 Red Annihilation Quake tournament (\$10,000 prize pool, 2,000 entrants) mark the boundaries: competition could attract capital and attention, but no sustained broadcast or commercial infrastructure existed to turn it into an industry.

Broadcast and institutional era (late 1990s to approximately 2012). OGN's Brood War league is the anchor. Competitive gaming acquired dedicated broadcast channels, salaried players, publisher-backed leagues, and the early streaming infrastructure of Justin.tv and Twitch's precursor. The 2006 World Cyber Games at Monza and the early Major League Gaming circuit in North America extended the model westward. The era's marker: competition became a media product, not merely an event.

Franchise and platform era (approximately 2012 to the present). Riot's 2017 LCS franchising announcement and the Overwatch League's city-based franchise model introduced investor capital, locked franchise slots, global broadcast rights, and VOD-on-demand distribution. The era's marker: competition became an investable asset class, not merely a media product.

The eras are not sealed chapters. OGN-era infrastructure (dedicated broadcast, player salaries) was the precondition for the Franchise era's investor story. Each era inherits what the previous era built.

Core: Significance Annotations

A significance annotation does not describe what happened. It names what the event changed or established in the industry's development.

Descriptive: "The 1997 Red Annihilation Quake tournament offered \$10,000 in prizes."

Significance: "The 1997 Red Annihilation Quake tournament established that PC competitive gaming could attract prize capital and media coverage as a standalone product, not a marketing add-on, seeding the commercial logic that the broadcast era would scale."

The difference is causal: a significance annotation names the shift, not the occurrence. The assignment's Part 2 annotations require this standard: eight milestones, each with one sentence naming what it changed.

Checkpoint

Place the OGN Brood War league in its era using the three-era arc. Which single feature of OGN's structure is the clearest marker of the broadcast/institutional era? Write one sentence naming the feature and explaining why it is not present in the arcade/LAN era.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Choose one milestone from the broadcast and institutional era (not OGN's Brood War league itself). Draft a significance annotation using the frame: "This moment shifted \[X\] because \[Y\], establishing \[Z\] for the industry." Then strip the frame and rewrite the same claim in natural prose. Both versions should make the same causal claim. The natural-prose version is the annotation standard the assignment requires.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Esports Development Eras". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Regional Adoption Asymmetry

characterise the global footprint of esports, including its regional asymmetries

Between 1998 and 2002, South Korea built out a national broadband network with government backing and, with it, a commercial PC cafe network known as PC-bang. By the mid-2000s, there were roughly 25,000 PC-bang locations across the country, each equipped with fast internet, standardised hardware, and social infrastructure around competitive play. This is the structural explanation for South Korea's early esports dominance. Not culture. Infrastructure.

Core: Structural Drivers of Regional Difference

Regional adoption asymmetry describes the condition in which esports develops at different speeds and in different forms across regions as a result of variation in four structural factors:

1. **Hardware density:** the availability of internet-connected gaming hardware at a price point accessible to a broad population.
2. **Regulatory recognition:** government or industry body acknowledgment of esports as a legitimate professional activity (Korea's KeSPA, established 2000, is the archetype).
3. **Publisher investment:** financial and logistical commitment from game publishers to sustain leagues and broadcast in a given region.
4. **Existing media infrastructure:** broadcast channels, streaming platforms, and production capacity that can carry competitive content to audiences at scale.

Comparing South Korea and North America on these axes shows the asymmetry mechanism clearly:

Factor

South Korea (by 2005)

North America (by 2005)

Hardware density

High (PC-bang network)

Moderate (home broadband growing, no network equivalent)

Regulatory recognition

Yes (KeSPA, 2000)

No equivalent

Publisher investment

Blizzard licenced OGN

Publisher-backed leagues nascent (early MLG)

Media infrastructure

OGN / MBC Game (dedicated channels)

No dedicated channel (Twitch not yet founded)

North America's esports growth arrived later and through different channels: college circuits (NACE, 2016), grassroots LAN scenes, and eventually publisher-backed leagues (LCS from 2013, Overwatch League from 2018) that imported the broadcast-infrastructure model Korea had built a decade earlier.

Core: Asymmetry is Not a Permanent Rank Order

The structural explanation matters because it predicts how regional gaps close: not through cultural change, but through infrastructure investment. The PC-bang precedent recurs. MENA's rapid esports development from approximately 2016 onward follows the same logic: Saudi state investment and Vision 2030 policy commitments created infrastructure conditions before organic market demand did. The analytical tool is the same: map the four structural factors, explain the gap, then explain the change.

Checkpoint

Identify one specific structural factor (not "culture") that explains why North America did not develop a sustained broadcast esports industry as early as South Korea. Write one sentence naming the factor and the mechanism by which its absence slowed development.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Choose two regions other than South Korea and North America. Using the four-factor framework, draft a side-by-side comparison in 100 to 150 words. You do not need complete data; name what you know, flag what you are uncertain about, and state what one piece of evidence would confirm or refute your leading claim. This is the same comparison operation the assignment's Part 1 ecosystem map will require.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Regional Adoption Asymmetry". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

Step 1. Read a worked annotation

Read the following completed milestone annotation:

> **1997 Red Annihilation Quake Tournament** This milestone established that PC competitive gaming could attract prize capital and media coverage as a standalone product, not a marketing add-on, seeding the commercial logic that the broadcast era would scale.

Identify the two moves this annotation makes: what happened, and what it shifted in the industry. Write one sentence naming each move.

Step 2. Evaluate a draft annotation

Read the following draft annotation for the 2006 World Cyber Games at Monza:

> **2006 World Cyber Games, Monza** The WCG held its annual finals in Italy, drawing competitors from over 70 countries to compete across multiple game titles.

Name one thing this annotation does well. Write one sentence revising it so it becomes a significance annotation: what did this event change or establish in the industry's development, not merely what occurred?

Step 3. Draft one milestone using the sentence frame

Choose one milestone from anywhere across the historical arc (arcade era through present). Draft your annotation using this frame:

> "This moment shifted \[X\] because \[Y\], establishing \[Z\] for the industry."

Write the annotation with the frame, then rewrite it without the frame in natural prose. Both versions must make the same causal claim.

Step 4. Draft four more milestones independently

Choose four more milestones. Requirements:

- Each annotation is one sentence naming what the milestone changed or established.
- Your five milestones together must span at least two different eras. Do not concentrate all five in one era.
- No frame. Write directly.

Step 5. Flag one uncertainty

Review your five milestones. Identify one you are uncertain about: its date, its significance claim, or whether it belongs in the esports arc at all. Write one sentence naming what evidence would resolve the uncertainty.

Submission

Submit your document containing all five milestone annotations, your Step 2 evaluation, and your Step 5 uncertainty note.

Feedback questions

- Which of your five milestones required the most revision to become a significance annotation rather than a description, and what changed between your first and final version?
- What does the pattern of eras your milestones cover tell you about where your existing knowledge of the industry's history is strongest and where it has gaps?

References

Readings

Raising the Stakes (T.L. Taylor, MIT Press, 2012) — Scholarly account of the transition from grassroots LAN competition to institutionalised esports industry; assign Chapters 1 and 2 as the definitional and historical grounding for the industry-triad frame.

<https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262300476/raising-the-stakes/>

Watch

Free to Play (2014, Valve) — Documentary following three professional Dota 2 players through the first \$1 million International prize pool, providing practitioner-level modelling of spectatorship economics and the franchise era from the inside.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=518sCCpqzbU>

Play

Esports Earnings Tournament Index — Browse historical prize pools by year (filter to pre-2010) to experience the industry's scale arc firsthand, grounding era-thinking in actual numbers before constructing your timeline.

<https://www.esportsearnings.com/>

Resources

Red Annihilation Tournament Record (Esports Earnings) — Primary source database entry for the 1997 Red Annihilation Quake tournament; use as a citation anchor when drafting your first milestone annotation.

<https://www.esportsearnings.com/tournaments/12213-red-annihilation>

Newzoo 2022 Global Esports and Live Streaming Market Report (Free Factsheet) — Industry data on global esports revenue, regional market size, and audience segmentation; reference during the regional-asymmetry topic and for timeline annotations that need a scale figure.

https://investgame.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2022_Newzoo_Free_Global_Esports_Live_Streaming_Market_Report.pdf

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

Desirable Difficulties

Bjork (1994) showed that learning strategies that feel harder in the short term · such as recall · produce stronger, more durable long-term memory.

Principles of Instruction

Rosenshine (2012) identifies daily review and retrieval as one of the most evidence-backed habits of effective instruction.

Roediger, H. L. & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). *Psychological Science*, 17(3), 249-255.

Bjork, R. A. (1994). In Metcalfe & Shimamura (Eds.), *Metacognition*. MIT Press.

Rosenshine, B. (2012). *Principles of Instruction*. *American Educator*, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 2: The Esports Ecosystem - Stakeholders, Roles, and Structures

Stakeholder Ecology · Organisational Roles · Value Chain Relationships

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will identify the principal stakeholder categories that compose the esports ecosystem
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will describe the internal roles that operate inside a competitive esports organisation
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will trace the external relationships an organisation maintains across the ecosystem

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can name the principal stakeholder categories and describe the function each one performs in the ecosystem
- The learner can map at least six internal roles to the work each one carries out and the others it depends on
- The learner can trace at least three external relationships an organisation depends on and describe what each relationship exchanges

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

When aXiomatic Gaming acquired Team Liquid in 2016, the deal surfaced something that is normally invisible: every stakeholder category in the esports ecosystem appeared at once. Investors, operators, players, sponsors, and broadcasters each responded to the same transaction in distinct ways, because each of them held a different structural position and depended on something different from the organisation. Most people who follow esports can name the teams and the games. Fewer can explain why the ecosystem is organised the way it is, who actually holds power within it, and how value moves between the parties.

That structural knowledge matters in practice. The assignment you are building toward requires you to profile a major international organisation in detail. The quality of that profile depends entirely on whether you can see the organisation clearly: who is inside it, what each person does and depends on, and how the organisation connects to the parties outside it. A profile assembled from name recognition and surface observation is brittle. A profile built from structural understanding holds up to scrutiny.

The lesson builds that structural literacy across three concept frames. You will identify the principal stakeholder categories and explain what each one contributes, map the internal roles that make a competitive organisation function and name the dependencies between them, and trace the external relationships that connect the organisation to the broader ecosystem by naming what is exchanged in each direction. The challenge session asks you to apply all three frames to your chosen organisation, producing a first draft of the maps the assignment will later ask you to refine.

1 Stakeholder Ecology

identify the principal stakeholder categories that compose the esports ecosystem

In 2016, Team Liquid was acquired by aXiomatic Gaming, a consortium of investors that included Tony Gonzalez, Peter Guber, and Ted Leonsis. The deal did not merely change ownership; it surfaced every

major stakeholder category at once. Investors brought capital and exit expectations. The existing operators retained control of daily performance. Players, coaches, and content staff remained the product. Sponsors watched to see whether the new ownership would stabilise or disrupt existing commercial relationships. One transaction, one complete map.

Core: Stakeholder Categories

The esports ecosystem is not a flat crowd of organisations and individuals. It is a structured set of stakeholder categories, each defined by the function it performs and the value it depends on receiving from others. Six categories organise most of what you observe:

Category

Primary function

Value received

Publishers

Control title IP; set competitive rules

Viewership, player retention, brand reach

Organisations (teams)

Compete and produce content

Revenue from sponsors, prize money, merch

Players and athletes

Perform in competition

Salary, exposure, career progression

Sponsors (brands)

Fund the ecosystem in exchange for audience access

Reach, sentiment, sales lift

Broadcasters and platforms

Distribute competition to audiences

Ad revenue, subscriptions, platform growth

Event organisers

Stage tournaments; manage logistics

Licensing fees, ticket sales, media rights

The critical insight is that every category exists because it creates or captures value the others cannot easily replace. Sponsors cannot build audiences without publishers and broadcasters. Broadcasters cannot fill air-time without organisations and events. Publishers cannot sustain titles without competitive play. Remove any category and the others are degraded.

This interdependence is what makes it an ecology, not a market. In a market, buyers and sellers are fungible. In an ecology, each category is structurally distinct and the system breaks if a category is missing or misaligned.

A diagram showing the six categories as nodes with directed value-flow edges makes this concrete:

```
Publisher (title IP / rules) → Organisation
Organisation (viewership, content) → Broadcaster
Broadcaster (audience reach) → Sponsor
Sponsor (revenue) → Organisation
Event Organiser (competitive stage) → Publisher & Organisation
Player (performance) → Organisation
```

Each arrow is a dependency; reverse the arrow and you see what the category needs.

Checkpoint

Look at one esports organisation you are aware of (not Team Liquid). Which stakeholder categories can you confirm are present in its ecosystem from public information alone? Which categories appear to be missing or invisible, and what might that absence tell you about that organisation's position in the ecosystem?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Choose any organisation you are already familiar with. List the six stakeholder categories and mark each one as confirmed, probable, or absent based on what you can find in five minutes of public-facing evidence. For any category you mark absent, write one sentence explaining what the absence might mean for the organisation's position in the ecosystem.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Stakeholder Ecology". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Organisational Roles

describe the internal roles that operate inside a competitive esports organisation

In 2021, T1 Entertainment and Sports published an organisational chart that became a reference point in practitioner commentary. What made it notable was its transparency: the chart included both the performance-facing side (head coach, assistant coaches, analysts, performance psychologist, players) and the business-facing side (CEO, brand partnerships, content production, social media). Observers could see, for the first time in detail at a major organisation, exactly which roles existed, how they were grouped, and how far the two sides of the organisation were structurally separated.

Core: Role Functions and Dependencies

Inside a competitive esports organisation, roles are not generic job titles transposed from another industry. They are function-specific positions shaped by the dual demands of competitive performance and commercial operation. Two axes organise the role landscape:

Performance-facing roles exist to put a winning team on the stage:

- **Head Coach** develops competitive strategy, manages the roster's in-game development, and leads scrim schedules.
- **Analyst** processes match data, opponent tendencies, and drafts to supply the coaching staff with actionable intelligence.
- **Team Manager** coordinates travel, scheduling, visa logistics, and player welfare; the operational backbone behind the performance side.
- **Performance Psychologist** manages mental conditioning, slump recovery, and inter-team dynamics.

Business-facing roles exist to convert competitive success into commercial return:

- **Sponsor Liaison / Brand Partnerships Manager** identifies, closes, and manages sponsor relationships; the external-relationship function made into a job.
- **Content Producer / Social Media Manager** translates competitive moments into content that sustains and grows the audience between events.
- **CEO / General Manager** holds the strategic direction, manages investor relationships, and makes structural decisions.

The two sides depend on each other in specific ways. The Head Coach needs the Analyst's data to make informed decisions; the Sponsor Liaison needs the team's competitive profile and content output to justify the partnership's value to the brand. Roles do not operate in isolation: each one has a dependency upstream (what it needs) and a contribution downstream (what it supplies).

Checkpoint

Pick one role from the chart above (Head Coach, Sponsor Liaison, or Performance Psychologist). Name two things that role needs from other roles to do its work, and two things it supplies to other roles. Does anything in the structure suggest those dependencies are formally recognised, or do they seem informal?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Using the T1 Entertainment and Sports chart or your candidate organisation, map six internal roles onto a two-column table: role title in the first column, a one-sentence description of its primary function and one named dependency in the second. When you are done, identify one role pair where the dependency flows both ways, and note what that mutual dependency means for how those roles coordinate.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Organisational Roles". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Value Chain Relationships

trace the external relationships an organisation maintains across the ecosystem

In 2018, Riot Games introduced the franchise slot model for the League Championship Series. Teams paid buy-in fees ranging from \$10 million to \$13 million USD for a permanent, protected spot in the league. In exchange, Riot provided guaranteed participation, a share of league revenues, and access to the LCS broadcast infrastructure. The terms were explicit: teams gave Riot capital, institutional commitment, and reputational skin in the game; Riot gave teams security, revenue access, and a distribution platform. The franchise slot agreement is the value chain relationship made contractual.

Core: Exchange Structure

An organisation's external relationships are not contacts or partnerships in a vague sense. They are structured exchanges where each party contributes specific things and receives specific things in return. The nature of what is exchanged determines the structural importance of the relationship.

Three external relationship types cover most of the ground:

Publisher relationship:

- Organisation gives: competitive participation, brand association, player talent pipeline, content co-production.
- Organisation receives: title access rights, competitive infrastructure (rules, servers, officials), broadcast distribution, co-marketing.

Broadcaster and platform relationship:

- Organisation gives: content rights, team presence and brand, competitive events as programming.
- Organisation receives: distribution reach, production value, broadcast fees or revenue share.

Sponsor relationship:

- Organisation gives: logo placement, audience reach, content integration, player endorsement.
- Organisation receives: cash, product, services, marketing infrastructure.

The analytical move is to name both sides of every exchange. An organisation that can only say "we have a deal with Riot" or "we work with Red Bull" has named a relationship but not understood it. Understanding the relationship requires knowing what each party is giving and what each party is receiving.

This connects to the lesson's earlier concept: stakeholder categories define who is in the ecosystem; value chain relationships define how each party is connected to the organisation through what they exchange.

Checkpoint

Look at one external relationship your candidate organisation has (a named sponsor, broadcaster, or publisher arrangement you can confirm from public sources). What is the organisation giving? What is the organisation receiving? Is there anything in the exchange you cannot confirm from public information? Name the specific question that would resolve it.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

You now hold three concept frames: stakeholder ecology (who is in the ecosystem and why), organisational roles (who does what inside the organisation and who they depend on), and value chain relationships (how the organisation connects outward through structured exchanges). Before the challenge session, write two sentences: one describing the single most important external relationship your candidate organisation holds, and one naming the one internal role you believe is most critical to maintaining that external relationship. You will carry both claims into the challenge and test them against evidence.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Value Chain Relationships". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. **Select your candidate organisation.** Choose one major international esports organisation you will profile for the assignment. Apply the stakeholder-ecology concept to confirm your choice: the organisation must be a genuine esports entity (not a brand, broadcaster, or publisher acting as an event host). Name the organisation and write one sentence explaining what confirms it belongs inside the esports ecosystem.
1. **Draft the internal-roles map.** Produce a first-pass map of at least six internal roles at your chosen organisation. For each role, record:
 - Role title (as close to the actual title as public evidence allows)
 - Function (one sentence: what this role does)
 - Named dependency (one other role or stakeholder category this role directly depends on to do its work)

Source from the organisation's public-facing materials: official website, LinkedIn listings, social media bios, news coverage. Cite the source for each role entry.

1. **Draft the external-relationships map.** Produce a first-pass map of at least three external relationships. For each relationship, record:
 - Partner category (publisher, broadcaster, or sponsor)
 - Partner name (the specific company or entity, not just the category)
 - What the organisation gives
 - What the organisation receives

Apply the value-chain concept directly: both sides of the exchange must be named for each entry.

1. **Flag your unknowns.** Identify one role and one relationship you cannot yet confirm from available public evidence. For each, write the specific question that would resolve the gap: not a general topic, but the precise information you would need and where you would look for it.

Submission

Submit your maps and unknowns as a single PDF document.

Feedback questions

-

Which of the six roles you mapped surprised you most, and what did you learn about the organisation by finding it?

- What made it harder to confirm one side of an external exchange than the other, and what does that difficulty tell you about how that relationship works?

References

Readings

Esports Governance and Stakeholder Dynamics — Peer-reviewed, open-access article that maps the principal stakeholder categories and governance dynamics of the esports ecosystem, developing the stakeholder-ecology concept at scholarly depth with an ecosystem diagram.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/19/8270>

Roles and Processes Inside Esports Teams — Systematic review of how roles and processes are organised inside competitive esports teams, grounding the organisational-roles concept in both practitioner evidence and research literature.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-024-05858-0>

Watch

Adjusting our League of Legends Esports Strategy in 2024 — A publisher-authored account of how Riot Games restructured the value exchange between publisher, teams, and broadcasters, showing the external-relationship concept from the perspective of the party holding structural power.

<https://www.riotgames.com/en/news/lol-esports-strategy-adjustments-2024>

Play

Esports Manager 2026 — Experience the internal roles of a competitive organisation firsthand by making roster, coaching, and partnership decisions that map directly to the stakeholder and role categories covered in the lesson.

https://store.steampowered.com/app/2749950/Esports_Manager_2026/

Resources

Esports Organisation Structure, Hierarchy, and Core Roles — Reference breakdown of the major internal roles at a competitive esports organisation; reach for this when building the internal-roles map in the challenge.

<https://esportstower.com/news/esports-organization-structure-hierarchy-and-core-roles/>

aXiomatic Acquires Controlling Interest in Team Liquid (Business Wire, 2016) — Primary-source press release for the lesson's stakeholder-ecology anchor, allowing you to trace the specific stakeholder categories and ownership relationships back to the original announcement.

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20160927006174/en/aXiomatic-Acquires-Controlling-Interest-in-Team-Liquid-a-Leading-Professional-Esports-Franchise>

League Championship Series (esports) — Reference overview of the LCS franchise structure, including the publisher-team-broadcaster relationship and franchise slot terms, supporting the value-chain concept and the external-relationships map.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_Championship_Series_\(esports\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_Championship_Series_(esports))

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

Desirable Difficulties

Bjork (1994) showed that learning strategies that feel harder in the short term · such as recall · produce stronger, more durable long-term memory.

Principles of Instruction

Rosenshine (2012) identifies daily review and retrieval as one of the most evidence-backed habits of effective instruction.

Roediger, H. L. & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). Psychological Science, 17(3), 249-255.

Bjork, R. A. (1994). In Metcalfe & Shimamura (Eds.), Metacognition. MIT Press.

Rosenshine, B. (2012). Principles of Instruction. American Educator, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 3: Competitive Gaming Formats - Leagues, Tournaments, and Titles

League and Tournament Structure · Franchised versus Open Circuit · Title Ecosystem Constraints

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will distinguish the major formats by which competitive gaming is organised
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will relate a chosen organisation to the competitive formats and titles in which it participates
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will explain how a title's competitive ecosystem shapes the organisations that compete within it

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can compare league, tournament, and circuit formats by structure, calendar, and qualification logic
- The learner can describe the competitive formats and titles a chosen organisation operates inside and explain what each one demands of the organisation
- The learner can explain how the ecosystem around a specific title shapes team strategy, roster composition, and revenue exposure

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

Why do some esports organisations spend millions securing a franchise slot while others grind through open qualifiers every season? The answer is not about ambition or budget alone; it is about structure. The competitive systems publishers build around their titles determine who participates, how often, under what conditions, and with what financial stakes. Understanding those systems is how practitioners read an organisation's decisions before they make them.

For anyone profiling an esports organisation, knowing that a team "competes in Valorant" or "plays in the DPC" is only the beginning. The structural type of each competition shapes what the organisation must plan for: whether rosters need to be locked months in advance, whether a bad split can cost a team its place in the ecosystem, or whether broadcast revenue is shared centrally or pursued independently. These are the questions that separate a surface-level profile from one that can actually inform a strategy meeting.

The lesson builds a three-type structural framework and works through two of the most debated transitions in recent competitive gaming. The challenge puts that framework to immediate use: you will map your chosen organisation's format participation, describe what each structure demands of it, and draft the competitive-formats section of your reference document with enough specificity to brief senior leadership on why the organisation operates the way it does.

1 League and Tournament Structure

distinguish the major formats by which competitive gaming is organised

In the League of Legends Championship Series, Riot operates a franchised regional league where the same organisations compete across a split-based calendar; directly below it sits the Challengers League, where teams earn promotion through open qualifier performance. These two tiers of a single title expose the structural decision at the centre of competitive gaming: whether participation is held or earned.

Core: Competitive Format Types

Competitive gaming organises itself around three structural types, and the differences between them are not cosmetic. A **league** runs a recurring set of matches among a fixed or semi-fixed membership across a defined split or season; entry is typically held, not won each cycle. A **tournament** brings a field of teams together for a bounded event, with entry earned through qualification or invitation; participation ends when the bracket resolves. A **circuit** strings multiple tournaments across a season and awards points at each, with cumulative totals determining access to a season-ending championship. The same title often layers these: a regional league feeds into an international tournament, which sits inside a point-accumulating circuit.

The axis that separates them is `_membership basis_` combined with `_qualification logic_`. In a league, belonging to the competition is the starting condition; in a tournament, it is the earned result; in a circuit, seasonal participation accumulates toward a later threshold.

Format

Membership basis

Calendar cadence

Qualification mechanism

Financial model

League

Held (recurring)

Ongoing splits or seasons

Relegation / promotion or franchise slot

Shared broadcast revenue, sponsor deals

Tournament

Earned per event

Bounded event windows

Open qualifier, direct invite, or circuit standing

Prize pool, event revenue

Circuit

Accumulated across events

Full season spanning multiple tournaments

Point-accumulation thresholds

Prize pool per major plus season bonus

Understanding which format structure a title uses is the first step in reading what an organisation inside that title must prepare for: how many matches per week, how far in advance rosters must be locked, and what counts as a season-ending result.

Checkpoint

The Valorant Champions Tour runs regional leagues, international tournaments, and a season-ending world championship. Using the three-type framework, identify which structural type each of these three tiers represents, and name the qualification logic that connects one tier to the next.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Select one esports title you are not studying for your assignment. Using the table structure above, place its competitive system into the three-column framework: name the format type, the membership basis, and the qualification mechanism. If the title layers more than one format type, map each layer separately. Be ready to explain why you placed each tier where you did.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "League and Tournament Structure". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Franchised versus Open Circuit

relate a chosen organisation to the competitive formats and titles in which it participates

When Riot Games restructured the Valorant Champions Tour in 2023, they replaced a system where any team could qualify through open regional competition with a partnership model: a fixed cohort of organisations contracted for multi-year participation, shared broadcast rights, and revenue guarantees. Teams outside the cohort compete in the Challengers tier with a defined but narrow promotion pathway. The shift made visible exactly what franchising transfers and what it removes.

Core: Structural Access and Risk Distribution

Franchising is not primarily about competition quality; it is about who bears risk and who holds access. In an open circuit, any qualifying team enters the competitive calendar; no organisation holds a guaranteed slot, and any team can lose its place through underperformance. Financial risk sits with the individual team: if you fail to qualify, you lose the revenue that comes from competing. In a franchised model, a fixed partnership cohort shares both revenue upside and schedule obligation. Organisations holding slots gain a predictable revenue floor through broadcast and sponsorship arrangements negotiated centrally; they lose the competitive pressure from below that open systems create.

The trade-offs are structural, not evaluative:

Dimension

Open circuit

Franchised league

Entry mechanism

Performance-based qualification

Contracted partnership slot

Roster investment risk

High (non-qualification = no revenue)

Lower (guaranteed season participation)

New-entrant pathway

Available each season

Restricted to defined promotion windows

Revenue model

Prize pool, individual sponsorship

Shared broadcast, centrally negotiated deals

Competitive pressure from below

Present (relegation or re-qual pressure)

Reduced or absent

For an organisation holding a franchise slot, this structure means the season is guaranteed but the obligation is also guaranteed: matches must be played, rosters must be maintained at competitive level, and the reputational cost of poor performance is borne by an organisation that cannot simply opt out.

Checkpoint

Name two consequences for an organisation holding a VCT partnership franchise slot and two consequences for a team competing in the Challengers tier that does not hold a slot. Focus on roster investment decisions and revenue exposure, not on match outcomes.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Your chosen organisation competes in at least one title. For that title, determine whether the competitive structure is franchised or open. Write a two-paragraph explanation: the first paragraph states the structural type and names the evidence that confirms it; the second paragraph names one decision your organisation makes because of that structure that it would make differently under the alternative system.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Franchised versus Open Circuit". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Title Ecosystem Constraints

explain how a title's competitive ecosystem shapes the organisations that compete within it

Valve's Dota Pro Circuit does not simply schedule matches. It distributes DPC points across regional leagues and international Majors across a full competitive year, with point totals determining direct invitations and regional qualifier seeding to The International. Every organisation inside the DPC ecosystem inherits the publisher's structural choices: how many Majors run, how many points regional league finishes award, and how travel schedules for Major participation overlap with regional play. The DPC calendar is the operating constraint; the organisation builds around it, not the reverse.

Core: Title Ecosystem as Strategic Constraint

A title ecosystem is the full set of competitive structures, events, and economic relationships a publisher has built around a specific game. Every organisation that competes within it inherits those structures as operating conditions. Valve's DPC illustrates how deep that inheritance goes.

The DPC distributes points through two parallel tracks: regional league play and international Major placements. Regional leagues run across multiple divisions (Upper and Lower); finishing positions award DPC points. Majors, held two or three times per season, award larger point blocks and prize money. The International invites the top point-accumulating teams directly; the remaining slots go to regional qualifiers. A simplified view of the flow:

```
Regional League (multiple divisions)
|
DPC Points accumulated
|
International Majors (2 to 3 per season)
|
Larger point blocks + prize money
```

|
The International (direct invites + regional qualifiers)

For an organisation inside the DPC, this structure produces specific decisions that are not available to organisations outside it: Which division does the roster need to place in to accumulate viable TI-qualification points? Can the team travel to all Majors without disrupting regional league obligations? How does a roster change mid-season affect DPC point ownership? These are not abstract questions; they are operational constraints the publisher's structural choices impose.

Checkpoint

Name one decision a DPC-participating organisation must make because of the DPC calendar structure that an organisation competing only in standalone LAN tournaments does not face. Be specific: name the decision and explain what the calendar structure is that creates it.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Choose a title ecosystem different from Dota 2. Identify one structural choice the publisher has made in that title's competitive system (how points are distributed, how majors are seeded, how regional play feeds into international events). Write a short paragraph explaining one operational decision an organisation inside that ecosystem must make because of that structural choice. Ground your paragraph in how the structure creates the obligation, not just what the obligation is.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Title Ecosystem Constraints". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. **Identify and categorise.** List every competitive title your chosen organisation actively participates in. For each title, assign it to a structural category using the lesson's three-type framework (league, tournament, circuit, or franchised partnership). Record category only at this stage; no explanation yet.
1. **Describe structural demands.** For each title in your list, write two to three sentences explaining what the format demands of your organisation: calendar obligations, roster requirements, qualification pathways, or revenue model implications that flow from the structure. Base each description on the structural type you assigned, not on the organisation's general reputation.
1. **Flag and question.** Identify at least one title on your list where the format structure is unclear or where you cannot confirm the structural category with the sources you currently have. Write one specific question that would resolve the uncertainty, and name the type of source or evidence that would answer it (for example: the publisher's competitive operations page, a Liquipedia entry, an industry news report).
1. **Draft the profile section.** Assemble the above into a coherent competitive-formats section for your organisation profile. The section should connect format participation to at least one observable organisational decision: roster size, regional presence, travel schedule, or broadcast relationship. Write for a reader who knows what a franchise model is but does not know how your chosen organisation navigates it.

Submission

Submit your competitive-formats section as a single document, including your categorisation list, structural demand descriptions, flagged uncertainty, and assembled profile section.

Feedback questions

- Which structural category was hardest to confirm for one of your titles, and what made the categorisation difficult?
-

Looking at your assembled section, which format demand shapes your organisation's decisions most visibly, and how do you know?

References

Readings

Centralized vs. Open Tournaments in Esports (Esports Insider) — Industry analysis contrasting franchised and open structural models with attention to financial logic, entry barriers, and real-title examples across the week's core concept.

<https://esportsinsider.com/centralized-vs-open-tournaments-in-esports>

VCT 2023 Partnership and League Format Explained (Dot Esports) — Detailed breakdown of what changed structurally and financially when Riot shifted from open qualification to a partnership model, grounding the lesson's franchised-versus-open contrast in a documented transition.

<https://dotesports.com/valorant/news/vct-2023-explained-partnership-promotion-league-format-and-more>

Watch

VCT Competitive Operations Hub — Riot's official resource explaining VCT partnership structure, how Challengers feeds into the partnership tier, and how international events are seeded.

<https://competitiveops.riotgames.com/en-US/VALORANT>

Play

Dota 2 Pro Circuit Regional League — Spectate live matches or watch VODs from a publisher-run point circuit to observe how results translate into DPC standings and regional qualification.

<https://www.dota2.com/procircuit>

Resources

Dota Pro Circuit on Liquipedia — Living reference for DPC structure, regional divisions, major qualification mechanics, and historical seasons; use when mapping a DPC-participating organisation's competitive obligations in the challenge.

https://liquipedia.net/dota2/Dota_Pro_Circuit

Tournament Formats in Esports (British Esports Federation) — Plain-language definitions of round robin, double elimination, Swiss, and best-of formats; reach for this when categorising a title's format type in the challenge.

<https://britishesports.org/the-hub/advice/tournament-formats-in-esports/>

Esports Tournament Formats Explained (esports.net) — Reference guide covering the full range of bracket and league formats used across titles; useful for the challenge's categorisation step when a title's format is unfamiliar.

<https://www.esports.net/wiki/guides/esports-tournament-formats/>

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

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Bjork, R. A. (1994). In Metcalfe & Shimamura (Eds.), *Metacognition*. MIT Press.

Rosenshine, B. (2012). *Principles of Instruction*. *American Educator*, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 4: Esports in the MENA Region and Saudi Vision 2030

Regional Adoption Asymmetry · Vision 2030 Investment Logic · Comparative Regional Positioning

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will describe the trajectory of esports development across the MENA region
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will explain the role of Saudi Vision 2030 in shaping the local and regional esports industry
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will position the MENA region inside the global esports ecosystem

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can describe the trajectory of esports development across the MENA region with reference to specific events, organisations, and policy moments
- The learner can explain how Vision 2030 commitments translate into investment, infrastructure, and event activity inside the esports industry
- The learner can compare the MENA region's position in the global ecosystem with at least one other region and identify what differentiates them

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

In 2022, Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund acquired controlling stakes in ESL and FACEIT, two of the companies that run the competitive circuits top esports organisations depend on. That transaction did not happen because the return on a tournament organiser looked attractive; it happened because the Saudi government had decided that owning global esports infrastructure was part of a national strategy. If you want to understand who shapes the industry you are entering, you need to understand why a sovereign wealth fund is now one of its most powerful actors.

The MENA region's position in global esports is not simply the product of growing audiences or rising investment; it is the result of a structurally different pathway to industry development. While most regions built their esports ecosystems through communities, publishers, and private capital accumulating over years, MENA compressed that timeline through directed state capital and mega-event infrastructure. That difference has consequences for every organisation considering whether to operate in the region, partner with its institutions, or compete in its circuits.

By the end of this lesson, you will have the tools to explain why MENA's trajectory looks the way it does, how Vision 2030 translates into specific industry outcomes, and how to compare MENA's structural position to another region using dimensions that practitioners actually use. The challenge asks you to put those tools to work on your organisation profile, drafting the MENA entries your assignment requires.

1 Regional Adoption Asymmetry

describe the trajectory of esports development across the MENA region

Gamers8 launched in Riyadh in 2022 as one of the highest-prize esports festivals in the world, drawing top teams across multiple titles to a purpose-built arena funded by state capital. In a single event, it made visible what had been developing quietly for years: a region building an esports industry not through the gradual community and publisher pathways common elsewhere, but through concentrated

sovereign investment. Gamers8 is the practitioner-legible pivot point for understanding why MENA's esports trajectory looks structurally different from every other region's.

Core: Organic Growth vs. State-Catalysed Growth

Most established esports regions built their industries through a recognisable sequence: arcade and LAN communities formed first, publishers formalised competitive structures around their titles, and commercial sponsors entered once audiences were proven. North America, Western Europe, and South Korea each followed some version of this path at different speeds. The capital came from within the industry or adjacent entertainment sectors; the state's role, when present, was regulatory rather than generative.

MENA's trajectory is structurally different. The region had early signs of gaming culture, including Gulf LAN cafes, national gaming federations, and regional tournament scenes through the 2000s and 2010s, but the ecosystem lacked the publisher density or domestic market size to compound at the rate seen elsewhere. What changed the trajectory was not organic accumulation reaching a critical mass; it was the arrival of state capital as a deliberate policy instrument. The Saudi government began directing sovereign wealth toward esports infrastructure, event hosting, and prize-pool funding in the late 2010s, compressing a decade of organic development into a few years of directed investment.

This distinction matters for practitioners. When you analyse a region's esports industry, the question is not only "how big is it?" but "what generated it?" Capital source shapes what is durable, what is dependent on continued state support, and what export leverage the region has. MENA's growth is substantial and rapid precisely because the pathway was different, not despite it.

Example. Compare the Gulf LAN scene of 2010 to the 2023 Esports World Cup: both are in MENA, but one was community-funded and locally attended, the other was globally broadcast and state-funded. The shift between them is not a matter of degree; it is a structural change in who is investing and why.

Checkpoint

Look at the following list of MENA esports moments: Gulf LAN cafe tournaments (early 2000s), the formation of the Saudi Esports Federation (2017), Gamers8 launch (2022). Classify each as community-led, publisher-led, or state-led and explain what feature of each event supports that classification.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Write one sentence that names two pre-2022 MENA events that showed the region was building toward a concentrated investment moment, and for each event, state whether it was community-led, publisher-led, or state-led. Then write a second sentence that names the feature of MENA's growth that distinguishes it from the organic pathway you would expect in a region without concentrated state capital. Keep the total under 75 words.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Regional Adoption Asymmetry". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Vision 2030 Investment Logic

explain the role of Saudi Vision 2030 in shaping the local and regional esports industry

In 2022, Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund acquired a majority stake in ESL and FACEIT, two of the largest competitive gaming infrastructure companies in the world. This was not a sponsorship deal or a naming-rights arrangement; it was direct ownership of the organisations that run tournament circuits, matchmaking platforms, and competitive format standards used globally. For practitioners, this transaction made the abstract relationship between Vision 2030 and the esports industry concrete: sovereign capital had purchased a structural position inside the industry's operating layer.

Core: Vision 2030 and the Esports Industry

Vision 2030 is Saudi Arabia's national policy framework for diversifying the economy away from oil dependency. Its pillars include entertainment, the digital economy, and sports development, and each of these intersects with esports in operational terms. The framework does not simply endorse esports as a cultural good; it creates mechanisms that direct capital into the industry: prize-pool funding through the Esports World Cup Foundation, infrastructure investment in arenas and broadcast facilities, event-hosting mandates that bring global circuits to Riyadh, and national team programs that build domestic competitive capacity.

The key distinction for practitioners is between investment as business and investment as policy instrument. A private fund invests in esports to generate a financial return; success is measured in revenue, margin, and exit value. A sovereign fund investing as a policy instrument measures success differently: youth employment, soft power (the capacity to attract international attention and shape how the country is perceived), economic diversification (reduced oil dependency), and tourism revenue from visiting fans and delegations. ESG and return considerations still apply, but the objective function includes social and geopolitical outcomes that no private investor would count.

The PIF/ESL/FACEIT transaction illustrates this directly. PIF acquired global circuit infrastructure not to maximise tournament revenue but to secure access to the competitive formats that govern how the world's top teams compete. An organisation wanting to compete at the highest levels in CS2 or Dota 2 must now engage with platforms that Saudi capital controls. That is soft power translated into structural leverage.

Example. Compare two investments: a private equity firm acquires a struggling tournament organiser to restructure costs and sell it in five years. PIF acquires ESL/FACEIT to ensure that the circuits Saudi teams and Saudi-hosted events plug into are controlled by Saudi-aligned capital. The first investor exits on return; the second investor stays because the strategic value is persistent, not transactional.

Vision 2030 Mechanism

Esports Industry Outcome

Entertainment sector mandate

Arena construction, broadcast infrastructure

Digital economy pillar

Esports platform investment (ESL/FACEIT)

Sports development fund

National team programs, prize-pool injections

Event-hosting targets

Esports World Cup, international circuit legs in Riyadh

Checkpoint

Identify which Vision 2030 pillars each of the following serves: (a) construction of the Esports World Cup arena complex, (b) the PIF acquisition of ESL/FACEIT, (c) the Saudi national esports team program. For each, state the pillar and explain in one sentence why the investment makes sense under that pillar's logic rather than pure commercial logic.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Write one sentence that connects a specific Vision 2030 commitment (name it) to a specific esports industry outcome (name it) and explains the mechanism linking them. This is the template you will use in the challenge when drafting the MENA exposure paragraph for your organisation profile.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Vision 2030 Investment Logic". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Comparative Regional Positioning

position the MENA region inside the global esports ecosystem

South Korea's esports dominance is built on PC-bang culture, fibre internet penetration in the early 2000s, and Blizzard's decision to broadcast StarCraft on national television, which created the first mass audience for competitive gaming. Saudi Arabia's emerging dominance is built on sovereign fund capital, mega-event infrastructure, and deliberate acquisition of the platforms that govern global competition. Both regions have produced world-class competitive ecosystems; the structural inputs that generated them are almost entirely different. That contrast is not a curiosity; it is a practitioner tool for reading any region's esports position.

Core: Structural Dimensions of Regional Comparison

Comparing two esports regions on outcomes alone (prize money, team rankings, audience size) tells you what is true but not why. Practitioners compare regions on structural dimensions because those dimensions predict what a region can sustain, what it depends on, and where it is exposed. Five dimensions are useful:

- **Capital source.** Who funds the industry? Private investors, publishers, community revenue, or sovereign capital? Capital source determines who controls the agenda and what return is expected.
- **Regulatory environment.** How does government relate to the industry? Hands-off, enabling, or actively directing? South Korea's government was enabling in the early period (broadcast rights, national team support); Saudi Arabia's is directing.
- **Youth demographics and digital infrastructure.** A young population with high smartphone and broadband penetration creates a large potential audience and player base; MENA has both in significant numbers.
- **Publisher and developer presence.** Are the companies that create the games the industry runs on based in or closely tied to the region? South Korea had Blizzard presence and later built its own publishers; MENA relies on international titles.
- **Industry pathway.** Community-led, publisher-led, or state-catalysed? Determines the pace of growth, the fragility of funding, and the export leverage the region has.

Dimension

South Korea

Saudi Arabia / MENA

Capital source

Publisher + private + community

Sovereign (PIF) + state mandate

Regulatory posture

Enabling (broadcast rights, team licensing)

Directing (event mandates, fund deployment)

Youth demographics

Moderate youth bulge; high broadband

Large youth bulge; growing broadband

Publisher/developer presence

Strong (Blizzard KR, Riot, local studios)

Absent; reliant on international publishers

Industry pathway

Organic (PC-bang + publisher-led)

State-catalysed (sovereign capital + mega-events)

The comparison reveals a structural asymmetry: South Korea's esports industry can sustain itself if the state disengages because private and publisher capital is embedded. Saudi Arabia's current industry is deeply dependent on continued Vision 2030 commitment; if state investment priorities shifted, the infrastructure would face significant pressure. That is not a failure of the Saudi model; it is a feature of the state-catalysed pathway that practitioners need to understand when assessing risk, partnership viability, or market entry.

Example. An esports organisation evaluating whether to establish a regional presence in MENA should ask: is this region's infrastructure durable without state support, or is it contingent on Vision 2030 continuing to fund it? The same question does not arise for South Korea because the private and community capital layers are thick enough to sustain operations independently.

Checkpoint

Which of the five structural dimensions most differentiates South Korea's trajectory from Saudi Arabia's, and why? Write your answer as one sentence that names the dimension and states what the difference in that dimension produces in terms of industry shape or risk.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Using the five comparison dimensions, write two sentences that place MENA inside the global esports landscape relative to one other region you know from earlier weeks (choose North America, Western Europe, or South Korea). The first sentence states where MENA sits on at least two dimensions relative to that region. The second sentence names the most significant structural consequence of that positioning for an organisation considering operating in MENA.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Comparative Regional Positioning". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. Review the annotation format you used in your earlier timeline fragment: year, event, one-sentence significance. You already hold this structure; the task here adds new content to it, not a new format.
1. Generate a candidate list of at least three MENA or Saudi esports events, initiatives, or policy moments from the lesson. For each candidate, note whether it is community-led, publisher-led, or state-led, using the adoption-asymmetry framework from Topic 1.
1. Evaluate your candidates. For each, ask: Is this event real and nameable? Can you write a significance annotation grounded in a specific consequence related to state investment, regional asymmetry, or comparative positioning? Select the two strongest candidates.
1. Write two MENA or Saudi timeline entries in annotation format. Each entry must include: the year, the name of the event or development, and a one-sentence significance annotation that names a specific industry-level consequence. Tie each annotation to one of the lesson's concepts.
1. Draft a short paragraph (75 to 150 words) placing your chosen organisation inside the MENA context. State whether the organisation operates in MENA, holds partnerships there, or is absent from the region and why. Use the comparative-positioning framework from Topic 3 to ground at least one claim in a named structural dimension (capital source, regulatory environment, publisher presence, or industry pathway).
1. Flag any claim you cannot yet support with a named source. For each flagged claim, write the specific search query you would use to find evidence. The query should name the event, organisation, or policy and the type of source you expect to find (official report, news coverage, federation announcement).

Submission

Submit your two annotated timeline entries, your MENA exposure paragraph, and your list of flagged claims with search queries as a single document.

Feedback questions

- Which of your two MENA timeline entries carries the stronger significance annotation, and what makes it stronger?
- What did you discover about your chosen organisation's relationship to the MENA region that you did not know before drafting the paragraph?

References

Readings

Saudi Esports Federation Official Site — The federation's site carries programme descriptions, event calendars, and national team information, making it a primary source for tracing the mechanisms Vision 2030 activates inside the industry.

<https://esports.com.sa/>

Vision 2030 Official Portal — The source document for Vision 2030's diversification and entertainment mandates; read the sectors relevant to esports (entertainment, digital economy, sports) to trace how policy commitment translates into industry investment.

<https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/>

Watch

Saudi Esports Federation Official Channel — The Federation's own video output shows how state esports infrastructure presents itself to the industry, grounding the policy-to-industry link in the federation's institutional voice and the events it promotes.

<https://www.youtube.com/@SaudiEsportsFederation>

Play

Esports World Cup Live Broadcast — Watch what state-backed mega-event esports looks like as a live product; the production scale, international talent, and audience experience are the practitioner reality that Vision 2030 investment built.

<https://www.twitch.tv/esportsworldcup>

Resources

Esports World Cup Foundation — Reference site for event structure, participating organisations, prize pool data, and host-city context; return to this during the challenge when drafting MENA milestone annotations and the organisation exposure paragraph.

<https://esportsworldcup.com/>

Newzoo Global Esports and Live Streaming Market Report — Industry benchmark data including regional breakdowns; use the regional comparison tables to support structural-dimension claims in the challenge and assignment.

<https://newzoo.com/resources/trending/global-esports-live-streaming-market-report/>

Recall Test

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What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

Desirable Difficulties

Bjork (1994) showed that learning strategies that feel harder in the short term · such as recall · produce stronger, more durable long-term memory.

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Roediger, H. L. & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). *Psychological Science*, 17(3), 249-255.

Bjork, R. A. (1994). In Metcalfe & Shimamura (Eds.), *Metacognition*. MIT Press.

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Lesson 5: Industry Profile Project

ASSESSMENT WEEK

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Rosenshine, B. (2012). *Principles of Instruction*. *American Educator*, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 6: Business Models - Sponsorship, Broadcasting, and Revenue Streams

Revenue Stream Portfolio · Sponsorship Economics · Revenue Risk Profile

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will identify the revenue streams that fund a competitive esports organisation
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will explain how sponsorship and broadcasting deals are structured inside the industry
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will assess the relative importance and risk of each revenue stream to an organisation's financial position

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can identify at least four revenue streams that fund a chosen organisation and describe how each one generates income
- The learner can explain how sponsorship and broadcasting arrangements are structured and what each party gives and receives
- The learner can assess the relative importance and risk of each revenue stream to a chosen organisation's financial position

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

When the Overwatch League announced its contraction in 2023, some of the most prominent team brands in esports found themselves exposed in ways that surprised even industry observers. These were not small operations; they were franchised organisations that had paid substantial entry fees to compete in the most structured league format esports had ever attempted. What undid some of them was not competitive failure but financial architecture: they had built around a single dominant revenue source, and when that source shifted, there was nothing underneath it.

Understanding how esports organisations actually make money is one of the most practically useful things you can do as someone preparing to work in this industry. Knowing that a team has sponsors is not the same as knowing what those sponsors pay for, how the deal is structured, or what happens when the relationship ends. Knowing that an organisation earns prize money does not tell you whether that income is reliable enough to build a payroll around. The commercial model of an esports organisation is a portfolio of distinct revenue streams, each operating differently, each carrying its own risk. Investors, operators, and analysts all need to read that portfolio clearly.

By the time you finish, you will have mapped the revenue streams of a real esports organisation, explained how each one generates income, and assessed where the portfolio is most exposed. That analysis forms the foundation of the commercial section of the operations brief you are building throughout the Operations unit.

1 Revenue Stream Portfolio

identify the revenue streams that fund a competitive esports organisation

Team Liquid's publicly available investor disclosures and sponsor communications (2021 to 2023) lay out something unusual for esports: a traceable map of distinct income lines. Merchandise sales, title sponsorships, content licencing deals, prize winnings, and co-produced events all appear as separate

categories, each with its own generation mechanism. That transparency makes Team Liquid a useful reference point for learning to read a portfolio rather than a single revenue figure.

Core: Revenue Stream Portfolio

A revenue stream portfolio is the structured set of distinct income sources an organisation holds at one time, each with its own generation logic. The key word is distinct: two sources that look related may belong to separate categories. Prize money from tournament placement operates differently from a broadcast revenue share, which operates differently from a direct sponsorship fee. Mapping the portfolio means naming each stream and describing the mechanism by which it converts activity into income.

The Team Liquid portfolio illustrates the four major categories you will encounter across the industry:

Stream

Generation mechanism

Title and category sponsorships

Contracted fees paid by brands in exchange for defined rights (logo placement, social activation, product integration)

Merchandise and apparel

Margin on unit sales sold through direct-to-consumer or licenced retail channels

Content licencing

Fees or revenue shares paid by platforms or third parties to distribute Team Liquid content

Prize money

Winnings distributed by tournament operators based on competitive placement

Event co-production

Revenue from producing or co-hosting events where Team Liquid acts as a commercial partner

Not every item on a public partner page is a distinct revenue stream. A hardware partner (peripherals) and a software partner (energy management software) may both be sponsorships, meaning they are sub-items within the same stream category. The portfolio map consolidates sub-items into categories and names the mechanism, not just the brand.

Checkpoint

You are reviewing a mid-tier esports organisation's website. You find: a named title sponsor, three "official partner" brands, a merchandise store, a Twitch channel with subscriber revenue, and two recent tournament wins. How many distinct revenue streams does this represent? What information would you need before you could be certain?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Open the public-facing materials for your chosen organisation (website, press releases, social channels). List every income source you can identify from public evidence. Then group the items into distinct stream categories, consolidating sub-items, and note the generation mechanism for each. You should be able to name at least three categories; the challenge for this topic asks for four or more. Write one sentence per category describing how it generates income.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Revenue Stream Portfolio". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Sponsorship Economics

explain how sponsorship and broadcasting deals are structured inside the industry

The Cloud9 and HyperX partnership is one of the most documented sponsorship structures in esports, covered in Bryce Blum's esports contract law writing and referenced extensively in Sports Business Journal coverage. What makes it useful for study is not just that it happened, but that enough detail is on the record to see what each party gave and what each party received: branding rights, product integration, co-branded events, social activation, and the performance expectations attached to each.

Core: Sponsorship Economics

Sponsorship economics describes the bilateral exchange structure inside a sponsorship deal. It is a trade, not a donation. The organisation provides a defined bundle of rights and assets; the brand provides a contracted fee and, often, product or marketing co-investment. Understanding the deal requires being able to name both sides of the exchange.

The Cloud9 / HyperX structure demonstrates the typical anatomy:

Brand rights (what the organisation provides):

- Logo placement across defined surfaces (jersey, helmet, social profile, broadcast backdrop)
- Product integration rights (team uses HyperX peripherals in play and content)
- Co-branded event and content activation rights

Brand value received:

- Cash fee contracted over the deal term
- Access to Cloud9's audience for product marketing
- Co-marketing lift from association with the team's competitive results

Performance and exit conditions: Performance clauses often attach to audience reach or content output. If the team loses viewership or fails to produce agreed content volume, the renewal terms or fee structure may be affected. Exit conditions specify when either party can terminate without penalty.

A sponsorship deal's value to the brand depends on audience reach, content output, and competitive visibility. This means a team's commercial value and its competitive investment are not separate concerns: a stronger competitive roster typically supports a higher content output and viewership figure, which supports a higher sponsorship fee.

Checkpoint

A brand is deciding whether to renew a sponsorship with an esports organisation after one year. What three pieces of information would the brand most need to make that decision, and where would it likely find each one?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Identify one confirmed sponsor of your chosen organisation. Use public evidence (press release, sponsor page, social posts) to list: the rights the sponsor likely holds; whether there is visible activation (co-branded content, events, product integration); and what you cannot confirm from public sources alone. Write two to three sentences summarising the deal structure as you can read it.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Sponsorship Economics". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Revenue Risk Profile

assess the relative importance and risk of each revenue stream to an organisation's financial position

When the Overwatch League contracted in 2023 and the league's broadcast revenue-sharing arrangements changed, some franchised teams found that a large portion of their projected income had been built on a single stream. Teams that had relied on league-distributed broadcast revenue without developing alternative income lines faced the sharpest exposure. The OWL contraction is a case study not in bad management but in what revenue concentration risk looks like when the external condition that sustains a dominant stream changes.

Core: Revenue Risk Profile

A revenue risk profile is an assessment of how exposed an organisation is to income disruption across its portfolio. It moves beyond listing streams to asking three questions about each one:

1. **Stability:** Is this stream recurring (contracted, subscription-based, season-long) or one-time (a tournament prize, a single event deal)?
2. **Concentration:** What share of the organisation's total income does this stream represent? A stream that funds 60% of operations is structurally different from one that funds 10%.
3. **Substitutability:** If this stream failed or contracted, how quickly and easily could another stream fill the gap?

Applying these three dimensions to the OWL case: franchise fees were one-time capital events; broadcast revenue shares were recurring but league-controlled rather than team-controlled; merchandise and content revenue varied by team. When the broadcast arrangement changed, teams with high concentration in league-distributed income and low substitutability (no alternative content or sponsorship income developed) were most exposed.

A useful way to render a risk profile is a simple rating:

Stream

Stability

Concentration

Substitutability

Overall exposure

Title sponsorship

Recurring

High

Medium

Medium

Prize money

One-time

Low

High

Low

Broadcast share

Recurring

High

Low

High

Merchandise

Recurring

Medium

High

Low

The overall exposure rating is highest where stability is low, concentration is high, or substitutability is low. A single high-exposure stream is a risk flag; two or more is a structural vulnerability.

Checkpoint

An organisation earns 70% of its revenue from a single broadcasting deal with a league partner that is up for renegotiation next year. How would you rate this stream on each of the three risk dimensions, and what would you recommend the organisation prioritise before the renegotiation?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Return to the portfolio you mapped in Topic 1. Apply the three-dimension frame (stability, concentration, substitutability) to each stream. For the stream you rate as highest-exposure overall, write a short risk note: what makes it exposed, what would trigger the disruption, and what would the organisation lose if the stream contracted by half. This is the same task as one step in the challenge, so the output you produce here is usable directly.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Revenue Risk Profile". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

Step 1: Source sweep Open the public-facing materials for your chosen organisation: website, press releases, partner pages, social channels, and any news coverage you can locate. List every income source you can identify from public evidence. Do not categorise yet; just list. Aim for completeness over precision at this stage.

Step 2: Categorise into streams Apply the four revenue stream categories from the lesson (sponsorship, media and broadcasting, merchandise, prize money) to sort your list. Consolidate sub-items: two peripheral brand partnerships count as one sponsorship stream, not two streams. Discard any item you cannot confirm as a distinct income line from public evidence. You need at least four confirmed, distinct streams to proceed.

Step 3: Explain generation logic For each confirmed stream, write one to two sentences explaining how it generates income for the organisation. Name the mechanism, not just the category. Example: do not write "the organisation earns sponsorship revenue"; write "the organisation holds a title sponsorship deal with \[Brand\], which pays a contracted fee in exchange for jersey placement and co-branded social content rights."

Step 4: Write a risk note for each stream For each stream, write two to three sentences assessing its risk profile across three dimensions: stability (recurring or one-time), concentration (what share of income it likely represents), and substitutability (how easily it could be replaced if it failed). Identify the one stream where your evidence is thinnest and state the specific question you would need to answer to strengthen it.

Step 5: Compose the commercial-model section Assemble your stream descriptions and risk notes into the commercial-model section of your operations brief. Write for a non-specialist investor reader: someone with business experience but no prior esports knowledge. The section should present the revenue picture clearly, explain how each stream works, and be honest about where the organisation's income is most exposed.

Submission

Submit your completed commercial-model section as a single document.

Feedback questions

-

Which revenue stream did you find hardest to confirm from public evidence, and what would you need to find to close that gap?

- If you had to advise the organisation to reduce its revenue risk, which stream would you focus on first and why?

References

Readings

Newzoo Global Esports and Live Streaming Market Report 2023 (Executive Summary) — Industry-authoritative framing of revenue stream categories and market-size data; the free executive summary provides the structural overview without requiring purchase.

<https://newzoo.com/resources/trend-reports/newzoo-global-esports-live-streaming-market-report-2023-free-version>

Understanding Esports Sponsorship Agreements — Practitioner-authored breakdown of the anatomy of a sponsorship deal from the legal and commercial side, explaining what rights are traded and why, grounded in actual deal structures.

<https://esportsbar.org/blog/understanding-esports-sponsorship-agreements>

Watch

How Esports Teams Make Money — Short practitioner-oriented breakdown of the major revenue categories for esports organisations, useful as a conceptual frame before the lesson's deeper analysis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oFQMFkilyY>

Play

Team Liquid Partners Page — Visit Team Liquid's partners page and identify each named sponsor; for each, note the brand category and hypothesise what rights that brand likely holds based on what is visible on the page.

<https://www.teamliquid.com/partners>

Resources

Esports Earnings Organisation Database — Reference for prize money totals by esports organisation; use the team and organisation listings to check prize income figures and calibrate how much weight prize money actually carries in a portfolio.

<https://www.esportsearnings.com/teams>

Sports Business Journal Esports Coverage Archive — Ongoing industry coverage of sponsorship deals, broadcasting agreements, and franchise valuations; reach for this during practice to check deal announcements and reported contract structures.

<https://www.sportsbusinessjournal.com/Esports.aspx>

Recall Test

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Lesson 7: Organisations and Teams - Management, Ownership, and Operations

Ownership and Capital Structure · Functional Departments · Seasonal Rhythm and Coordination

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will describe the ownership and capital structure of a competitive esports organisation
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will map the functional departments and management roles that operate inside the organisation
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will explain how competitive and commercial functions coordinate across the operating rhythm of a season

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can describe a chosen organisation's ownership and capital structure and explain what that structure enables or constrains
- The learner can map the functional departments inside a chosen organisation and describe the work each department owns
- The learner can explain how competitive and commercial functions coordinate across a season and identify at least one moment where they are most likely to collide

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

When a major esports organisation signs a new title sponsor, which department negotiates the deal, which one has to deliver the activation content, and which one makes sure the competitive team's schedule does not get consumed by brand appearances? The answer is not obvious from the outside, and that is the point. What looks like a single organisation is actually a set of differentiated functions that have to coordinate across a season -- and the way they coordinate is shaped by who owns the organisation in the first place.

The focus here is how esports organisations actually work. Ownership and capital structure determine who makes the final call when departments disagree. Functional departments define which teams own which decisions. And the seasonal operating rhythm reveals when those decisions collide at the highest pressure. Practitioners who can read an organisation's structure from public information -- a job listing, a press release, a tournament calendar -- are able to make better-grounded claims about what an organisation can and cannot do.

The outcome is a mapped department structure and a drafted operational-structure section of your operations brief, grounded in publicly available evidence for your chosen organisation, including the moment in their season where competitive and commercial priorities are most likely to come into conflict.

1 Ownership and Capital Structure

describe the ownership and capital structure of a competitive esports organisation

In 2016, Team Liquid accepted a partial acquisition from aXiomatic Gaming, a consortium that included investors Peter Guber and Ted Leonsis -- both veterans of traditional sports ownership. The deal brought in outside capital but also introduced a multi-stakeholder governance layer that redefined what decisions the founding team could make independently, and how quickly. That shift is not a footnote in Liquid's history;

it is the defining structural moment that explains the organisation's subsequent expansion into multiple titles, global facilities, and long-term brand partnerships.

Core: Capital Structure as Governance Instrument

Ownership is a structural question before it is a financial one. The issue is not who holds shares but what that arrangement enables or constrains: who can direct the organisation's strategy, over what time horizon, and with what accountability to whom.

Esports organisations operate across a spectrum of ownership models. At one end, a founder-owned organisation answers to no external investor. Decisions are fast, risk tolerance is personal, and the strategic horizon is as long as the founder can sustain it financially. At the other end, a publicly listed organisation answers to shareholders on a quarterly cycle. Risk tolerance narrows; decisions must be justified in terms of return, not competitive vision. Between those poles sit three common structures in esports:

Structure

Who directs strategy

Time horizon

Accountability

Founder-owned

Founder

Long (personal runway)

No external board

VC/investor-backed

Investor-founder coalition

Medium (fund cycle)

Board of directors

Traditional sports crossover

Parent ownership group

Variable

Multi-entity governance

Franchised (publisher-linked)

Operator + publisher

Short-to-medium

Publisher rules + board

The enabling properties of each structure are just as important as the constraining ones. Investor capital enables scale -- new titles, new markets, facility investment -- that a founder cannot self-fund. That same capital constrains the founder's ability to prioritise competitive performance over commercial returns if the two diverge.

Reading an organisation's ownership structure from public information is a practitioner skill. Press releases about investment rounds, ownership disclosures on sports licencing databases, and Wikipedia citations for publicly traded parent entities are all legitimate evidence sources. What you are looking for: who can override whom, and under what conditions.

Checkpoint

Team Liquid was founder-owned before 2016. After the aXiomatic acquisition, the governance structure changed. Name one decision type that became more constrained after the deal, and explain why the capital structure explains that constraint.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Find the publicly available ownership information for your chosen organisation (organisation website, press release, Wikipedia where corroborated). Using the table above as your framework, assign your organisation to one of the four structure types and identify one strategic decision the organisation has made in the last three years that reflects the enabling or constraining properties of that structure. Write three sentences: what the structure is, what the decision was, and how the structure explains it.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Ownership and Capital Structure". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Functional Departments

map the functional departments and management roles that operate inside the organisation

Between 2020 and 2023, Cloud9 published a consistent stream of hiring announcements across Dot Esports and its own channels: head of content, director of partnerships, head of people and culture, competitive operations coordinator. Taken together, those announcements reveal not an abstract organisational chart but the actual functional boundaries Cloud9 drew as it scaled. Each hire names a department, states its remit, and signals what the organisation considers a distinct area of ownership.

Core: Functional Differentiation as Operational Design

An organisation is not a flat collection of people doing similar work. It is a differentiated functional system where specific departments own specific decisions. Reading an organisation means naming which department owns which work -- because you cannot describe how the organisation operates without that map.

Esports organisations at scale typically differentiate into the following functional areas:

Department

Primary work owned

Who it coordinates with most

Competitive

Roster, coaching, performance, practice

Content, Operations

Content

Production, streaming, social, creator partnerships

Commercial, Competitive

Commercial / Partnerships

Sponsorship, brand deals, revenue

Content, Leadership

People / HR

Contracts, welfare, hiring

All departments

Operations / Events

Travel, logistics, tournament prep

Competitive, Commercial

These categories are not universal. Some organisations collapse Content and Commercial into a single department. Some separate esports-title-specific competitive teams from a central operations function. The specific shape of the chart is an organisational design decision that reflects the ownership structure and strategic priorities.

The practitioner-facing implication: a sponsorship loss is felt first by Commercial, but the response requires Competitive (do we roster-change to increase viewership?) and Content (do we amplify organic reach to compensate?). Tracing a single business event across departments reveals the coordination architecture underneath.

Cloud9's public hiring activity shows this in practice: the director of partnerships role appeared as a distinct position separate from content, signalling that Cloud9 had differentiated revenue-generating partnerships from brand-adjacent content production. That boundary is an operational design decision, not an accident of org structure.

Checkpoint

A top esports organisation loses its largest title sponsorship mid-season. Which two departments feel the immediate operational impact, and what work does each one own that explains why?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Using the Cloud9 hiring announcement approach, find three publicly named roles or departments for your chosen organisation (official website, LinkedIn, press releases). Place them in the table template above: department name, primary work owned, who it coordinates with. Flag any department where you cannot find public evidence and mark it "unconfirmed." Write one sentence explaining what the biggest gap in your evidence is.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Functional Departments". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Seasonal Rhythm and Coordination

explain how competitive and commercial functions coordinate across the operating rhythm of a season

During the 2023 League of Legends World Championship cycle, the Korean organisation known as T-One was simultaneously the most-watched team in competitive play and one of the most commercially active organisations in the industry. Social media documented the tension in real time: bootcamp lockdowns colliding with sponsor activation schedules, content team requests for player appearances competing with coaching-mandated recovery windows. The Worlds 2023 cycle is a publicly narrated case not because the organisation was poorly managed but because the coordination demands were unusually visible -- and the coordination mostly held.

Core: Seasonal Rhythm as a Coordination Architecture

A competitive esports season is not a calendar. It is a coordination architecture: a recurring pattern of decision points, handoff moments, and cross-functional dependencies that structure the entire year.

The seasonal rhythm has two distinct operating modes: on-season and off-season. Each creates different coordination demands.

On-season (tournament active):

- Competitive: roster locked, performance-focused, restricted media access
- Commercial: activation obligations peak, partner content deadlines hit
- Content: production schedule constrained by competitive schedule
- Coordination pressure: highest; conflicts most likely to surface publicly

Off-season (transfer window, pre-season):

- Competitive: roster construction, contract negotiations, bootcamp planning
- Commercial: sponsorship renewal, new deal development
- Content: retrospectives, team-building content, next-season narratives
- Coordination pressure: lower but consequential; decisions made here shape on-season constraints

The transfer window is a structural moment of convergence. Roster changes affect commercial value (viewership, sponsor audience), content strategy (new player introductions), and operational logistics (visas, housing, practice facilities). Every department is involved; the ownership structure determines who makes the final call when they disagree.

The Worlds 2023 cycle illustrates where competitive and commercial priorities are most likely to collide: the period immediately before and during a marquee tournament, when competitive teams want isolation and commercial partners want activation. The organisations that navigate this well have built explicit agreements about what competitive can require and what commercial can request during different calendar phases.

Checkpoint

Describe one moment in the calendar year of a major esports organisation where competitive and commercial priorities are structurally most likely to collide. Explain why that moment creates the conflict, not just that it does.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Locate the competitive calendar for your chosen organisation's primary title for the current or most recent season (tournament operator website, Liquipedia). Identify one moment in that calendar where the competitive and commercial sides of the organisation would face the highest coordination demand. Write four sentences: what the moment is, which departments are involved, what each side wants, and what the organisation would need to do to resolve the conflict.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Seasonal Rhythm and Coordination". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

Step 1. Structured Observation

Open the public-facing information for your chosen organisation: official website, press releases, and Wikipedia where sources are cited. Work through three questions in order:

- Who owns or controls the organisation? What type of ownership structure does this appear to be?
- What departments or functional areas are explicitly named (in job titles, team pages, or press releases)?
- What information is absent or ambiguous?

Do not make claims yet. You are locating evidence, not drawing conclusions.

Step 2. Department Mapping

Using the five functional areas from the lesson as your scaffold (Competitive, Content, Commercial/Partnerships, People/HR, Operations/Events), build a two-column table:

Department

Evidence of its existence or work

Competitive

Content

Commercial / Partnerships

People / HR

Operations / Events

Populate each row from the evidence you found in Step 1. Where you cannot find public evidence for a department, leave the cell blank and mark the row "unconfirmed." A table with gaps is more accurate than a table with guesses.

Step 3. Write the Operational-Structure Section

Draft the operational-structure section of your operations brief in continuous prose. Your draft should:

- Name the ownership type and explain in one sentence what it enables or constrains for the organisation
- Name the departments visible in your evidence, describing what work each one owns
- Identify one moment in the organisation's competitive season where the commercial and competitive sides are most likely to face competing demands, and explain why
- Flag any role or coordination claim you cannot confirm with evidence

Aim for 300 to 400 words. Write from your evidence, not from general knowledge about esports.

Step 4. Source-Gap Check

Identify the one claim in your draft you are least confident in. Name the specific source you would consult to strengthen or correct it: a named publication, database, or official document -- not a general category like "their website."

Submission

Submit your completed department-mapping table and your operational-structure draft as a single document.

Feedback questions

- Which department was hardest to confirm from public evidence, and what does that gap tell you about how this organisation presents itself externally?
- When you identified the competitive-commercial collision point, what evidence led you to that moment in the season rather than another?

References

Readings

Esports Team Ownership and Investment Structures — Industry-analyst overview covering ownership typologies (founder-owned, VC-backed, traditional sports crossover) and the enabling and constraining properties of each structure; directly supports the capital structure concept in Topic 1.

<https://newzoo.com/resources/blog/esports-team-ownership-and-investment-structures>

Inside the Org Charts of Esports' Biggest Teams — Practitioner-reported piece tracing the functional departments and management hierarchies at several top-tier organisations, supporting Topic 2 and the challenge's department-mapping task.

<https://dotesports.com/business/news/inside-the-org-charts-of-esports-biggest-teams>

Play

Cloud9 Team Page — Cloud9's public-facing team and staff listing, used during the challenge to identify named departments and roles from primary-source evidence.
<https://www.cloud9.gg/team>

Resources

Esports Earnings Organisation Profiles — Searchable database of organisations with tournament history, roster records, and game affiliations; useful when locating evidence about a chosen organisation's competitive activity across a season.
<https://www.esportsearnings.com/organizations>

LinkedIn Organisation Pages — Organisation LinkedIn pages serve as a legitimate evidence source for inferring functional departments from named employee roles and job titles during the challenge's observation step.
<https://www.linkedin.com>

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

Desirable Difficulties

Bjork (1994) showed that learning strategies that feel harder in the short term · such as recall · produce stronger, more durable long-term memory.

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Lesson 8: Esports Media - Content, Streaming, and Audience Engagement

Content Strategy Across Platforms · Streaming Economics · Audience Engagement Metrics

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will describe how a competitive esports organisation produces and distributes content across platforms
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will explain how streaming and creator activity contribute to an organisation's commercial position
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will characterise audience engagement as a commercial measure used inside the industry

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can describe a chosen organisation's content production and distribution across platforms and identify the audiences each platform reaches
- The learner can explain how streaming and creator activity feed a chosen organisation's commercial position and identify which revenue streams they support
- The learner can characterise audience engagement as a commercial measure and describe how an organisation translates engagement into commercial value

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

When the Overwatch League signed broadcast deals with ESPN and ABC, the expectation written into those contracts was not that esports would become the next NFL overnight. It was that the viewership numbers would justify renewal. When the numbers declined, the contract was renegotiated. That sequence tells you something important about how the esports industry actually works: the audience is not just a fan base. It is a commercial asset, and organisations are paid based on how large, how active, and how measurable that asset is.

The question this raises for anyone analysing an esports organisation's commercial position is: where does that audience come from, and how does the organisation put a number on it? Every organisation manages a portfolio of platforms, each reaching a different segment of fans through different content types. A live stream on Twitch serves a different commercial function than a highlights clip on TikTok or a roster announcement on Instagram. Content strategy is the deliberate plan that connects platform choice to audience reach to commercial outcome. Streaming economics determines how money flows through creator activity. And engagement metrics are what lets the organisation prove, to a sponsor or broadcaster, that the attention they have built is real.

By the end of this lesson, you will have mapped your chosen organisation's content operations across platforms, traced how streaming and creator activity feed their revenue position, and assessed at least one engagement claim against the evidence available to verify it.

1 Content Strategy Across Platforms

describe how a competitive esports organisation produces and distributes content across platforms

Team Liquid runs one of the most documented multi-platform content operations in esports. Their output is segmented by platform: long-form match VODs and documentary content on YouTube, live competitive coverage and personality streams on Twitch, rapid-fire highlight clips on TikTok, and brand and roster announcements on Twitter/X and Instagram. Each channel reaches a distinct cohort, and Team Liquid's

public brand partnership announcements make the segmentation explicit: sponsors buy access to specific audiences, not a single undifferentiated feed.

Core: Platform Portfolio

An esports organisation does not broadcast uniformly across every platform. The problem it faces is structural: core fans, casual viewers, and the demographic targets that sponsors pay to reach have incompatible consumption habits. A sponsor activation designed for a Twitch audience that skews 18-to-34 and watches for hours at a stretch will not land on TikTok, where the same organisation's content must hook in under fifteen seconds and reach a younger, mobile-first cohort.

Practitioners manage this through a **platform portfolio**: the deliberate assignment of content types to platforms based on audience segment and commercial purpose. The four main platform types operating in esports today are:

- Platform type
- Primary format
- Audience served
- Commercial function
- Live streaming (Twitch, YouTube Gaming)
- Real-time gameplay and commentary
- Core fans, engaged community
- Subscription revenue, live ad inventory, direct sponsor activation
- VOD (YouTube, Bilibili)
- Long-form highlights, mini-documentaries, team vlogs
- General gaming audience, search-driven discovery
- Ad revenue, brand deal integration, archive as evergreen asset
- Short-form (TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels)
- 15-90 second clips, meme-format content
- Casual viewers, new fan acquisition
- Top-of-funnel reach, cross-promotion to owned channels
- Social (Twitter/X, Instagram, Discord)
- Announcements, roster moves, community interaction
- Fan base, press, sponsors
- Relationship maintenance, press reach, community sentiment

A platform is chosen not because the organisation likes the interface but because the audience it needs to reach lives there. Content type follows audience, not preference.

Checkpoint

Look at three platforms your chosen organisation uses publicly. For each platform, identify the audience segment it appears to be reaching and describe what commercial purpose the content on that platform serves for the organisation.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Open your organisation's content ecosystem: visit their main site and navigate to at least three linked platforms. For each platform, write one sentence that names the content type present, the audience you observe or can infer, and the commercial job that content appears to do. Organise your notes in a table matching the four platform types above.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Content Strategy Across Platforms". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Streaming Economics

explain how streaming and creator activity contribute to an organisation's commercial position

In 2019, Tyler "Ninja" Blevins signed an exclusivity deal with Microsoft's Mixer platform, reportedly valued at \$30 million. When Mixer shut down in 2020, Ninja returned to Twitch. The episode made streaming economics visible in a way that no textbook could: it showed that exclusivity deals pay a guaranteed income in exchange for locking a creator to one platform, that the platform absorbs the audience risk, and that when the platform fails the creator's audience does not automatically follow them home. Ninja was a free agent whose personal brand outlasted the platform. For most creators affiliated with an esports organisation, the calculus is different.

Core: Income Mechanisms in a Streaming Arrangement

Money flows through a streaming arrangement along three channels. Understanding each channel clarifies how an esports organisation captures value from its creator roster.

Ad revenue share. Platforms (Twitch, YouTube) display advertising against a live stream and share a percentage of that revenue with the content creator. The split varies by platform and by the creator's tier (Twitch Partners, YouTube monetised channels). For an organisation that employs a creator, the organisation may take a portion of that revenue as part of the creator's employment arrangement.

Subscriber or membership split. Viewers pay a monthly fee to support a channel (Twitch subscriptions, YouTube channel memberships). Platforms typically retain 30-50% and pass the remainder to the creator. For an organisation-affiliated creator, revenue split terms are negotiated at the employment stage.

Sponsorship activation through the stream. Sponsors pay for brand mentions, product placements, and activation segments within a live stream. This is often the most commercially significant channel for an organisation, because the organisation can negotiate a sponsorship deal at the organisational level and deploy activations across multiple creators' streams simultaneously, multiplying reach without a corresponding increase in deal overhead.

Two primary roster arrangements operate in esports:

- **Salaried creators** are employed by the organisation; their streams function as a brand channel. The organisation controls content direction, brand safety, and activation scheduling. Revenue from the stream flows primarily to the organisation.
- **Contracted streamers** are affiliated with the organisation under a revenue-share or representation deal; their personal audience is the asset. The organisation takes a percentage of streaming income and provides organisational infrastructure (brand credibility, sponsor introductions, marketing support) in exchange.

The Ninja/Mixer case illustrates what happens when a contracted streamer's personal brand is larger than the platform's: the creator has negotiating leverage that an organisation-level contracted arrangement would normally suppress. For an organisation evaluating a creator signing, the key question is whether the creator's audience is portable (it belongs to the creator) or captive (it belongs to the platform and the game).

Checkpoint

Does your chosen organisation have a creator roster listed on their website or documented in press coverage? If yes, identify one creator and write a sentence describing which roster arrangement (salaried or contracted) appears most likely, based on what you can observe publicly. If no creator roster is visible, describe what evidence you would look for to determine whether one exists.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Identify which revenue streams streaming activity feeds for your chosen organisation. Write two to three sentences: name the specific income mechanism (ad share, subscriber split, sponsorship activation), the revenue stream it feeds (e.g., sponsorship, content revenue), and one thing you cannot confirm from public sources about how the arrangement works.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Streaming Economics". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Audience Engagement Metrics

characterise audience engagement as a commercial measure used inside the industry

The Overwatch League launched in 2018 with a broadcast deal that valued its viewership highly enough to attract ESPN and ABC as partners. By 2020, concurrent viewer figures had declined sharply from their 2018-2019 peak. Activision Blizzard subsequently restructured the broadcast arrangement with Disney. The case is the clearest public instance in esports where engagement metrics connected directly to broadcast contract valuations: when the numbers held, the deal was renewed on comparable terms; when they declined, the commercial relationship was renegotiated. The OWL's trajectory shows that audience engagement is not a vanity metric. It is the evidence a broadcaster or sponsor uses to decide whether a partnership was worth it, and whether to renew.

Core: Engagement Metrics and Their Commercial Function

A sponsor or broadcaster deciding whether a partnership delivered value cannot assess it through intuition. They need numbers. Audience engagement is the industry's answer: a suite of metrics that translates audience attention into commercially legible evidence.

The primary metrics in use:

Metric

What it measures

Who uses it

Concurrent viewers

Unique viewers watching a live stream at the same moment

Broadcasters, sponsors evaluating live reach

Average minute audience (AMA)

Average viewership across every minute of a broadcast window

TV-trained buyers, broadcast rights negotiations

Watch time

Total hours of viewing accumulated across an event or series

Platforms assessing content performance; sponsor ROI models

Engagement rate

Ratio of active interactions (reactions, comments, shares) to total reach

Social sponsors; creators pitching brand deals

Social reach

Aggregate impressions across social posts related to an event or organisation

PR-focused sponsors; community-size assessments

These metrics are not self-reported by organisations. They are produced by platform analytics (Twitch Dashboard, YouTube Studio), by third-party measurement firms (Newzoo, Stream Hatchet, Esports Charts), and, for broadcast deals, by television audience measurement bodies. The source matters commercially: a figure produced by an independent measurement firm carries more weight in a contract negotiation than one produced by the organisation itself.

Organisations use engagement data in two commercial contexts:

Sponsor decks. An organisation presenting to a prospective sponsor will include peak concurrent viewers, total tournament watch hours, and social reach figures to argue that their audience is worth paying to reach. The sponsor's team will cross-reference these figures against independent sources before signing.

Broadcast negotiations. A league or organisation negotiating a streaming or broadcast rights deal will use AMA and total watch time as the basis for valuing the rights. The OWL case shows that when those figures decline over successive seasons, the rights-holder's negotiating position weakens proportionally.

Core: The Evidence Gap in Engagement Claims

Organisations publish engagement claims in press releases, on their websites, and in investor decks. Not every claim is verifiable from public data. Newzoo and Stream Hatchet publish some engagement data freely; detailed platform analytics are available only to the creator or rights-holder. When an organisation claims "X million viewers" without citing a measurement source, that claim may be accurate, approximate, or aspirational. Practitioners who work with these figures in commercial contexts learn to ask: who measured this, with what methodology, and where can I check?

This is the same epistemic problem the operations brief will ask you to navigate. Your chosen organisation will make engagement claims you may not be able to verify from public sources. Naming the gap is part of the analysis.

Checkpoint

Find one public engagement claim made by your chosen organisation (a "X viewers," "Y social impressions," or "Z streaming hours" figure in a press release, social post, or news article). Identify who produced the figure (the organisation itself, a platform, or a third-party firm) and assess whether you can verify it from an independent source.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Write a paragraph of three to four sentences characterising audience engagement as a commercial measure for your chosen organisation. Name at least one specific metric the organisation uses or would likely use, explain how that metric translates audience attention into commercial value, and flag one engagement claim you cannot substantiate and the source you would consult to verify it.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Audience Engagement Metrics". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

Step 1: Locate a named broadcaster or platform partner. Visit your chosen organisation's official website and check their press releases, partnership pages, and social announcements. Search for the organisation's name alongside terms such as "broadcast partner," "streaming partner," or "official media partner" in publicly available news sources. Identify one named broadcaster or platform (not a generic platform category) associated with your organisation and note the source where you found it.

Step 2: Write one sentence describing the relationship. Using your source, write a single sentence that names the partner and describes what the relationship is: for example, an official

streaming partner, a league broadcaster, or a content collaboration arrangement. Cite the source in parentheses.

Step 3: Extend your operations brief with a media and content paragraph. Open the commercial section of your operations brief. Add a paragraph that covers:

- the platform or platforms your organisation uses, mapped to the content type and audience each serves (draw on your platform-portfolio observations from the lesson)
- the named broadcaster or partner you identified in Step 1 and what that relationship contributes commercially to the organisation
- how streaming or creator activity connects to at least one of the revenue streams you identified earlier in the brief

Close the paragraph by flagging one engagement claim about your organisation that you cannot yet substantiate and naming the specific source you would consult to verify it (a measurement firm, a platform analytics report, a league disclosure, or similar).

Step 4: Review every claim. Read your paragraph from top to bottom. For each factual claim about your organisation's content activity or audience engagement, check whether it traces to a named source. Mark any unverified claims clearly before submitting.

Submission

Submit your updated operations brief document with the new media and content paragraph clearly placed within the commercial section.

Feedback questions

- Which engagement claim in your paragraph was hardest to substantiate, and what made that specific claim difficult to verify?
- Looking at the platform-to-audience mapping you produced, which platform does your organisation appear to use most intentionally for commercial purposes, and what evidence supports that reading?

References

Readings

The Business of Esports (Newzoo) — Newzoo's practitioner-authored overview of how streaming platforms function as commercial infrastructure for esports organisations, developing streaming economics beyond surface-level description.

<https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/the-business-of-esports>

Esports Audience Measurement (Esports Insider) — Industry publication piece on how concurrent viewership, average minute audience, and engagement rate are calculated and used in commercial negotiations, directly supporting the engagement metrics topic.

<https://esportsinsider.com/2021/08/esports-audience-measurement>

Watch

Overwatch League ESPN and ABC Partnership Announcement — Documents the OWL broadcast deal and its engagement expectations, providing a named case for how audience figures translate into broadcast contract terms.

<https://esportsinsider.com/2020/02/overwatch-league-espn-abc-disney>

Play

Team Liquid Content Ecosystem — Browse Team Liquid's site and navigate to multiple linked platforms to observe what content type appears on each and who the apparent audience is, making platform strategy observable before the lesson theorises it.

<https://www.teamliquid.com>

Resources

Newzoo Global Esports and Live Streaming Market Report — Reference data on platform viewership and market size, for use when assessing audience reach claims made by a chosen organisation.

<https://newzoo.com/reports/global-esports-live-streaming-market-report>

Stream Hatchet Esports Analytics Blog — Practitioner data blog covering Twitch and YouTube Gaming metrics, useful when locating or verifying engagement figures for a specific organisation or tournament.
<https://streamhatchet.com/blog>

Esports Earnings Database — Factual database of prize money and tournament records, for corroborating revenue claims related to competitive performance.
<https://www.esportsearnings.com>

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

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Lesson 9: Ethics, Governance, and Player Welfare

Governance Arrangements · Ethical Exposure in Operations · Player Welfare Obligations

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will identify the governance arrangements that operate over a competitive esports organisation
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will describe the ethical considerations that arise across an organisation's operations
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will explain how player welfare obligations shape contracts and management practice

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can identify the governance arrangements that apply to a chosen organisation and describe what each one constrains or requires
- The learner can describe at least two ethical considerations that arise inside a chosen organisation's operations and explain how the organisation does or does not address them
- The learner can explain how player welfare obligations shape contracts and management practice and identify one area where a chosen organisation could strengthen its practice

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

When Riot Games restructured the League of Legends Championship Series into a franchised league in 2018, it did not just reorganise who competed. It became a regulator. Teams that had previously earned their place through performance now operated under franchise agreements that constrained where they could play, how they had to report their finances, and what conduct standards applied to everyone in the organisation. The shift made visible something that had always been true but rarely examined: esports organisations do not govern themselves. They operate inside a web of authorities, obligations, and exposures that shape nearly every decision they make.

That web is what the work ahead addresses. Understanding how an organisation is actually governed, what its ethical obligations look like in practice, and where its player welfare responsibilities show up in contracts and org charts, is the difference between describing a business and analysing one. For anyone working in the industry, in commercial, people, legal, or competitive roles, these are not background considerations. They are operational realities that appear in budgets, in staff headcount, and in the risk section of any serious investor briefing.

The lesson moves from governance arrangements through ethical exposure to player welfare obligations. By the close, you will have identified the arrangements that constrain your chosen organisation, mapped its ethical exposure areas against the evidence available, and drafted the section of the operations brief that addresses how the organisation does or does not meet its obligations. That draft is the hardest analytical section of the brief to write well, and the work here builds directly toward it.

1 Governance Arrangements

identify the governance arrangements that operate over a competitive esports organisation

In 2018, Riot Games restructured the League of Legends Championship Series (LCS) from an open-circuit format into a franchised league. Teams that had previously competed through promotion and relegation were replaced by permanent slots granted under franchise agreements, each carrying strict financial,

operational, and conduct requirements. The shift made Riot Games not just a game publisher but a league regulator, with the authority to suspend organisations, impose fines, and set operating standards that overrode any individual team's preferences.

Core: Governance as Constraint and Requirement

A competitive esports organisation does not operate under a single authority. It operates under a stack: the publisher who owns the game sets one layer of rules, the tournament or league operator sets another, and national or regional regulators may add a third. Each layer constrains different decisions and requires different actions.

The analytic move is to separate what each arrangement *_constrains_* (what the organisation cannot do) from what it *_requires_* (what the organisation must do). A franchise agreement might constrain an organisation from relocating its home market without league approval while requiring it to maintain a minimum roster size and publish audited financials. A national gaming regulator might require age verification for players and prohibit prize payments through certain payment channels.

The governance stack also varies by title and region. An organisation competing in a franchised league (LCS, Overwatch League) operates under a different constraint set than one competing in an open-circuit league (ESL Pro League, BLAST Premier). An organisation with operations in Germany faces a different national regulatory context than one operating from South Korea or the United States. Governance is plural and layered, not uniform.

Arrangement type

Who sets it

What it typically constrains

What it typically requires

Publisher franchise agreement

Game publisher (Riot, Activision Blizzard)

Market territory, roster eligibility, league exit

Financial reporting, code of conduct, revenue sharing

League-operator rules

Tournament organiser (ESL, BLAST, Riot)

Player registration, match conduct, prize distribution

Participation minimums, scheduling compliance, anti-doping

National/regional regulation

Government or statutory body

Prize payment structures, data practices, betting relations

Licencing, age verification, tax compliance

A comparative read is useful here. Consider an organisation in a franchised league versus a comparable organisation competing in open circuit. The franchised organisation has traded competitive uncertainty (no relegation) for regulatory depth: more governance obligations, more disclosure requirements, more league oversight. The open-circuit organisation has fewer structural obligations to its league operator but greater competitive risk. Neither arrangement is ungoverned; the obligation landscape just differs.

Checkpoint

What governance arrangement most directly constrains a decision your chosen organisation could make this season? Name the arrangement type, who sets it, and whether it constrains, requires, or both.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Look up one piece of public documentation from your chosen organisation's league or publisher: a ruleset, a franchise agreement summary, or a conduct policy. Identify one constraint and one requirement from the document. Write two sentences: one naming what the organisation cannot do

under this arrangement, one naming what it must do. If no public documentation is available, identify the gap and name the source that would fill it.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Governance Arrangements". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Ethical Exposure in Operations

describe the ethical considerations that arise across an organisation's operations

In 2021, the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing filed a lawsuit against Activision Blizzard, the publisher behind the Overwatch League. The lawsuit detailed a pattern of workplace harassment, pay disparities, and retaliation against employees who raised concerns, including players and coaching staff within OWL. The public record that followed, including internal documents, player statements, and investigative reporting from Bloomberg and the Wall Street Journal, exposed how an organisation's stated values (diversity, player welfare, community) had diverged from its operational practices. The case made the concept of ethical exposure visible: the gap between what an organisation says it does and what evidence shows it does.

Core: Operational Ethical Exposure

Ethical considerations in an esports organisation are not abstract principles. They are operational exposures: risks that arise from specific practices, in specific parts of the organisation, visible through specific evidence. The four most common exposure areas in competitive esports are:

1. **Player contracts and terms** -- whether contracts reflect competitive norms, whether buyout clauses are fair, whether revenue-sharing arrangements are disclosed
2. **Wellbeing and mental health provisions** -- whether mental health support is resourced, whether playing schedules respect recovery, whether burnout risks are managed
3. **Diversity and inclusion in hiring and roster decisions** -- whether the organisation's workforce and roster demographics reflect stated inclusion commitments
4. **Governance of conduct** -- whether harassment, abuse, and power asymmetries are addressed by policy and practice, not just by policy statement

The distinction between an ethical claim and an ethical exposure is diagnostic. An ethical claim is what the organisation says about itself (mission statements, social media commitments). An ethical exposure is what evidence shows: player statements, HR policy announcements, union filings, investigative reporting, or the absence of any of these.

What makes exposure uneven is that some areas are well-documented in public record and others require inference. Player welfare incidents often reach the press. Internal HR practices rarely do. A learner analysing an organisation's ethical position must distinguish between areas where evidence is strong, areas where evidence is thin, and areas where the absence of evidence is itself informative.

Reading ethical exposure from public evidence means asking: What does the organisation report? What have players said publicly? Has any investigative source documented a gap? Has any regulatory or union body raised a complaint? The strength of a claim about ethical exposure depends on the quality and diversity of its sources.

Checkpoint

Name one ethical exposure area for your chosen organisation where you have strong evidence and one where your evidence is thin. What type of source would change your assessment of the thin one?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Choose one of the four exposure areas above. Find two pieces of public evidence about your chosen organisation's practice in that area: one that suggests the organisation addresses the exposure, one that suggests it does not. Write one sentence summarising what each piece of evidence shows. If you can only find evidence on one side, name the source type that would give you the other.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Ethical Exposure in Operations". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Player Welfare Obligations

explain how player welfare obligations shape contracts and management practice

The National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) Collective Bargaining Agreement runs to hundreds of pages covering minimum salaries, practice hour limits, access to medical care, mental health resources, travel conditions, and grievance processes. It exists because a century of labour organising produced enough collective leverage to make welfare obligations enforceable. Esports player organising is newer and thinner: the Council of Professional Esports Players (CPEA, formerly CSPA) has proposed minimum standards, and Riot Games runs publisher-funded player support programmes, but none of these carry the contractual depth or enforcement weight of a mature CBA. The contrast makes the concept of player welfare obligations as a contract-shaping force legible: the NFLPA shows what the obligation looks like when it is codified; CPEA and publisher programmes show what it looks like when it is still being built.

Core: Welfare Obligations as Structural Forces

Player welfare obligations are not a benevolent gesture. They are a set of overlapping legal, contractual, and reputational requirements that shape how an organisation is structured and how it operates.

Three layers of obligation apply:

- **Legal obligations** -- Employment law in the organisation's operating jurisdiction sets floors: minimum rest periods, maximum working hours, health and safety requirements, visa and relocation duties. These apply regardless of league rules or contract terms.
- **Contractual obligations** -- League minimums, individual contract clauses, and where they exist, collective agreements set specific welfare requirements: salary floors, access to performance staff, travel standards, dispute resolution processes.
- **Reputational obligations** -- Player advocacy, social media accountability, and community expectations create a fourth layer that operates without legal enforceability but shapes organisational behaviour. An organisation that is publicly criticised for failing a player's welfare faces recruitment, sponsorship, and audience consequences.

These obligations show up in structure, not only in policy statements. Welfare obligations appear in org charts (a performance psychologist on staff is a welfare response), in budget lines (travel and accommodation spend is welfare-shaped), and in contract clauses (minimum rest days between competitive fixtures is a welfare clause). When an organisation cannot demonstrate these structural responses, the absence is itself an indicator.

The obligation landscape is not uniform. An organisation operating under a publisher-backed franchise with mandatory wellness standards carries more codified obligations than one operating in an open circuit with no league welfare minimums. An organisation employing players as employees (common in Germany, South Korea) carries more legal obligations than one classifying players as contractors (common in North America). Understanding welfare obligations means knowing which layer applies, not assuming a universal floor.

Checkpoint

What welfare obligation has the most visible operational consequence for your chosen organisation? Where does it show up: in their structure, their contracts, their staffing, or their scheduling?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Identify one area where your chosen organisation visibly addresses a welfare obligation (staffing, contract clause, published policy, or scheduling practice) and one area where improvement is plausible based on public evidence. Write a sentence for each: one describing what is in place, one identifying the gap and the evidence basis for naming it a gap.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Player Welfare Obligations". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. **Locate and categorise governance arrangements.** Using public sources (league documentation, publisher rule sets, franchise agreement summaries), identify the governance authorities that apply to your chosen organisation. For each one, note the arrangement type (publisher franchise agreement, league-operator rules, or national/regional regulation), who sets it, and one thing it constrains or requires of the organisation. Aim for at least two distinct arrangements. If documentation is not publicly available for a particular authority, record the gap and name the source that would fill it.
1. **Map ethical exposure areas.** Identify at least two operational areas where ethical considerations arise for your chosen organisation. For each area, describe what the organisation does or does not do, using evidence from public sources (player statements, policy announcements, investigative reporting, or the absence of these). Flag any claim that rests on a single source and name the corroborating source you would seek.
1. **Draft the ethics section of your operations brief.** Using the governance and ethical exposure work from steps 1 and 2, write the ethics section of the operations brief for your chosen organisation. The section should: describe at least two governance arrangements and what each constrains or requires; identify at least two ethical exposure areas and explain how the organisation does or does not address each; and identify one area where the organisation's operational practice could be strengthened, with a brief justification.
1. **Draft the operational-improvement paragraph.** Write a single focused paragraph naming the practice you would recommend the organisation change, your reasoning, and the evidence basis for the claim. The paragraph should stand on its own: a reader unfamiliar with your full draft should be able to follow the argument.

Submission

Submit your ethics section draft and improvement paragraph as a single document.

Feedback questions

- Which governance arrangement has the most direct effect on a decision your chosen organisation could make this season, and what is your evidence for that claim?
- Where in your ethics section did your evidence feel thinnest, and what source would you consult to strengthen it?

References

Readings

Governing Esports (Hutchins and Carter, Communication, Culture and Critique, 2020) — Scholarly treatment of the governance layer in esports from a media and policy perspective, developing the argument that governance in esports is fragmented and contested across publishers, platforms, and public regulators.

<https://academic.oup.com/ccc/article/13/2/209/5826434>

Player Contracts in Esports (Asser Institute International Sports Law Blog) — Practitioner-authored legal analysis comparing esports player contracts across jurisdictions, making welfare obligations and their contractual basis concrete and accessible without a legal background.

<https://www.asser.nl/SportsLaw/Blog/post/player-contracts-in-esports-a-comparative-overview>

Watch

Esports Player Welfare and Mental Health (ESIC Panel Discussion) — Industry practitioners from an integrity and governance body discuss player welfare as an operational and regulatory matter, modelling practitioner discourse rather than treating welfare as a values question.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Rn6kbMkL5A>

Play

LCS Ruleset (Riot Games) — Browse the eligibility, conduct, and team-standards sections of Riot's published league documentation to see governance-as-constraint in a primary source.

<https://lolesports.com/en-US/esports/lcs>

Resources

Esports Integrity Commission (ESIC) Governance and Standards — Reference hub for ESIC codes of conduct, anti-corruption standards, and member obligations; use when checking what a governance arrangement actually requires of member organisations.

<https://esic.gg/codes/>

The Esports Observer Organisation and Business Coverage Archive — Industry trade archive covering organisational structure, ownership, and commercial practice; search your chosen organisation to find reported governance decisions, welfare incidents, or ethical controversies.

<https://archive.esportsobserver.com>

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

Desirable Difficulties

Bjork (1994) showed that learning strategies that feel harder in the short term · such as recall · produce stronger, more durable long-term memory.

Principles of Instruction

Rosenshine (2012) identifies daily review and retrieval as one of the most evidence-backed habits of effective instruction.

Roediger, H. L. & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). *Psychological Science*, 17(3), 249-255.

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Rosenshine, B. (2012). *Principles of Instruction*. *American Educator*, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 10: Organisational Analysis Project

ASSESSMENT WEEK

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Lesson 11: Career Pathways Across the Esports Ecosystem

Career Pathways by Function · Transferable Skill Clusters · Labour Market Positioning

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will characterise the career pathways available across the esports ecosystem
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will identify the skills and knowledge that underpin entry into specific roles
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will relate personal interests and strengths to candidate roles inside the ecosystem

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can characterise the career pathways available across at least three functional areas of the ecosystem and describe what the work looks like inside each one
- The learner can identify the skills and knowledge that underpin entry into at least three specific roles and explain how those skills are typically demonstrated
- The learner can relate personal interests and strengths to at least three candidate roles and explain what makes each role a credible direction

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

Most people entering the esports industry know roughly what they want -- they want to work in esports. What they often cannot say is which part of the industry, in which kind of role, and why their current skills make them a plausible candidate for it. That gap between "I want to work in esports" and "here is the role I am credible for and why" is the most consequential one you will close in Career Pathways Across the Ecosystem.

The esports ecosystem is not a single career pipeline. It is a set of distinct functional areas -- competitive operations, commercial partnerships, content production, event logistics, community -- each with its own hiring logic, skill requirements, and growth paths. Practitioners who succeed at entry level are the ones who can read that structure clearly enough to know where they fit, position their existing skills against what the role actually demands, and make a credible case for themselves. That skill, reading the labour market and placing yourself honestly inside it, is what distinguishes a confident career strategy from wishful interest.

By the end of these lessons you will have named three specific roles drawn from different functional areas, mapped your own skills against what each role requires, and produced a first draft of the career-pathway analysis that the showcase portfolio will ask you to complete at professional quality.

1 Career Pathways by Function

characterise the career pathways available across the esports ecosystem

Riot Games publishes its own role families on its careers site, grouping positions under Esports, Publishing, Product, and Creative. That taxonomy is not a marketing convenience -- it reflects how the organisation's actual work divides: each family has distinct hiring criteria, internal promotion paths, and a different relationship to the competition calendar. When you see the same company segment its own workforce this way, you are reading a practitioner map of functional areas, not an academic model.

Core: Functional Area Segmentation

The esports ecosystem is not a single career pipeline. It is a set of distinct functional areas, each with its own logic, hiring criteria, and growth path. Understanding the difference matters because applying to a content-production role with a competitive-operations portfolio signals a mismatch, regardless of how strong the individual skills are.

The five functional areas that structure most esports organisations are:

Functional Area

Core Work

Example Roles

Competitive Operations

Schedule, player welfare, broadcast coordination

League coordinator, player relations manager, referee

Commercial and Sponsorship

Brand deals, partner integration, revenue

Sponsorship manager, business development associate

Content Production

Video, social, editorial output

Video producer, social media manager, content writer

Event and Venue Operations

Live show production, logistics

Event coordinator, production manager, broadcast technician

Community

Audience growth, fan engagement, moderation

Community manager, Discord lead, grassroots organiser

Competitive operations is the clearest example of functional logic. The function's core work -- building and enforcing the competition schedule, coordinating broadcast slots, managing player welfare -- generates a specific set of roles. A league coordinator needs a different skill set from a sponsorship manager, even though both work at the same organisation. The function defines what the work demands; the role is where a person sits inside that demand.

Checkpoint

A job listing for an "esports operations associate" at a regional publisher mentions broadcast scheduling, player communication, and venue logistics. Which functional area does this role belong to, and what does that tell you about the skills the hiring panel will weight most?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Return to the five functional areas in the table above. For each one, write a single sentence naming the central work the function exists to do -- not the job titles, the work. Then identify which functional area you know least about based on what you have written. That gap is your target for Topics 2 and 3.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Career Pathways by Function". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Transferable Skill Clusters

identify the skills and knowledge that underpin entry into specific roles

FACEIT's published partnership structures with talent-pipeline organisations -- scholarship programmes, broadcast training partnerships -- name the actual skills they hire for against entry level: broadcast production, data analysis, community moderation. These are not aspirational wish lists; they are commitments a platform-side company put in writing. Reading those documents, you can see that entry into esports is structured around recognisable skill clusters, not player rankings or industry connections.

Core: Transferable Skill Clusters

Entry into esports roles is structured around skill clusters -- grouped competencies that transfer from adjacent industries, education, or personal practice. Passion and play-time are not clusters; they are context. The clusters that appear across most esports hiring at entry level are:

- **Broadcast and production:** camera operation, editing, live switching, audio engineering -- skills that transfer directly from college media, community television, or online content creation
- **Data literacy:** spreadsheet analysis, performance metrics, statistical storytelling -- skills from analytics coursework, sports statistics, or any data-heavy hobby
- **Community operations:** moderation, audience engagement, event facilitation -- skills from Discord server management, learner-organisation leadership, or grassroots tournament running

The shift from "I love esports" to "I am credible for this role" happens when a learner can point to a cluster and say: I have evidence of that skill in a context someone else can verify.

The diagram below shows how one cluster connects to multiple entry-level roles:

Community Operations Cluster
Social Media Manager
Discord Community Lead
Grassroots Tournament Organiser
Fan Engagement Coordinator

A learner with strong community operations evidence -- running a 500-member Discord server, organising a university-level LAN -- can point to that cluster as a credible application for any node on that diagram.

Checkpoint

A background in editing short-form video for a club's social media channels maps to one of the clusters above. Which cluster is it, and name two esports roles where that cluster is a stated entry requirement?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

List two or three things you do well -- skills, not interests. For each one, identify which skill cluster it maps to from the list above (broadcast and production, data literacy, community operations, or a cluster you would name yourself). Then name one esports role that cluster supports entry into. Keep it to three lines per skill.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Transferable Skill Clusters". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Labour Market Positioning

relate personal interests and strengths to candidate roles inside the ecosystem

Practitioners who narrate their own career transitions in public -- through newsletters, social commentary, or industry features -- routinely make the same move: they name the gap between their current profile and the target role, and then they describe the strategy they used to close it. Rod "Slasher" Breslau's public writing on how industry professionals navigate role shifts is a readable example of this pattern. What those accounts show is that market positioning is not accidental. The professional is reading the labour market and making a deliberate case for their own credibility.

Core: Labour Market Positioning

Labour market positioning is the act of assessing how your current skill profile aligns with employer demand for a specific role, and identifying either the credibility case for entry now or the development gap that would need to close first.

Interest tells you which direction to face. Positioning tells you how close you actually are.

The practical operation looks like this: take a role you are interested in, look at three or four real job listings for it, identify the skills and experience the listings name most often, and then rate your own profile honestly against those named requirements. The result is not a score -- it is a map. Some roles sit inside your current credibility zone; others sit at a 12-month development horizon.

Example: A learner with strong community operations evidence (Discord moderation, grassroots event organisation) and moderate production skills (some video editing) maps their profile like this:

Role

Cluster Match

Credibility Assessment

Community Manager

Community operations: high

Credible now -- apply with portfolio

Social Media Manager

Community: high, Production: moderate

Credible now -- role requires both

Broadcast Producer

Production: moderate

12-month horizon -- needs more production evidence

The first two are credible directions today. The third is a legitimate goal, but the application would be premature without more production evidence. That distinction is what positioning produces.

Checkpoint

A learner rates themselves as high on data literacy and developing on community operations. They are interested in both esports analyst roles and community manager roles. Based on their profile, which role is a credible application now and which is a development horizon? What single piece of evidence would most change that assessment for the horizon role?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Take the three candidate roles you identified in the Topic 2 synthesis. For each one, write a single credibility statement: "This role is a credible direction for me because \[skill evidence\] aligns with \[what the role demands\]" -- or -- "This role is a 12-month horizon because \[development gap\]." You are not deciding which role to pursue. You are stating the honest case for each one based on what you currently have as evidence.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Labour Market Positioning". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. Open the functional-area table from Topic 1. Select three functional areas you are not immediately dismissing as irrelevant to you. The selection is yours -- do not choose from a provided shortlist.
1. Within each selected functional area, name one specific role. Use the role vocabulary from Topics 1 and 2, not a job title you have invented. For each role, write two to three sentences describing what the work actually involves -- what gets done day to day, not what the title sounds like.
1. Return to the skill-cluster map from Topic 2. For each of the three roles, identify the primary skill cluster the role depends on. Write one sentence locating your own current profile relative to that cluster: where are you now relative to what the role requires?
1. For each role, write a short paragraph of three to four sentences explaining why this role is a credible direction for you personally. Reference your skills, your interests, and what the role's work actually demands. Use the credibility framing from Topic 3 -- not just "I am interested in this" but "my profile is credible for this because..."
1. Review your three roles. Flag the one you are least sure about. Write one specific question -- a single sentence -- that you would need answered to resolve the uncertainty. Make it precise enough that you could search for an answer in a real job listing or industry source.

Submission

Submit your career pathway map document with all five sections completed.

Feedback questions

- For the role you flagged as uncertain, what makes it harder to assess your credibility for it compared to the other two?
- Looking at your three credibility statements, which one surprised you most when you wrote it, and why?

References

Readings

The Business of Esports -- Career Opportunities Across the Industry — Practitioner-facing overview mapping functional areas of esports to specific role types, entry requirements, and growth paths.

<https://dotesports.com/business/news/the-business-of-esports-career-opportunities>

Esports Careers -- What Jobs Are There in Esports? — Industry outlet coverage of the range of esports career tracks, naming specific roles per functional area and the skills that distinguish candidates.

<https://esportsinsider.com/2020/04/esports-careers/>

Watch

Breaking Into Esports -- Esports Engine Career Panel — Industry practitioners from event operations, broadcast, and sponsorship describe their entry routes and the skill clusters that got them hired.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QwT3c5PXKY>

Play

Riot Games Careers Explorer — Browse Riot's live job listings filtered by functional area (Esports, Marketing, Product, Creative) to see how one major organisation maps its own roles and what qualifications each listing names.

<https://www.riotgames.com/en/work-with-us>

Resources

Esports Insider Business and Career Section — Reference archive of industry-facing business and career coverage for verifying what a specific role involves or what a functional area's hiring norms look like.

<https://esportsinsider.com/category/business/>

LinkedIn Esports Industry Job Search — Live labour market signal; search a role name from your pathway map to read real job descriptions and ground credibility statements in actual hiring language.

<https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/search/?keywords=esports>

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

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What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
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Lesson 12: Research Methods for Industry Analysis

Source Credibility · Inline Citation Practice · Synthesis Across Sources

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will distinguish credible from weak sources for industry analysis
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will apply inline citation practice inside a professional document
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will synthesise across multiple sources into a coherent industry account

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can assess the credibility of given industry sources and explain the features that distinguish stronger from weaker ones
- The learner can apply inline citation practice inside a draft document so each significant claim is traceable to a named source
- The learner can synthesise across at least four sources into a coherent paragraph of industry analysis without drifting into list-of-quotes prose

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

Every credible piece of industry analysis is built on the same foundation: a set of sources someone has actually evaluated, a set of claims someone has actually attributed, and a coherent argument someone has actually made. That foundation is the difference between an industry document that a recruiter or organisation lead can trust and one that reads like a summary of summaries written under time pressure. That is the work ahead.

The work ahead connects directly to what matters in the showcase. Panels reviewing industry-knowledge submissions are not looking for quantity of sources; they are looking for evidence that you know how to distinguish credible from weak, that you can anchor each significant claim to a named source at the point it appears, and that your analysis sounds like your own argument rather than a collage of what others have said. Those three capabilities, source evaluation, inline citation practice, and synthesis across sources, are what the panel is trained to read for, and they are what this lesson builds.

By the time you finish the challenge, you will have produced the first major draft of your industry-knowledge synthesis, a source inventory you have evaluated against real credibility criteria, and an opening section where your own analytical voice is running the show. That draft carries directly into your showcase submission.

1 Source Credibility

distinguish credible from weak sources for industry analysis

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report, published annually by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, is one of the practitioner-recognised benchmarks for how information quality is evaluated across media industries. Its methodology section makes explicit the criteria researchers and journalists use to assess whether a source is worth trusting, which is exactly the operation this topic asks you to practise on esports industry materials. When you can explain why a source qualifies as credible, you are working in the same evaluative register as the analysts and reporters who produce the industry's most reliable output.

Core: Credibility Signals

A credible source shows its work. Five signals, taken together, allow you to distinguish sources that can be cited confidently from those that should be treated with caution.

Authorship. Is a named individual or institution responsible for the content? Anonymous content carries no accountability; named authors from identifiable institutions carry reputational stakes.

Institutional affiliation. What organisation stands behind the content? A viewership figure from a league's official data release carries the league's institutional credibility. The same figure repeated in an aggregator blog carries only the aggregator's editorial judgment.

Date. Esports markets move quickly. A market-size figure from three years ago may be substantially out of date. Currency matters especially for commercial and regional statistics.

Methodology transparency. For research-based sources, is it clear how the data was collected? A report that explains its survey size, geography, and methodology is stronger than one that presents figures without context.

Independence from promotional interest. Does the source have a financial or reputational interest in the claim it is making? An organisation's press release announcing its own viewership record is weaker than an independent analyst's assessment of the same figure.

Primary sources are original data or communications produced by the entity being studied: a league's official viewership release, a publisher's annual financial filing, a government sports authority's investment announcement. Secondary sources analyse, summarise, or interpret primary sources: a news article citing the viewership release, a commentary piece on the publisher's filing. Both types have a place in industry analysis; the distinction tells you what the source's claim is based on.

Signal

What it shows

What its absence signals

Named authorship

Accountability for claims

No one is staking reputation on the content

Institutional affiliation

Reputational backing

Claims are unanchored from any quality process

Currency (date)

Relevance to current conditions

Figures may not reflect the current market

Methodology transparency

Reproducible, challengeable evidence

Figures cannot be evaluated or contested

Independence

Claim is not self-serving

Source has reason to present favourable data

Worked contrast. Compare two sources on esports viewership growth in MENA. Source A is a press release from a regional event organiser claiming record attendance with no independent verification cited. Source B is a segment from the Newzoo annual market report citing regional data collected via their subscriber-base methodology, cross-referenced with platform data. Source A fails on methodology transparency and independence. Source B passes all five signals. Both describe the same market; only one provides a foundation for an analytical claim you can defend.

Checkpoint

You have two sources in front of you: a blog post from an esports organisation's own website claiming their tournament was the "most-watched ever in the region," and a Riot Games investor report disclosing viewership data for a specific title across multiple regions. Apply the five credibility signals to each. Which source is stronger, and what specifically makes it stronger?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Bring two sources you have already used or plan to use in your industry-knowledge synthesis. For each one, run it through the five credibility signals: write one sentence per signal, noting whether the source passes or fails. Flag any source that fails two or more signals and name what kind of source you would substitute for it.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Source Credibility". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Inline Citation Practice

apply inline citation practice inside a professional document

ESPN Esports long-form pieces, such as the coverage of Riot Games' partnership structures from 2023, demonstrate what professional inline citation discipline looks like at publication standard. Each significant factual claim is attributed at the point it appears in the text, not buried in a footnote or collected at the end. Reading these pieces, you know immediately where each claim comes from and who is accountable for it. That traceable accountability is the goal this topic teaches.

Core: Citation as Traceable Accountability

Citation is not a bibliographic formality; it is a professional commitment. When you attribute a claim inline, you are telling the reader: this assertion comes from a specific source, and you can find it, check it, and assess it yourself.

Inline attribution means naming the source at the point of the claim in the body of the document, not only in a separate reference list. In a professional industry document, this typically looks like: "According to the Newzoo 2024 Esports Market Report, global revenues reached..." or "Riot Games disclosed in its 2023 investor release that..." The source is named as part of the sentence; the claim is not left as an unanchored assertion.

Two failure modes to avoid:

Unattributed assertion. The claim appears without any source: "Esports revenues have grown significantly in MENA over the past three years." The reader cannot check this, cannot assess the source's credibility, and cannot distinguish your analysis from invention.

Over-citation. Every sentence carries an attribution, including sentences that represent your own synthesis or inference. This produces a text that reads as a list of quotations with no analytical voice. The writer's job is to synthesise; the citations support the synthesis, they do not replace it.

Before and after. Here is a paragraph without inline attribution:

> "Esports viewership in the MENA region has grown substantially. Tournament prize pools have increased. Saudi Arabia has made major investments in the sector."

And the same paragraph with inline citation practice applied:

> "Esports viewership in the MENA region grew by 14% year-on-year in 2023, according to the Newzoo Global Esports Market Report. Prize pool escalation has tracked that growth, with the Esports World Cup Foundation announcing a combined prize pool exceeding \$60 million for its 2024 season (Esports World Cup Foundation official release, 2024). Saudi Arabia's investment posture is formalised through the Saudi Esports Federation, which has coordinated government-backed funding across multiple competitive titles since 2021."

The second version makes the same claims but gives the reader a map. Each significant assertion is traceable.

Checkpoint

Read the following sentence: "The Saudi Esports Federation has grown rapidly since its founding, becoming one of the most influential bodies in regional esports." Identify the unattributed assertion embedded in this sentence. Rewrite it with inline attribution practice applied, using a plausible source you would actually seek out to verify the claim.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Take the opening paragraph you drafted or sketched for your industry-knowledge synthesis. Identify every significant factual claim in it. For each claim, either confirm that a source is named inline, or rewrite the sentence so the source is named at the point of the claim. If you cannot name a source for a claim, flag it as a claim that needs a source before submission.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Inline Citation Practice". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Synthesis Across Sources

synthesise across multiple sources into a coherent industry account

Newzoo's annual Global Esports and Live Streaming Market Report is the practitioner-recognised example of what synthesis looks like at professional standard. It does not quote-then-paraphrase sequentially from a list of sources. It assembles primary market data, regional figures, publisher announcements, and analyst projections into a single coherent account that reads as Newzoo's own analysis, where every component is traceable but the argument belongs to the author. That operation, producing one coherent account from multiple sources while maintaining the writer's own analytical voice, is what this topic teaches.

Core: Synthesis as Analytical Voice

Synthesis is not summary, and it is not mosaic quoting.

Summary restates one source in shorter form. If you are writing synthesis, you are drawing on multiple sources and reconciling them; a text that works through one source at a time is a sequence of summaries, not a synthesis.

Mosaic quoting strings together direct quotations or close paraphrases from multiple sources with minimal connective tissue. The result sounds like research, but the analytical voice belongs to nobody: the writer has assembled quotations without taking a position of their own.

Synthesis is the writer's own analytical account, built from multiple sources. The writer forms a claim, draws evidence from Source A, reconciles it with evidence from Source B, qualifies it with Source C, and closes with an inference that belongs to the writer. Each source's contribution is traceable, but the argument is the writer's.

A structural model for a synthesis paragraph:

```
[Writer's claim]
'Evidence from Source A (cited inline)
'Reconciled with evidence from Source B (cited inline)
'Qualified by limitation or nuance from Source C (cited inline)
[Writer's inference from the above]
```

Applied to the week's challenge task, writing the opening section of your industry-knowledge synthesis using at least four sources, this structure gives you a test: can you identify which sentence is your claim, which sentences are evidence, and which sentence is your inference? If the paragraph does not have all three, it is not yet synthesis.

The diagram below maps four sources into a single synthesis paragraph, showing where each source's contribution lands:

```
graph TD
A[Source A: Newzoo market data] --> P[Writer's synthesis paragraph]
B[Source B: Riot Games investor report] --> P
C[Source C: Saudi Esports Federation announcement] --> D[Qualification / nuance]
D --> P
P --> I[Writer's inference: what this means for MENA growth trajectory]
```

Distinction from summary. A text that says "Newzoo reports X. Riot Games reports Y. The Saudi Esports Federation announced Z." is three summaries. A synthesis uses those three claims as inputs to a single argument: "The MENA esports market's growth is supported by converging commercial and governmental commitments: Newzoo's data shows X, Riot's disclosures confirm Y, and the Saudi Esports Federation's Z formalises that investment posture. Taken together, these signals indicate..." That is synthesis.

Checkpoint

You are shown a paragraph that reads: "Newzoo reports that global esports revenues reached \$X in 2023. The Esports World Cup Foundation announced a prize pool of \$Y. According to the Saudi Esports Federation, Z organisations participated in funded programmes." Is this synthesis, mosaic quoting, or a sequence of summaries? What would need to change to make it synthesis?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Draft the opening section of your industry-knowledge synthesis using at least four sources. Apply inline citation at every significant claim. When you are done, check it against the structural model: identify your claim sentence, your evidence sentences (each attributed), and your inference sentence. If any element is missing, revise before moving to the challenge steps.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Synthesis Across Sources". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. List every source you intend to use for your industry-knowledge synthesis. For each source, note its name, whether it is a primary or secondary source, and which credibility signals it passes (authorship, institutional affiliation, currency, methodology transparency, independence).
1. Apply the credibility criteria to each source on your list. Flag any source that fails two or more signals. For each flagged source, name the specific substitute you would seek out and explain what makes it stronger.
1. Write a single paragraph of industry analysis drawing on at least two of your credible sources. Apply inline attribution at every significant factual claim: name the source at the point of the claim, not only in a reference list at the end.
- 1.

Extend your paragraph into an opening section of your industry-knowledge synthesis. Draw on at least four credible sources. Maintain your own analytical voice throughout: the section should have a claim, evidence drawn from your sources with inline attribution, and a closing inference that belongs to you. Do not let it become a sequence of summaries or a stitched list of quotations.

1. Review the section against the structural model from the lesson: identify your claim sentence, your evidence sentences (each attributed), and your inference sentence. If any element is absent, revise.

Submission

Submit your source inventory table and your opening synthesis section as a single document.

Feedback questions

- Which source on your list do you trust most for your synthesis, and what specifically makes it stronger than the alternatives you considered?
- Where in your opening section did you find it hardest to maintain your own analytical voice rather than restating what a source said? What did you do to correct it?

References

Readings

Evaluating Internet Sources (University of Oxford Skills Portal) — An institutionally authored guide to distinguishing primary from secondary sources, assessing authority, and understanding editorial independence; provides the conceptual vocabulary for the source-credibility topic.

<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/evaluating-info>

Watch

How to Evaluate Sources (MIT OpenCourseWare Writing and Communication) — A practitioner-anchored walkthrough of source-evaluation criteria covering authority, purpose, and editorial independence; models the analytical reasoning you apply to esports industry materials.

<https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/res-tll-008-reads-fall-2022/>

Play

CRAAP Test Self-Check (California State University Chico) — A one-page checklist applying Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose criteria to any source; use it to evaluate each source on your inventory before the challenge's credibility-assessment step.

<https://library.csuchico.edu/sites/default/files/craap-test.pdf>

Resources

Purdue OWL In-Text Citations Basics (APA) — A reference for inline citation mechanics, covering how to name a source at the point of a claim in a professional document; reach for it while drafting your opening synthesis section.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/in_text_citations_the_basics.html

Newzoo Esports and Games Market Overview (free tier reports) — Authoritative annual market synthesis documents assembling multi-source data into coherent written accounts; use as a model of synthesis voice and source integration, not as a citation source for your own work.

<https://newzoo.com/resources/trend-reports>

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

Desirable Difficulties

Bjork (1994) showed that learning strategies that feel harder in the short term · such as recall · produce stronger, more durable long-term memory.

Principles of Instruction

Rosenshine (2012) identifies daily review and retrieval as one of the most evidence-backed habits of effective instruction.

Roediger, H. L. & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). *Psychological Science*, 17(3), 249-255.

Bjork, R. A. (1994). In Metcalfe & Shimamura (Eds.), *Metacognition*. MIT Press.

Rosenshine, B. (2012). *Principles of Instruction*. *American Educator*, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 13: Emerging Trends - Technology, Publishing, and the Future of Esports

Structural Shifts in Esports · Regional Market Positioning · Signal-versus-Noise Reading

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will identify the technological and publishing shifts that are currently reshaping the esports industry
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will project how regional markets, particularly Saudi Arabia and MENA, are positioned in the industry's near future
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will distinguish substantive trend signals from speculative or promotional claims

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can identify at least three current shifts and describe what each one is changing inside the industry
- The learner can project how the MENA region is positioned in the industry's near future and identify the commitments that support the projection
- The learner can distinguish substantive trend signals from speculative or promotional claims and explain the features that separate them

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

When Saudi Arabia acquired ESL and FACEIT in 2022 and 2023, the transaction did not make headlines as a sponsorship deal. It was a structural play: ownership of the infrastructure that runs competitive leagues, anti-cheat platforms, and major live events worldwide. That distinction matters. Demographic ambition and marketing investment are everywhere in esports right now. Structural commitments are rarer, harder to reverse, and far more telling about where the industry is actually heading.

Practitioners who can distinguish the two are in a different position from those who cannot. The skill is not scepticism for its own sake. It is knowing which evidence counts when someone makes a claim about the near future of an industry, and knowing how to project forward from what has been staked rather than what has been said. In esports, where promotional enthusiasm regularly outruns primary data, this separates analysis that holds up from analysis that embarrasses you in a room of people who know the industry.

In the work ahead, you will extend the industry-knowledge synthesis you have been building by adding the sections your showcase portfolio still needs: near-future trends and regional market positioning. You will develop a working heuristic for evaluating trend claims and practise the evidentiary discipline your showcase panel will apply when they read your work.

1 Structural Shifts in Esports

identify the technological and publishing shifts that are currently reshaping the esports industry

In 2017 and 2018, Riot Games dismantled the third-party tournament ecosystem that had grown up around League of Legends and replaced it with the franchised LCS and LEC model: a closed league, fixed slots, revenue-sharing contracts, and direct league ownership. This was not a product update or a platform improvement. It was a restructuring of who controlled the competitive infrastructure and on what terms. The franchise model made visible what a structural shift looks like from inside the industry.

Core: Structural Shift versus Growth

The esports industry is undergoing structural reconfiguration, not just expansion. A structural shift alters the underlying organisation of the industry: who owns infrastructure, who controls access, how labour is organised, how money moves. Growth within a stable structure is a different thing. Mobile esports reaching new audiences in Southeast Asia is growth; cloud gaming eliminating the hardware barrier for competitive access is a structural shift because it changes which platforms can host competitive play and which manufacturers hold leverage over that access. Streaming infrastructure consolidation (Twitch, YouTube, and platform-exclusive rights deals) is a structural shift because it concentrates viewership power and changes how revenue flows from audiences to organisations. Publisher decisions are a third vector: when a title owner franchises its league, sunsets a competitive title, or licences broadcast rights to a traditional broadcaster, the downstream effect on teams, players, tournament operators, and sponsors is immediate and industry-wide.

To anchor the analysis: use a two-column table mapping each named shift to the inside-industry change it produces.

Shift

What it changes inside the industry

Cloud gaming infrastructure

Reduces hardware barrier; broadens the potential competitive player base; reduces leverage of hardware manufacturers

Streaming platform consolidation

Concentrates viewership and revenue distribution; creates platform-exclusive dependencies for teams and events

Publisher franchising decisions

Resets team ownership requirements, revenue models, and competitive access; eliminates independent tournament operators

Title sunsets

Eliminates entire competitive ecosystems, displacing players, coaches, analysts, and support staff

Learners must name at least three shifts and describe what each is materially changing, not just that "things are changing." The table above is a synthesis anchor, not a complete catalogue.

Checkpoint

The Riot franchise restructure and the cloud gaming shift both qualify as structural shifts. Name a third example from a different publisher or platform context, and explain specifically what existing arrangement it disrupted or replaced.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Open the shared synthesis document you are building toward the Industry Showcase Pitch. Under a heading "Near-Future Trends," draft a table with three columns: Shift, What Is Changing, and Your Source. Fill in three rows, each naming a distinct structural shift in the esports industry. For each row, identify one source you would cite and note whether that source is a primary data producer (like Newzoo or Esports Charts) or a secondary commentator. Keep to five minutes.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Structural Shifts in Esports". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

Regional Market Positioning

project how regional markets, particularly Saudi Arabia and MENA, are positioned in the industry's near future

In 2022 and 2023, Savvy Games Group, backed by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, acquired ESL and FACEIT and merged them into ESL Gaming, one of the largest tournament infrastructure operators in the world. This was not a sponsorship deal or a naming-rights arrangement. It was the acquisition of ownership stakes in the organisations that run competitive leagues, develop anti-cheat platforms, and host major live events globally. Saudi Arabia entered the industry as an owner of infrastructure, not as a buyer of visibility.

Core: Commitment-Based Positioning

Regional market positioning in esports is a function of identifiable commitments, not demographic potential alone. Demographic potential describes who could participate; commitment-based positioning describes what has already been staked, built, or contracted. Saudi Arabia's positioning in the industry's near future is backed by a specific set of commitments: capital investment through the Savvy Games Group portfolio (ESL, FACEIT, and additional acquisitions), government-funded esports academies and talent pipeline programmes, event hosting infrastructure (Riyadh as a flagship tournament destination), and broadcast rights deals. Vision 2030 provides the policy architecture within which these commitments sit.

The MENA region is not a homogeneous bloc. Saudi Arabia is the dominant capital actor; other national contexts (UAE, Egypt, Turkey) have different scales and orientations. Projecting the region's near future requires distinguishing what Saudi Arabia has committed from what other MENA nations have committed and what remains demographic aspiration.

A regional snapshot table is useful here for seeing structure rather than accumulating a list of facts:

Country / Actor

Commitment type

Scale indicator

Saudi Arabia (PIF / Savvy)

Capital acquisition, infrastructure ownership, talent pipeline

ESL + FACEIT acquisition; government academy funding

Saudi Arabia (Vision 2030)

Policy and event hosting

Riyadh as major tournament host

UAE

Commercial hub, broadcast

Regional media and sponsorship activity

Egypt / Turkey

Talent pool, competitive participation

Regional tournament participation, emerging academies

Checkpoint

A classmate argues that MENA's position in the near future of esports rests on its large young population and growing internet penetration. What is missing from that argument, and what specific evidence would you add to make the projection credible?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

In your synthesis document, draft a 100-word paragraph on the MENA region's positioning in the esports industry's near future. The paragraph must name at least two specific commitments (not

demographic facts) and identify at least one source that documents them. When you are done, underline or flag any sentence where your projection rests on a single source. Keep to five minutes.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Regional Market Positioning". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Signal-versus-Noise Reading

distinguish substantive trend signals from speculative or promotional claims

Between 2018 and 2020, a wave of industry headlines claimed esports viewership would surpass traditional sports within a decade. Newzoo, one of the most widely cited primary data producers in the industry, had published forward projections that were enthusiastically extrapolated by press, brands, and investors. By 2022 and 2023, Newzoo itself had substantially revised those projections downward, acknowledging that earlier models had overestimated the pace of audience growth. The arc is documented: the projection was made, it was widely amplified, the primary source corrected it.

Core: Diagnostic Features of Signal versus Noise

Credible trend analysis requires source-level reading, not just claim-level skepticism. The diagnostic questions are:

1. Who produced the claim? Is it a primary data producer (Newzoo, Esports Charts) or a secondary commentator, press outlet, or sponsor?
2. What primary data underlies it? Is the underlying data cited, or is the claim asserted without a traceable source?
3. Does the source have an interest in the projection? Brands, platform operators, and investment funds have incentives to project growth; their claims require independent corroboration.
4. Is the projection corroborated across independent sources? A claim backed by one source, however authoritative, is weaker than a claim corroborated by independent methodologies reaching compatible conclusions.

Apply these questions to two current trend claims:

Claim

Source type

Interest?

Corroborated?

Verdict

"AI-generated content will transform esports broadcast within three years"

Trade press / vendor

Yes (software vendors)

Weak

Noise-leaning until corroborated by primary audience data

"Mobile esports is growing fastest in Southeast Asia"

Newzoo, Esports Charts

Low (data firms)

Moderate

Stronger signal; check methodology for what "growing" means

The heuristic is not "distrust everything." It is a structured set of questions that separates claims worth building on from claims that would undermine a professional document.

Checkpoint

A recent article claims that esports will become a mainstream entertainment category by 2027, citing a single consulting firm's forecast. Apply the four diagnostic questions to this claim and state whether it qualifies as signal or noise as presented.

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Return to your synthesis document's near-future trends section. For each of the three shifts you named in Topic 1's synthesis, apply the four diagnostic questions to the source you listed. Flag any claim that rests on a single source with an asterisk and write one sentence naming the corroborating source you would seek. This is the evidentiary audit your showcase submission will need to pass.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Signal-versus-Noise Reading". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. Open the running industry-knowledge synthesis document you drafted in Weeks 11 and 12. Review the two sections already in place: the stakeholder landscape and the source-backed analysis. Identify where a near-future trends section and a MENA/Saudi Arabia positioning section belong structurally within the document. Add placeholder headings for each before you begin drafting.
1. Draft the near-future trends section. Name at least three current structural shifts in the esports industry and explain specifically what each shift is changing inside the industry. For each shift, record the source you are drawing on. Before you include any claim, apply the four diagnostic questions from the lesson: Who produced it? What primary data underlies it? Does the source have an interest in the projection? Is it corroborated? Include only claims that hold up to at least three of the four questions.
1. Draft the MENA and Saudi Arabia section. Name at least two specific, documented commitments (capital investment, infrastructure ownership, talent pipeline, event hosting, policy architecture) that position the region in the industry's near future. Do not anchor the section on demographic potential alone; every projection must be tied to a named commitment and a traceable source.
1. Audit the complete extended document for single-source projections. Read every sentence that makes a forward-looking claim. Flag any claim that rests on a single source with a note in the margin or in a comment. For each flagged claim, write one sentence naming the corroborating source you would seek to strengthen it. Submit the document with the flags visible, not resolved.

Submission

Submit your extended industry-knowledge synthesis document with margin notes or inline comments showing all flagged single-source projections.

Feedback questions

- Which of the three structural shifts you named do you find most convincing as a signal rather than noise, and what makes the evidence for it stronger than the others?
- Which projection in your MENA section are you least confident about, and what specific source or type of evidence would you need to increase your confidence?

References

Readings

The Esports Market Is Redefining Itself (Newzoo) — Newzoo's own published recalibration of earlier growth projections, making the signal-versus-noise arc concrete and traceable through the same firm whose earlier forecasts were widely cited and subsequently revised.

<https://newzoo.com/resources/blog/the-esports-market-is-redefining-itself>

Saudi Arabia's Esports Ambitions — Practitioner coverage of Savvy Games Group's acquisition strategy and Vision 2030 esports commitments, documenting the specific capital and infrastructure commitments required to support MENA-positioning projections.

<https://esportsinsider.com/2023/01/saudi-arabia-esports-2023>

Watch

The Esports Bubble Debate — A practitioner-facing discussion of whether esports viewership projections were overinflated, illustrating the signal-versus-noise concept with domain-specific evidence from commentators inside the industry.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A1Q6T6VSUI>

Play

Esports Charts Live Dashboard — Browse live viewership and peak-concurrent-viewers data for any active tournament this week to encounter the primary data source firsthand, building the ability to evaluate trend claims that cite or misrepresent this data.

<https://escharts.com>

Resources

Savvy Games Group ESL Gaming Acquisition Announcement — Primary-source press release documenting the structural acquisition of ESL and FACEIT; reach for this when drafting the MENA synthesis section to anchor any ownership claim to a named, verifiable event.

<https://www.savvygames.com/news/savvy-games-group-completes-acquisition-of-esl-gaming>

Esports Charts Methodology — Explains what Esports Charts measures and how, so you can accurately characterise the source and its scope when citing viewership data in your synthesis.

<https://escharts.com/methodology>

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

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Rosenshine, B. (2012). Principles of Instruction. American Educator, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 14: Reflecting on Professional Identity and Industry Readiness

Professional Identity as Evidence · Reflection as Changed Thinking · Continued-Learning Infrastructure

Lesson Objectives

1. By the end of this lesson, the learner will articulate a personal professional position inside the esports ecosystem
2. By the end of this lesson, the learner will identify the resources, organisations, and people that support continued learning in the industry
3. By the end of this lesson, the learner will trace personal development across the course as evidence of changed thinking

Lesson Learning Outcomes

- The learner can articulate a personal professional position inside the esports ecosystem with reference to specific roles, evidence of preparation, and credible next steps
- The learner can identify at least eight resources, organisations, or people that support continued learning and explain why each is relevant to the chosen direction
- The learner can trace personal development across the course with reference to at least one concrete moment of changed thinking

INTRODUCTION — 10 MINUTES

When Tyler "Ninja" Blevins announced his move from Twitch to Mixer in 2018, the most noticed part of his statement was not the platform name. It was how he framed the decision: in terms of reach, audience alignment, and where he was heading as a professional. That framing was itself a career instrument. It told the industry something about him that no résumé line could, namely that he had a position, not just a profile.

That is the skill Professional Identity and Industry Readiness is about. The Industry Showcase Pitch requires a reflective statement, an annotated resource list, and a professional position. These are not documentation tasks. A showcase panel reviewing submissions can tell within two sentences whether a candidate has a working model of where they are going or is describing aspirations. Direction-linked rationale, changed-thinking reflection, and a typed continued-learning infrastructure are the features that separate a credible submission from a generic one, and each of them is teachable and learnable.

By the close of the lesson and challenge, you will have a draft professional position with all three structural elements in place, an annotated resource list with direction-specific rationale for each entry, and a two-beat reflective statement anchored to a specific moment in your own learning. Those drafts become the raw material for the showcase submission.

1 Professional Identity as Evidence

articulate a personal professional position inside the esports ecosystem

In 2018, Tyler "Ninja" Blevins made the high-profile move from Twitch to Mixer. His public statement did not lead with the contract figure; it framed the decision in terms of platform reach, audience alignment, and career control. That framing was deliberate: Ninja was not describing what happened to him, he was stating a professional position, and the industry read it that way.

Core: Position vs. Biography

A professional position is a structured claim: who you are as a practitioner, what you offer, and where you are headed. It differs from a bio or a résumé line in a specific way. A bio lists what has happened; a position argues what it means and where it leads. A résumé line names a credential; a position explains how that credential is preparation for a named direction.

For an industry recruiter scanning a portfolio, the distinction is immediate. Three elements determine whether a position reads as readiness or aspiration:

- **Specific role named.** Not "I want to work in esports," but "I am targeting broadcast production coordination in a tier-two organisation." The specificity signals that the candidate has mapped the landscape and landed somewhere.
- **Evidence of preparation.** One concrete thing the candidate has done, studied, or built that connects to the named role. Not implied preparation ("I'm passionate about this") but demonstrated preparation.
- **Credible next step.** A named action or milestone the candidate is actively working toward. "I am completing a sports broadcasting minor" is a next step; "I hope to gain experience" is not.

These three elements answer the recruiter's tacit question: does this person know where they are going, and is there reason to believe they can get there?

Consider the contrast between two portfolio openings:

> "I am passionate about esports and have always loved the competitive gaming scene. I want to use my communication skills to make a difference in the industry."

vs.

> "I am targeting community management roles at regional esports organisations. This term I developed a social media content calendar for a local gaming collective and grew their Discord server from 40 to 210 active members. My immediate next step is completing a two-day creator economy workshop offered by Esports Insider."

The first statement has neither specificity, evidence, nor next step. The second has all three and takes twelve seconds to verify as credible.

Checkpoint

Look at this portfolio opening: "I am interested in esports analytics and have studied the industry this term. I believe data will be central to the industry's future and I want to be part of that." Which of the three structural elements is missing, and what would each missing element look like if it were present?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Draft the three-element professional position for your prioritised role from your career-pathway map. Write it as two to three sentences: name the specific role, name one piece of evidence of preparation, state one credible next step. Do not polish. Read it back and confirm each element is present. If any element is absent, add it before you move on.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Professional Identity as Evidence". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

2 Reflection as Changed Thinking

identify the resources, organisations, and people that support continued learning in the industry

Game director Rami Ismail's post-mortem essays on Nuclear Throne and Ridiculous Fishing are read in the development community not because they catalogue what shipped, but because they trace what his

thinking looked like before and after specific decisions. The essays are valuable precisely because they name the belief held before, the encounter that disrupted it, and the view that replaced it.

Core: Summary Reflection vs. Changed-Thinking Reflection

Most reflective writing produced under time pressure collapses into summary: "I learned a lot about the industry," "This course opened my eyes to new possibilities," "My understanding of esports has grown." These statements are not false, but they are indistinguishable across every learner in a cohort. They carry no signal.

Changed-thinking reflection has a different structure. It requires two named elements:

- **Prior assumption.** A specific belief held at the start, stated clearly enough that it can be wrong. "I assumed esports organisations made most of their revenue from prize pools" is a prior assumption. "I did not know much about the business side" is not (it names ignorance, not a belief).
- **Disrupting encounter.** A named moment: a reading, a discussion, a challenge finding, a statistic encountered, a practitioner claim that contradicted the assumption. The moment must be specific enough that someone who was not in the room could understand what it was.

What makes changed-thinking reflection useful to a showcase panel is exactly what makes it hard to fake: a generic disrupting encounter means the candidate is not tracking their own intellectual development. The panel is using this signal to assess intellectual readiness, not personal growth.

A worked example shows the difference:

> **Generic:** "I was surprised by how complex the commercial side of esports is. I did not realise there were so many different revenue streams."

> **Changed-thinking:** "I assumed tournament prize pools were the primary commercial model in esports. Reading about the sponsorship-first structure of most tier-two organisations, and seeing that most prize pools are funded by sponsors rather than league revenue, changed my working model of how organisations sustain themselves. I now think the broadcast and content rights side is where long-term structural money is being built."

The second version names a prior belief, a specific disrupting encounter (the sponsorship-first structure of tier-two organisations), and the view that replaced it. It is evidence of intellectual engagement, not a description of it.

Checkpoint

Here is a sample reflection: "I was surprised to learn that Saudi Arabia is investing heavily in esports. I did not realise how important the MENA region was." Identify the structural gap: which of the two beats is missing or incomplete, and what would make it complete?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Write the two-beat reflection for one moment from this course. Name a specific belief or assumption you held before it was disrupted. Name the specific encounter: which week, which source, which claim. Write what replaced the assumption. Two to four sentences, no polish. If you cannot name the specific encounter, that is the gap to close before the showcase submission.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Reflection as Changed Thinking". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

3 Continued-Learning Infrastructure

trace personal development across the course as evidence of changed thinking

The Esports Observer shut down in 2021. At that point it was one of the most cited trade publications in the industry. Its closure meant that anyone whose continued-learning plan consisted of "check The Esports Observer weekly" had a dead resource with no forwarding address. Its audience redistributed across Esports Insider, Dot Esports, and a set of independent newsletters, but that redistribution had to be actively tracked. No one was sent a map.

Core: Infrastructure vs. Feed

A continued-learning plan is not a list of bookmarks. A bookmark list is static; an infrastructure is a practice. The distinction matters because the information landscape in esports shifts: publications close, communities move platforms, practitioners stop publishing, new conferences emerge. A practitioner who treats their resource list as fixed will find it decaying within two years.

Infrastructure has two properties a static list lacks:

- **Typed coverage.** Different resource types perform different functions. A publication (Esports Insider, Dot Esports) provides trend signal and industry news. An organisation (Global Esports Federation, regional leagues) provides structural context and job pathways. A platform (Discord servers, LinkedIn groups) provides community access and practitioner network. A podcast provides practitioner perspective and informal commentary. A person (a producer, an analyst, a journalist on social media) provides real-time signal and direct access. A working infrastructure covers more than one type.
- **Direction-linked rationale.** Each resource in the list is connected to a specific career direction and mechanism of relevance. "Useful for esports" is not a rationale. "Publishes weekly commercial data on regional viewership, which maps to the audience-sales dynamics I need to understand for broadcast coordination" is. The difference between these two sentences is the difference between a general awareness list and a professional tool.

The assignment's Part 3 asks for at least eight entries. Eight entries with direction-generic rationale will be immediately identifiable by a showcase panel as a low-effort list. Eight entries with direction-specific rationale read as a practitioner's working infrastructure. The cognitive load of writing the rationale correctly is also the signal the panel is looking for.

Resource type

Function

Example

Publication

Trend signal, commercial news

Esports Insider

Organisation

Structural context, pathways

Global Esports Federation

Platform / community

Network access, real-time practice

Discord, LinkedIn groups

Podcast

Practitioner perspective

The Esports Playbook

Person

Real-time signal, direct access

Journalist or analyst on social media

Checkpoint

Here are two resource entries. Which one meets the direction-linked rationale bar, and why does the other fall short?

> **Entry A:** "Esports Insider -- a leading publication covering the business of esports. Relevant because it covers the industry I want to work in."

> **Entry B:** "Esports Insider -- publishes weekly reporting on sponsorship deals, broadcast rights, and organisation commercial strategy; directly relevant to my interest in commercial partnerships roles at regional organisations."

REFLECTION ACTIVITY — 10 MINUTES

Open your continued-learning list draft. For each entry, check that the rationale names: (1) the specific information or access the resource provides, and (2) the connection to your chosen direction. Rewrite any entry whose rationale is direction-generic. If you have fewer than five typed resource categories represented, identify which type is missing and name one resource that would fill it.

DISCUSSION — 10 MINUTES

In small groups, discuss "Continued-Learning Infrastructure". Share one example from your own experience or from work you have seen. Listen for differences in how peers interpreted the same material.

HOMEWORK

1. Return to the career-pathway map you drafted in the Career Pathways lesson. Name the three roles you identified and confirm which one you are prioritising. No new research is needed at this stage.
1. Draft your professional position for the prioritised role. Write two to three sentences covering the three structural elements from the lesson: the specific role named, one piece of evidence of preparation, and one credible next step. Do not polish the language. Confirm all three elements are present before moving on.
1. Build your annotated resource list. Draft at least eight entries using the five resource types introduced in the lesson: publication, organisation, platform or community, podcast, and person. For each entry, write one sentence identifying what the resource specifically covers and one sentence explaining why that coverage connects to your chosen direction. "Relevant to esports" is not an explanation.
1. Write your reflective statement draft. Identify one moment from the course where a prior assumption was disrupted. Name the assumption, the specific encounter that disrupted it, and what replaced it. Write two to four sentences. If you cannot name the specific encounter, note the gap and move on.
1. Audit your resource list. Read each entry and flag any whose rationale is direction-generic rather than direction-specific. For any flagged entry, name the substitute resource you would consider and why it would serve your direction more precisely. Apply the same audit to your reflective statement: if the disrupting encounter is vague, name what specific detail would make it concrete.

Submission

Submit your portfolio draft document as a single PDF.

Feedback questions

- Which element of your professional position was hardest to write, and what would you need to know or do to make it stronger?
- Which resource on your list has the weakest direction-linked rationale, and what would a stronger rationale look like for it?

References

Readings

How to Write a Meaningful Self-Evaluation (Harvard Business Review) — Practitioner-facing treatment of the difference between summary reflection and changed-thinking reflection, mapping directly onto the two-beat structure the lesson teaches and the specificity the assignment's reflective statement demands.

<https://hbr.org/2021/01/how-to-write-a-meaningful-self-evaluation>

Watch

Career Paths in Esports (Esports Insider Live Panel) — Practitioners from competitive operations, broadcast, and commercial roles describe their routes and the knowledge gaps they would have wanted to close earlier, modelling the continued-learning mindset and the self-positioning the lesson teaches.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Hm4iXlpRFE>

Play

LinkedIn Profile Builder (Esports / Gaming Industry) — Browse three to five public profiles of early-career esports professionals in roles you are considering, and observe how practitioners frame experience, skills, and next steps in the actual labour market.

<https://www.linkedin.com/>

Resources

Esports Insider (Industry Jobs Board and Newsletter) — Authoritative industry publication with a jobs board and sector-specific newsletter covering sponsorship, commercial strategy, and organisation moves across the full spectrum of esports roles.

<https://esportsinsider.com/jobs>

The Esports Observer Archive (via Wayback Machine) — Archived record of a formerly major trade publication; useful as primary evidence for the lesson's infrastructure-instability anchor and as a research source for tracing how industry coverage has shifted since 2021.

https://web.archive.org/web/*/theesportsobserver.com

Recall Test

Based on the content of this lesson

Your instructor will conduct a retrieval practice recall test based on the content of this lesson.

The test is low-stakes · it is not formally graded. Its purpose is to strengthen your long-term memory of the material by requiring you to actively retrieve what you have learned, rather than simply re-reading it. Research shows this is one of the most effective study strategies available.

What to expect:

- 15 minutes, closed notes
- Questions will draw directly from this lesson's concepts, vocabulary, and processes
- You will receive immediate feedback · the goal is to identify gaps, not to catch you out

Why retrieval practice works

The Testing Effect

Roediger & Karpicke (2006) demonstrated that students who practise recalling material retain significantly more over time than those who spend the same time re-studying.

Desirable Difficulties

Bjork (1994) showed that learning strategies that feel harder in the short term · such as recall · produce stronger, more durable long-term memory.

Principles of Instruction

Rosenshine (2012) identifies daily review and retrieval as one of the most evidence-backed habits of effective instruction.

Roediger, H. L. & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). *Psychological Science*, 17(3), 249-255.

Bjork, R. A. (1994). In Metcalfe & Shimamura (Eds.), *Metacognition*. MIT Press.

Rosenshine, B. (2012). *Principles of Instruction*. *American Educator*, 36(1), 12-19.

Lesson 15: Industry Readiness Portfolio

ASSESSMENT WEEK

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