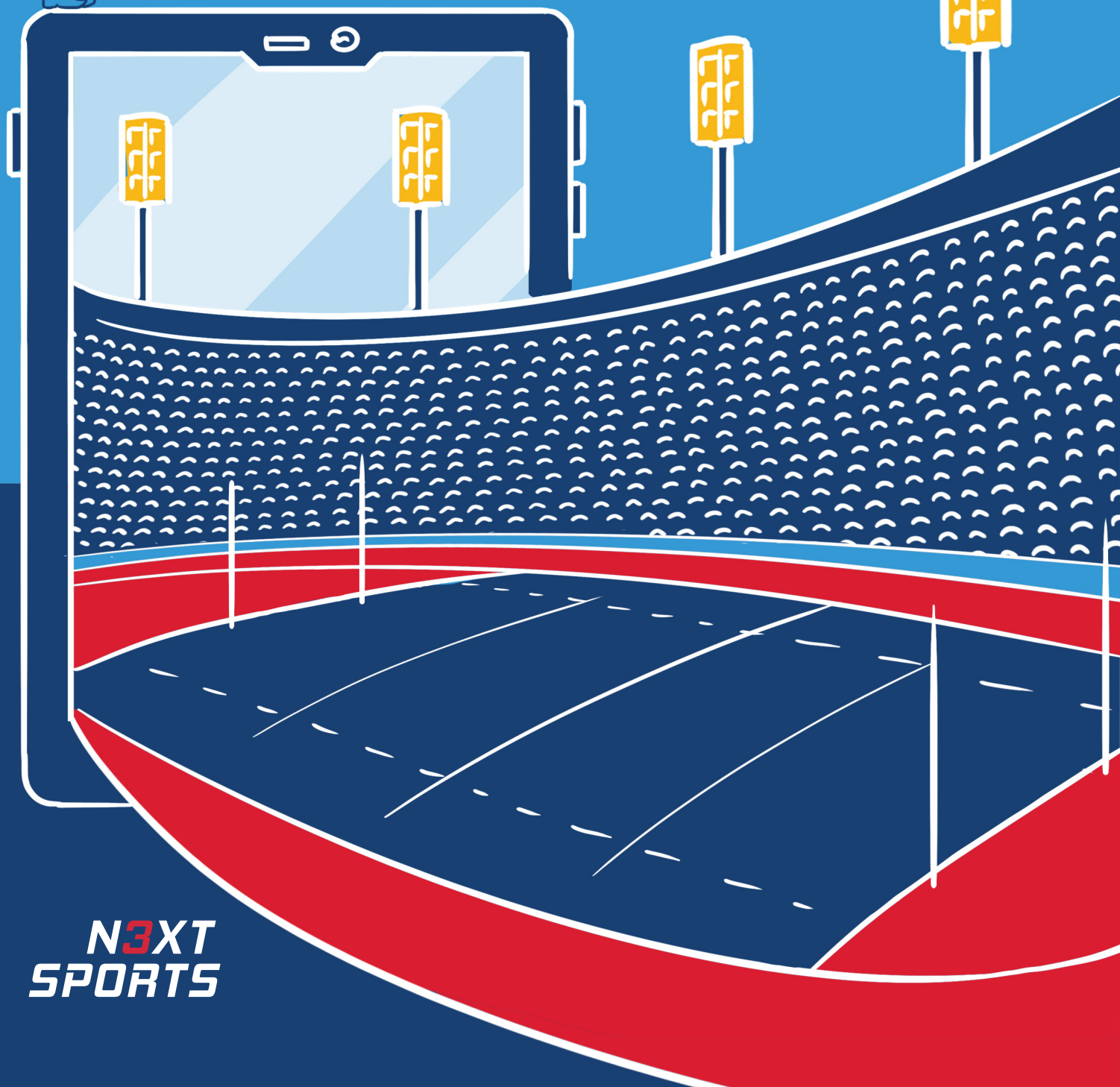


DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION **IN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT**

*The Handbook for Leaders, Innovators
and Changemakers*

June 2021



N3XT
SPORTS

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When I was working as the Sports Intelligence Manager at the International Olympic Committee, I got to see firsthand how rapidly technology and innovation were changing the environment of the sports world. I also saw that many organizations who were taking their first tentative steps into the digital world quickly found significant benefit from their investments of time and resources.

The IOC's recently launched 2020+5 strategic plan underlines the importance of digitalization to the Olympic Movement at large. In this report we hope to reveal how deeply and positively digitalization can affect sports organizations, supporting smarter decisions, finding competitive edges, developing strategic plans, building efficient ecosystems, better engaging fans and creating new revenue.

We have analyzed key success stories from the sports world, highlighting different aspects and benefits of digital transformation, and spanning from LA28's innovative logo design through to FIFA's Connect platform. We also sat down with a diverse group of people from across different Olympic organizations to learn from their experiences.

Over the last few years working on topics of transformation and modernization within the Olympic Movement, we discovered a wave of change makers. They all share a sense of openness, creativity and curiosity that leads them into the realm of digital, technology and innovation.

At **N3XT Sports**, we work alongside these pioneers, guiding Olympic organizations and professional sports bodies through their digital transformation and innovation journeys. The process requires leadership buy-in and the creation of momentum through quick wins. Throughout this report we invite you to explore how organizations have already leveraged digitalization, and to think about your next steps. If your organization is looking to start its own digital transformation, or would like expert advice on a process you have already begun, **N3XT Sports** can help. You can reach me and my team at info@n3xtsports.com

”

– Hisham Shehabi, OLY
COO, N3XT Sports



AUTHORS

Hisham Shehabi, OLY
Mounir Zok
Beatriz Indurain

EDITOR

Tom Taylor

DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION

Christel Saneh

EXPERTS

Babak Amir-Tahmasseb

Director of International Relations and
grand INSEP network
INSEP

Motasem El Bawab

Head of Digital
Volleyball World

Bertrand Daille

Deputy Chief of Elite Performance
INSEP

An Dang Duy

Chief Information Officer
World Athletics

Colin Freeman

Director of Digital
Canadian Olympic Committee

Matic Švab

Deputy Secretary-General
Olympic Committee of Slovenia

David Silvertand

Business Development for Paris 2024
Atos

Gordon Templeman

Director of Commercial and Communications
United World Wrestling

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1. **LEADING** **IN A DIGITAL WORLD**

On Sept. 1, 2020, LA28 launched not just one logo, but 32. A full eight years in advance of the return of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to the United States, the organizing committee was already focused on engaging an audience that would be in its 20s and 30s come 2028.

The “A” in each of the LA28 logos is drawn by a different local icon. There are accomplished athletes such as Olympic sprinter Allyson Felix and Paralympic long jumper Lex Gillette, of course, but also many others like artist Steven Harrington, actress Reese Witherspoon and musician Billie Eilish. There are also logos focusing on themes like equality and diversity. The LA28 logos are digital-age-ready, designed to be shared and liked across digital platforms and to leverage the influence of their creators. Choosing to take this approach was a forward-thinking and smart decision.

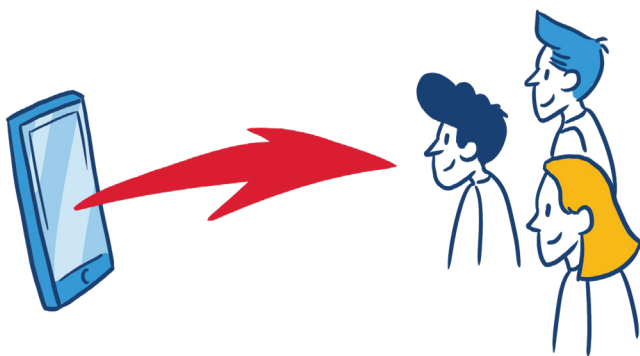
Digital is no longer a nice-to-have, but an essential and central part of what modern organizations do. It is no longer the future that requires a digital mindset, but the present. Leaders from across the Olympic Movement already know that the buck stops with them. But it also starts with them. Whether or not the idea for the LA28 logos came directly from the organizing committee’s board of directors, that leadership deserves credit for building an environment that would foster such digital innovation.

In 2019, researchers at MIT discovered that the companies with the most digitally fluent boards of directors outperformed their competition on metrics like revenue growth, return on assets and market cap growth. Within the Olympic Movement, digitalization offers organizations the chance to diversify revenues, build and engage new audiences, seek new partnerships, and even win medals.

The world has changed substantially since we entered the new millennium at Sydney 2000. Four of the five largest companies in the world ranked by stock market valuation are now tech companies (Apple, Microsoft, Amazon and Alphabet). Facebook, at No. 6, was founded in 2004 and didn’t join the stock market until 2012.



Social network sports app Strava grew to a \$1.5 billion valuation last year, and virtual sports platform Zwift rose to more than \$1 billion. Peloton Interactive, which makes connected stationary bikes and treadmills and produces training content, has tripled its market value within a year to more than \$28 billion. Companies like these are the new digital face of sports.



The Olympic Agenda 2020+5, which was unanimously approved by the IOC in March 2021, identifies digitalization **as a key trend for the Olympic Movement** over the next five years. According to the IOC, *“Digitalisation offers a chance for us to address people more directly, engage with young people and promote the Olympic values.”*

But the COVID-19 pandemic showed that digitalization has benefits in more than just audience building. Companies that had already adopted the infrastructure needed for remote working more quickly shifted to the need for all employees to work from home. When the New York City Marathon was cancelled, its organizers were still able to rely on the virtual race, powered by Strava, that they had created in 2018. Building on the virtual sports theme, the IOC recently launched an Olympic Virtual Series based around baseball, cycling, rowing, sailing

and motorsports. And when sports began to return, organizations embraced digital approaches that aimed to reduce infection risks and keep athletes and employees safe.



If Innovation is seen as a job for one person or one department, the organization will certainly fail to evolve to a better digital future. Innovation is very much a mindset change starting with the leadership team and an appetite for transformation to spread at all levels.



– An Dang Duy,
Chief Information Officer,
World Athletics

The challenge, however, is in navigating this new space. Change must be led; it doesn't just happen. Experienced and knowledgeable leaders are the main driver towards positive digital transformation, able to understand this evolving space, and to unite, motivate and mobilize all departments and teams across their organizations.

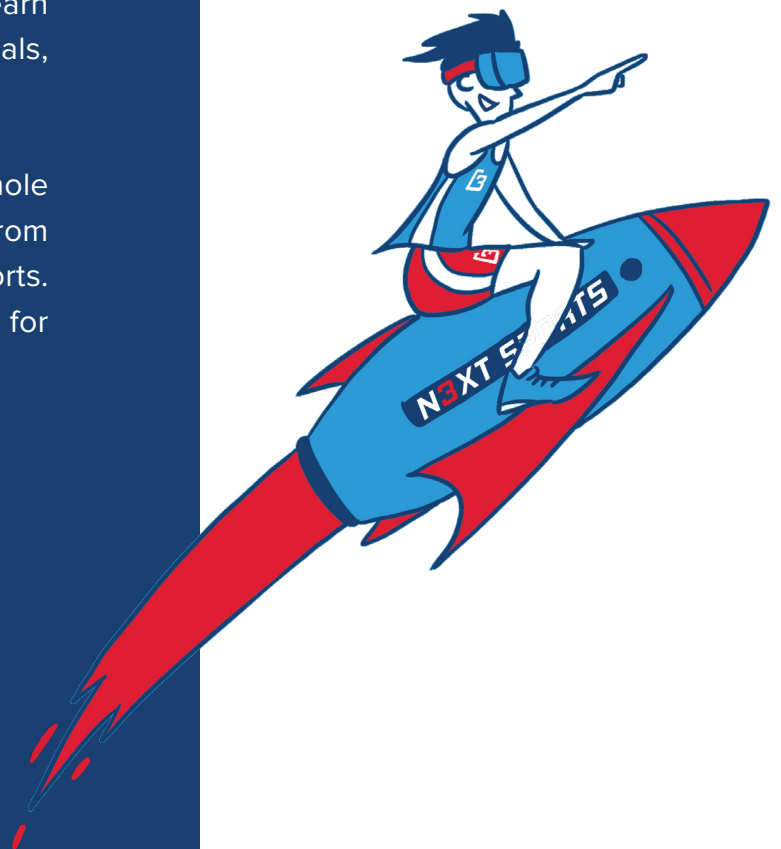
N3XT STEPS



Leaders and key decision makers within the Olympic Movement must be able to understand the digital and innovation trends that are bringing new stakeholders and opportunities to their organizations. In the race to engage more fans, earn more revenue and win more medals, digitalization needs to be a top priority.

Our team has expertise from the whole scope of digital transformation and from across a wide variety of different sports. We can help educate and prepare you for what is next.

Find out more by emailing us at info@n3xtsports.com or visiting www.n3xtsports.com



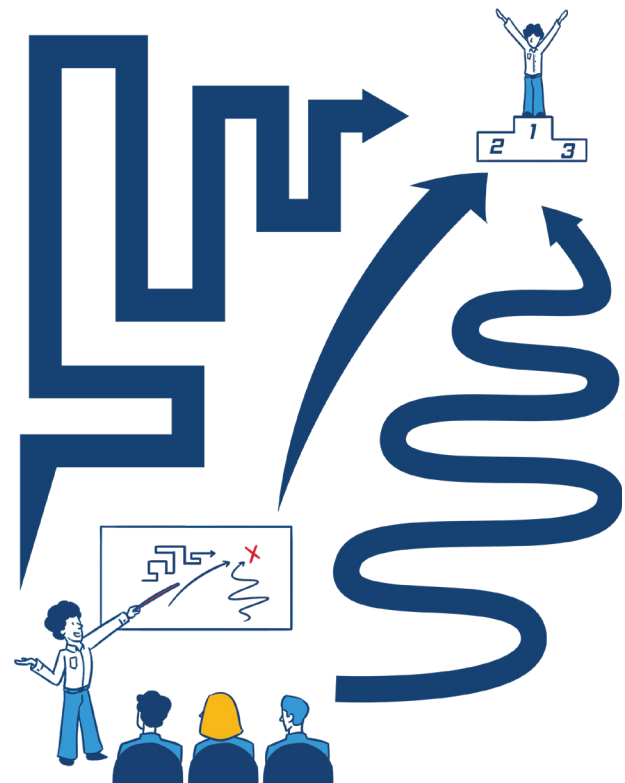
2. **SETTING** **STRATEGIC GOALS**

Before 2016, Spanish football team Real Sociedad had been struggling to generate income from its digital assets. As the LaLiga club began upgrading and modernizing its stadium, its leadership realized it also needed to do the same for its digital strategy.

Three years later, Real Sociedad's digital transformation was having significant impacts across fan engagement, internal business processes and even sports performance. By the start of the 2019-20 season, average stadium attendance had increased from 22,000 to 30,000, 70% of fans were accessing the club's website via mobile devices, and revenue from e-commerce had grown by 85%. The club had also implemented Microsoft's cloud-based Office 365 across its organization and deployed new point-of-sale devices within Anoeta Stadium to learn more about purchasing behavior. And, thanks in part to a new sports management system, Real Sociedad would go on to win the 2019-20 Copa del Rey.

Many organizations, both inside and outside sports, have added digital assets on top of their existing business structures, instead of totally reimagining those structures from a digital viewpoint. As a result, the responsibilities for implementing and maintaining those digital resources are typically divided across communications, marketing and IT departments. The absence of an overarching strategy can waste time,

personnel and budgets, and ultimately not achieve the desired goals.



Real Sociedad's example illustrates how, like a full stadium upgrade, a digital transformation involves more than simply adding new products. By creating a strategic plan and roadmap, organizations can prioritize different initiatives and identify the most efficient routes to success. It also shows that a digital transformation doesn't necessarily mean starting completely from scratch, but instead understanding how to incorporate existing assets with new ones. Anoeta Stadium has not been replaced, but modernized based on its existing foundations.

A good digital strategy should take into account your current environment, existing tools and data flows, commercial deals and governance structures, and must be aligned with your overall corporate strategy. Digitalization is not an add-on, but a core part of how your modern organization functions.

It also shouldn't require an enormous amount of capital to realize, and should be achievable either utilizing existing resources or by adding incremental investments that are balanced by clear returns in efficiency and revenue. The main goal is always to add value.



If you want to succeed with your digital transformation, you need a good collaboration between all of your departments. Your digital strategy will ultimately equal the performance of your organization. Working with everyone from marketing to coaches to sponsors, and building an aligned vision, is key to success.



– David Silvertand,
Business Development for Paris 2024,
Atos

After the International Volleyball Federation implemented its own digital strategy, it saw a more than 60% increase in revenue from in-stream ads, gained more than 500,000 new Facebook followers (a 25% increase), and, over a four-month period, had 24 million more video views of at least one minute in length (an 85% increase).

Creating a digital strategy will also make your organization more able to adapt to future challenges, spanning from the emergence of new and disruptive technologies to unpredictable world-changing events like the current COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last year, Real Sociedad has shifted its focus from targeting those fans who might be physically present in its stadium to making its app, Realzale, and website the second screen for those watching at home.

The N3XT Sports *Digital Assessment Tool* is a first step to understanding the digital maturity of your organization. It uses a three-pronged approach covering administration, sports and business, and can identify the quick wins.

Sports organizations that set clear digital strategies and objectives can expect to see significant benefits within less than a four-year Olympic cycle. By starting now, you should see results by Paris 2024, and perhaps even as early as Beijing 2022.

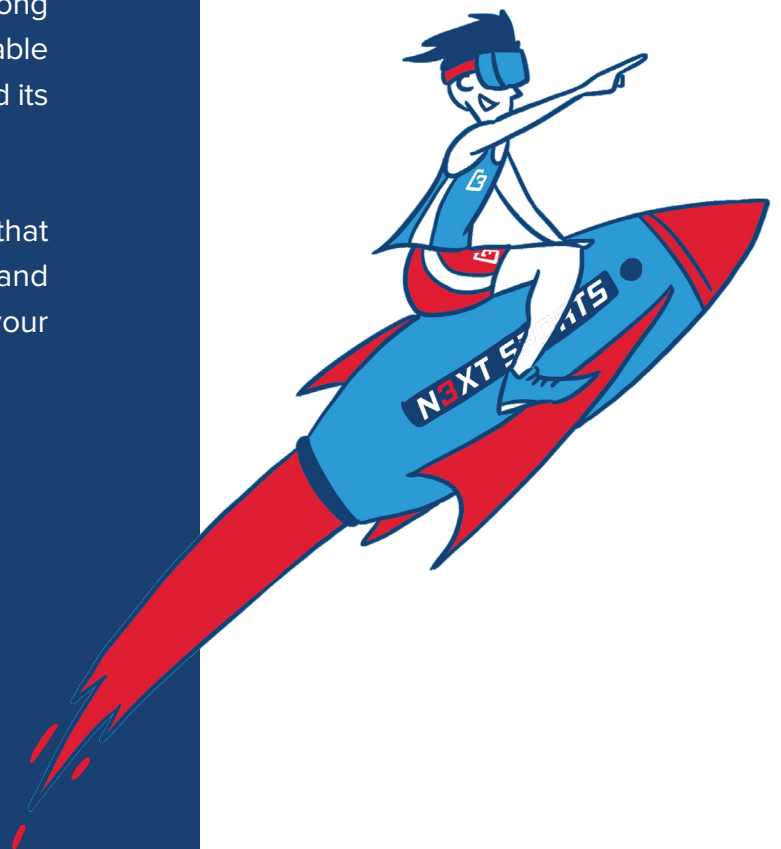
N3XT STEPS



Organizations within the Olympic Movement must create and communicate clear goals for what they want to achieve through their digital transformation processes, and for how they will achieve that. The best plans offer wins in the short, medium and long term, creating a navigable and measurable path to success for each organization and its ecosystem.

We can help you develop a plan that aligns both with your existing human and technology infrastructures and with your sports and business priorities.

Find out more by emailing us at info@n3xtsports.com or visiting www.n3xtsports.com



3. **GROWING ENGAGED FANBASES**

In July 2020, four-time NBA champion Tony Parker faced off against fans on a court at the quai de Jemmapes in Paris. Later that summer, a host of other elite French sports stars would challenge fans to freestyle swimming relays (Florent Manaudou), table tennis (Simon Gauzy), long jumping (Marie-Amélie Le Fur and Arnaud Assoumani), a tennis tie-break (Pauline Parmentier and Charlotte Fairbank) and break dancing (B-Girl Carlota and B-Boy Lagaet).

Those events launched Paris 2024 Club, an initiative which is offering fans the chance to take part in sports and cultural activities in the lead up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in France. They are also part of a growing movement connecting fans directly—in-person and online—to athletes. Last year, Airbnb Online Experiences featured Olympians and Paralympians leading workouts, holding mentoring sessions, and even giving flamenco guitar lessons.

Sports fans are no longer content to sit on the sidelines or watch from home through the unidirectional lens of their televisions. As the options for interactivity have grown, fans not only increasingly want to be part of the action but they expect to be.

A decade ago, everybody was served the same content. Now, much of what we see or watch or hear can be personalized according to the differences in our interests and

engagement styles. That can span everything from data-heavy analysis stories for those who are most interested in statistics—or who bet on competitions—to athlete-generated content for those who look for the human stories behind sports. As fans we can like, share, interact, and even produce our own content that others can engage with on a multitude of digital platforms. And the need to maintain and strengthen connections between sports organizations and fans during the dislocation of the coronavirus pandemic has only accelerated this revolution.



But with so much potential in how to communicate and engage with fans, knowing and understanding audiences has become essential for every stakeholder in the sports industry. In exactly the same way as the modern athlete is defined by their data, so is the modern fan. And while data can be used to help athletes set new records and personal bests, it can also be used to optimize the experience for fans.

The challenge of data is frequently not in how to collect it, but in how to connect it. Sports organizations need to both own this data and to store it within a centralized database so that they can fully understand, and best serve, every one of their fans. Otherwise, with so many different digital touchpoints—including an organization’s own website and apps plus Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, SnapChat, Twitch and more—there is substantial risk of building an incomplete picture of how fans are interacting with those platforms.

In 2019, an internal analysis of FIVB’s digital channels suggested the organization was only reaching about 1.5% of the sport’s 800 million potential fans. FIVB realized it needed to handle storytelling for its two disciplines, indoor and beach, differently, because, while there is overlap, the fan bases for each can be distinct. It also looked to empower influencers like the Titans Volleyball YouTube channel, which has more than 1.5 million subscribers, through a content-sharing affiliate program.

Olympic organizations not only need to develop different platforms to reach and interact with their audiences, but that digital transformation must be guided by the real

wants and needs of those individual fans. And the goal should always be to make the experience of being a fan better.



The global wrestling audience is passionate and highly engaged; the data confirms this across all our platforms. Content is key and having a high cadence creates increased opportunities for consistent interactions between us and our followers. To evolve we must also be conscious of creating new forms of content that resonate with other groups outside of our core audience. Finding a balance between engaging our core and increasing new followers is the goal and this is where data will play a key role in growth in the years to come.



– **Gordon Templeman,**
Director of Commercial Operations and
Communications,
United World Wrestling

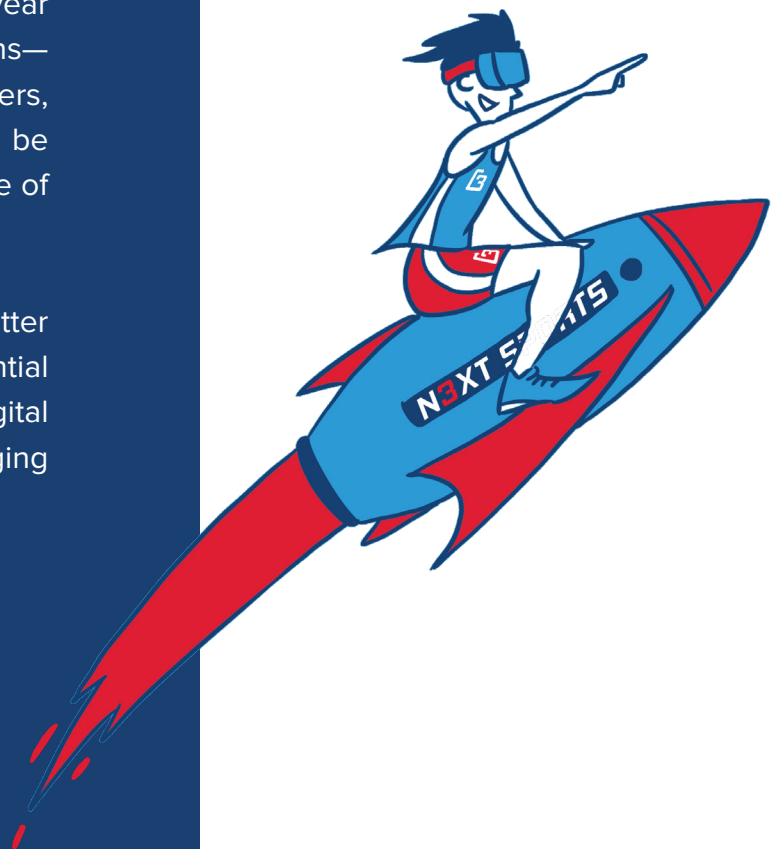
N3XT Steps



The digital world offers the Olympic Movement wide opportunity to diversify and grow audiences through an array of new content possibilities. Not only can fans who already watch and attend events be kept more engaged throughout the four-year Olympic cycle, but non-traditional fans—social media influencers and followers, sports bettors and more—can now be attracted, extending the reach and value of a sport.

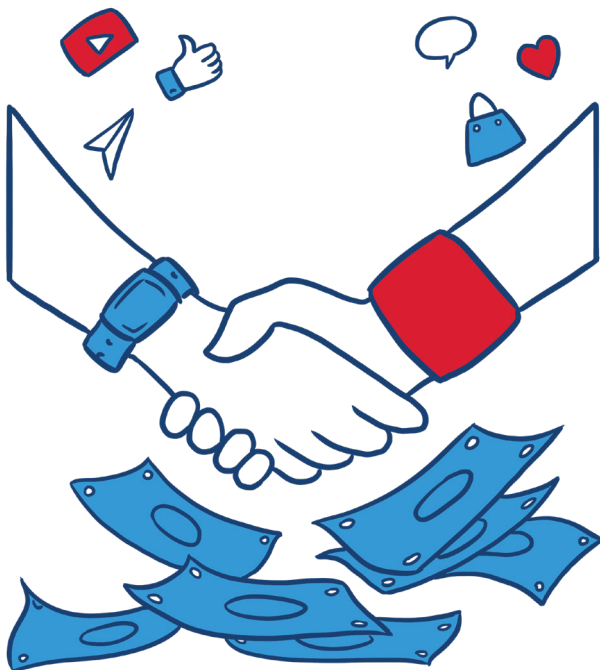
We can help you leverage data to better understand your existing and potential fans, and use your new data and digital infrastructures to power engaging experiences.

Find out more by emailing us at info@n3xtsports.com or visiting www.n3xtsports.com



4. **CREATING** **NEW REVENUE**

This past winter, with live skiing events and opportunities to hit the slopes severely impacted by the global pandemic, the International Ski Federation (FIS) turned its focus on adding value to its longtime partnership with Swiss watchmaker Longines by boosting digital fan engagement. Operating within a budget of just 2,000 Swiss francs, FIS created a social media campaign called #whichskierareyou. It included a quiz that aimed to determine each fan's on-snow persona, matched that to a Longines watch and then directed participants to the Longines online shop.



The campaign ran from Jan. 10 through Feb. 26, and by the end had amassed 142,000 page views, recorded 12,200 quiz completions and 1,900 fans had registered to win the chance to meet either a FIS race

director or Longines ambassador. While a relatively simple initiative with a small budget, the campaign had big results. In March, Longines extended its partnership with FIS for five more years through to the end of the 2025-26 skiing season.

The traditional revenue streams for sports organizations were typically limited to ticket sales, merchandising, broadcast deals and sponsorship. But in a digital world, there is an increasingly diverse choice of both new revenue streams and new ways to add value to those old ones. Like #whichskierareyou, there are sponsored social media campaigns which don't just aim to raise brand awareness, but also to connect users to online stores and directly sell merchandise. There are also subscription OTT video platforms which offer fans content they can't access through linear TV, paid data feeds that power sports betting, NFT-verified crypto-merchandise, sponsored esports and virtual sports activations in which fans can compete against their idols, and many more.

Previously, digital was seen as a cost center by many Olympic organizations. Now, the IOC's Olympic Agenda 2020+5 specifically recommends greater innovation of revenue generation models within the Olympic Movement, and many of those are digital, ranging from new broadcast methods to e-commerce, and from social media to gaming.

FIS's digital transformation has helped grow its number of newsletter subscribers from 10,000 to 125,000, and last year it saw a 30% increase in fan engagement across its platforms. The organization has released or updated a series of digital products this past winter, including the FIS App and the FIS World Cup Ski Racing mobile game. The FIS's bigger audience and greater number of touchpoints with fans has grown its value for both current and potential sponsors.

“

More and more sponsors are looking into digital activation, digital content, digital numbers, and, even on the sponsor side, your account manager is becoming more of a digital native. They're requiring more and more visibility on digital because they can directly talk to the consumers. For us at Volleyball World, it is a crucial part of our business plan for the next eight years to have digital as a focal point and no longer a cost center but a revenue driver.

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– **Motasem Elbawab,**
Head of Digital,
Volleyball World

Perhaps the most valuable asset for sports organizations in a digital world is data. This encompasses sports results and statistics, fan information and behavior, athlete health and performance, sponsorship value and more. Through data we can understand every aspect of a sport. It can be monetized directly, selling data streams that power other platforms, or can be used to boost the value of a sports organization's other offerings.

The Canadian Olympic Committee's loyalty program is a key example. The program leverages a robust customer relationship management system, helping the COC to understand the behaviors of its fans and to group those with similar interests. “We identified that the ability to build our own fan base with data, and to learn more about them and be able to share that data in whatever ways we can with our partners will become a competitive advantage,” explains Colin Freeman, Director of Digital at the COC. The organization can now personalize communications with fans, including emails, social media campaigns and digital events. And that has created increased value for its partners, allowing them to target those fans who will resonate most with each brand's products and services.

Diversification of revenue streams has not only become a must for any sports organization, but also the potential gains from pursuing some of the many new digital opportunities can be huge. The challenge of digital transformation, though, lies in determining which new solutions to invest in and how to change the way an organization delivers services to its stakeholders.

N3XT STEPS



Olympic Movement organizations no longer need to rely solely on traditional revenue streams from governments, ticketing, linear broadcast deals or sponsorship. Digital transformation creates new revenue models, including direct-to-fan streaming subscriptions, selling access to sports data and even innovating technology solutions that are valuable outside of the sports world. Digitalization is a way to achieve financial independence, separating business success from sports success.

We can help you understand your organization's value in the digital world, identifying and developing new revenue streams with minimal additional investment.

Find out more by emailing us at info@n3xtsports.com or visiting www.n3xtsports.com



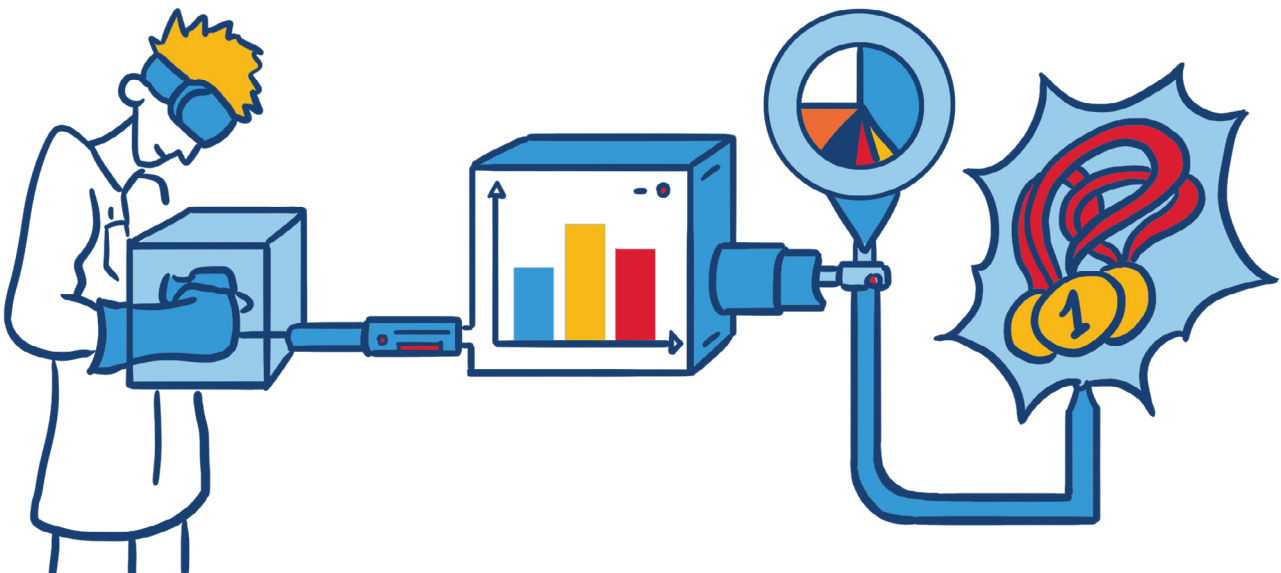
5. UNLOCKING COMPETITIVE EDGES

From Sydney 2000 through London 2012, the number of Olympic medals won by Team USA had crept up from 93 to 104. Then it jumped by 17 medals to hit 121 at Rio 2016. Team USA also added 17 more Paralympic medals in Brazil than it had in the United Kingdom, reaching a total of 115. The reason for that leap in success, at least partly, was technology.

In 2012, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee set up a new innovation and technology department to find new ways to leverage solutions to benefit its athletes. The idea was not to focus on a single sport, but to support as many of its sports federations as possible in implementing new ideas. As a result, within just one Olympic cycle, U.S. athletes and coaches arrived in Brazil more informed than many of their competitors about their own performances, about how the local conditions in Brazil might affect them, and about how to win.

This century has been marked by a rapid expansion of technology into our lives, driven by advances in computing power, storage capacity, hardware miniaturization, network connectivity, artificial intelligence and data analysis. Two decades ago, smartphones didn't exist—the first generation iPhone wasn't released until 2007. Now they are an essential part of our everyday lives, connecting us, informing us and augmenting our experience of the world.

The use of data gathering and analysis in sports has grown over a similar timeframe, fueled by both the same technological advances and the constant search for a competitive edge. Athletes now know far more than ever about their own performances, and coaches can learn almost everything about their opponents' plays, tactics, and weaknesses.



Even a 1% difference in sports can be huge. It can elevate athletes first to the podium and then to winning gold medals. For example, in five of Swedish swimmer Sarah Sjöström's six world records, she holds a margin of less than 1% over her competitors. Take one mistimed stroke, and that edge is gone. In the search for success, technology has increasingly become a way to either find, or maintain, that 1%.

The solutions available to do that are diverse and growing in number. There are heart rate monitors that can be worn on the chest, arm or wrist, blood oxygenation sensors that measure how close an athlete is to their lactate threshold, patches that can analyze sweat and thus determine hydration needs, motion sensors that can track movement around a field and others that use movement to predict sleep quality. Collecting data is no longer a problem. But the challenges for sports organizations lie in how to find the right technology, how to integrate that into existing processes and educate coaches, how to combine and analyze data from diverse sources, including medical records, and above all, how to find opportunities to improve athlete health and optimize performance.

Meeting those challenges requires a clear idea of what exactly an organization is hoping to learn from the data, and working with technology providers to be able to extract the important details for key personnel—athletes and coaches—who are not data scientists. Those organizations who work most closely with technical partners may even find opportunities to collaborate and innovate together, creating bespoke solutions that offer unparalleled competitive advantages.

Success in sports is still a complicated objective, and there is no single formula that guarantees it. You can still win without technology today. But as Team USA proved at Rio 2016, those who embrace technology can win more.



Performance is not only improved through training but can also be improved through the proper use of data. However, the challenge can be in handling that data efficiently. We asked our sports federations what they need data for, and found that they all use it for different purposes. Each sport has its own unique set of data, covering training, results, health and even finances. All of that information is important, but every sport is different.



– Bertrand Daille,
Deputy Chief of Elite Performance,
INSEP

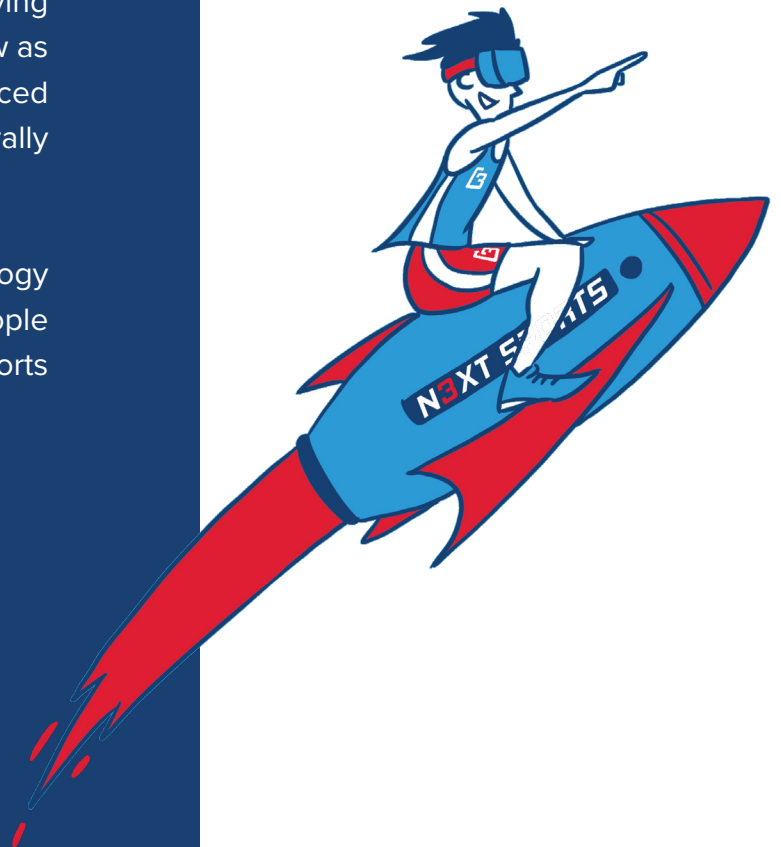
N3XT STEPS



The secret behind modern sports success lies in not just more data, but in what that data is, how it is collected, how it is stored and shared, and how it is analyzed and converted into actionable insights. Creating the right digital infrastructure and identifying the right technological solutions are now as essential as hiring the most experienced coaches or discovering the most naturally talented athletes.

We can help you develop your technology infrastructure to best support your people and processes, and bring greater sports success.

Find out more by emailing us at info@n3xtsports.com or visiting www.n3xtsports.com



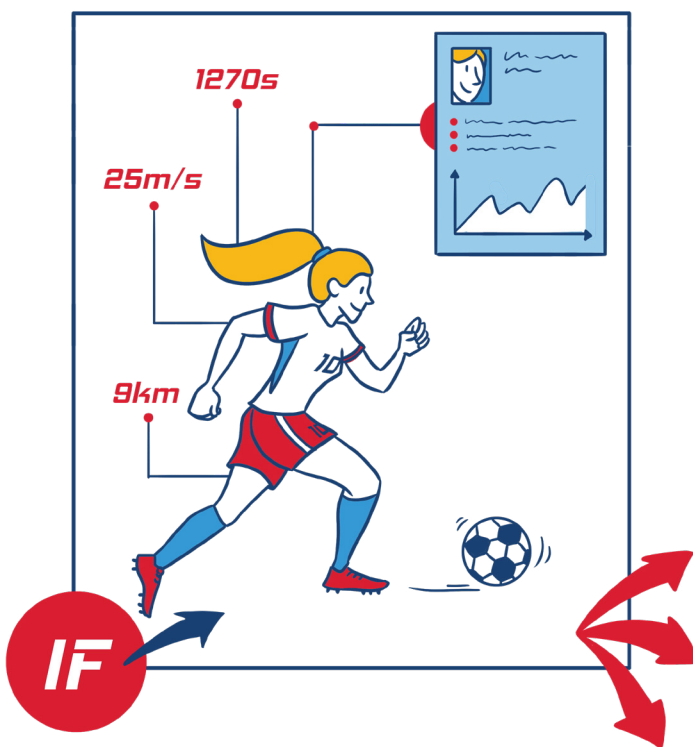
6. EMPOWERING EFFICIENT ECOSYSTEMS

In 2015, FIFA launched an initiative to streamline the process of digitization across all of its member associations around the world. FIFA Connect offers a centralized registration system for all stakeholders, players and competitions. It also aims to standardize how data relevant to both the game of football and its administration is collected, stored and exchanged.

world. When the Tonga Football Association signed on to the FIFA Connect service in May 2019, it became the 100th member association on the platform.

When an international federation creates a uniform digital platform, that can quickly be adapted with personalizations like translations into local languages and launched across all of its national federations. That platform can encompass websites and mobile applications that power ticketing and merchandising, share news and information, and, like FIFA Connect, help develop the sport itself. The data and engagement generated by those different services not only can be used to improve the efficiency and governance of the sport, but can also be sold to both local and international partners, generating significant revenue.

By 2019, the largest national federations in France had created their own data centers for managing clubs and licensing, and for fan data collection, but few were using digital tools and data to improve performance. Recognizing that opportunity, the French high performance center, INSEP, partnered with the newly launched French national sports agency, ANS, to create a sports data hub to help Olympic and Paralympic athletes. INSEP's Integrated Management System is now used by all 59 of France's national sports federations, involved in high performance level.



FIFA Connect assigns unique IDs to players, coaches, referees and other officials aged 10 or older, helping its member associations to track their careers and development. Part of its focus is to grow participation in the game, specifically within women's football, and its reach has grown rapidly across the football

“Our job at INSEP is to help athletes and their coaches understand that digital and data tools can help improve performance and ultimately contribute to Olympic success,” explains **Babak Amir-Tahmaseb**, Director of International Relations and grand INSEP network, at INSEP.

The implementation of those sorts of platforms also hasn’t been limited to only the largest countries. The Slovenian Olympic Committee noticed a similar need, and while it typically only sends a total of about 60 competitors to Winter and Summer Games, it now leverages a database through which it can track the data and performance of 50,000 registered athletes.



Our athlete database has become an extremely important tool. It includes their health tracking and everything else, and was challenging because of GDPR. But we can now share this information with national federations, clubs and the ministry of sports. It is also one of the parameters which helps determine how to distribute public money to each sport.



- Matic Švab,
Deputy Secretary General,
Olympic Committee of Slovenia

When creating solutions that aim to connect and standardize processes across a wide range of different stakeholders and organizations, those new systems must be compatible with existing infrastructure. They should add value without incurring a significant implementation cost. While the FIFA Connect platform, for example, aims to onboard members who have little or no digital infrastructure, it is also designed to integrate with the existing platforms of other members.

New systems must above all aim to support an organization’s membership and partners. The current strategic plan of Panam Sports, which comprises 41 nations across North, Central and South America, declares that it is a service-oriented organization. The plan aims to have expanded access to digital services and technology, including both for communications and for data management, across all of its members by 2023.

Olympic and Paralympic organizations sit at the center of their ecosystems and are uniquely able to create massive impact. Through their sports, they connect players, fans, sponsors and other stakeholders, and they naturally assume the role of service provider for all of those. This means that digital and data solutions can always be implemented at scale, expanding quickly across member associations, aggregating data and generating value.

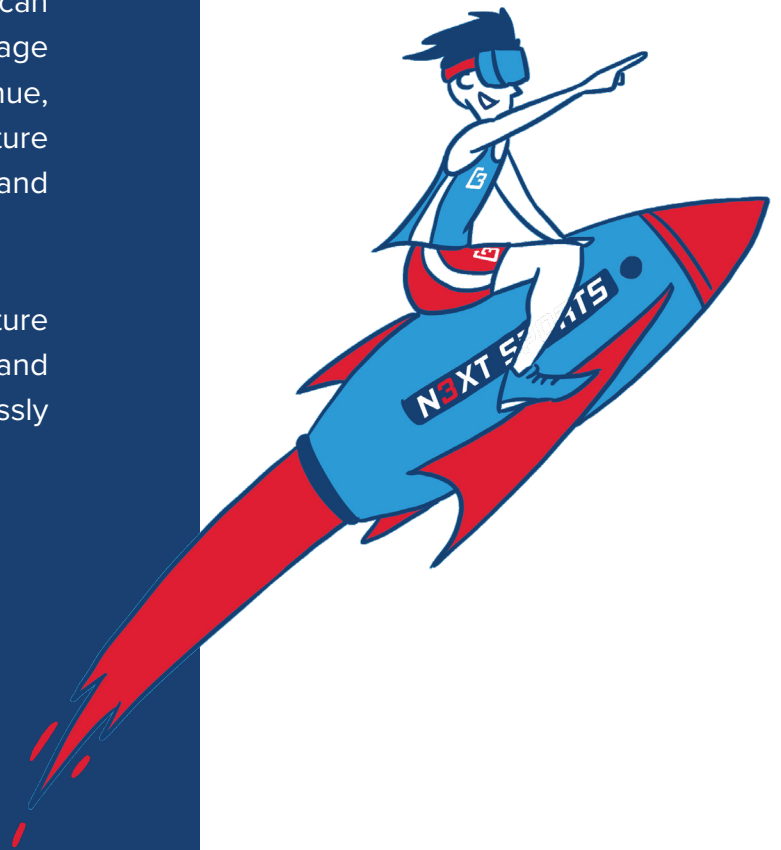
N3XT STEPS



Modern Olympic Movement organizations must be built upon a digital infrastructure that empowers efficiency both within each organization itself and throughout its wider ecosystem of members, partners and sponsors. Data is the language that can power new digital products that engage fans, develop athletes and create revenue, but an organization's data architecture must be scalable, flexible, sharable and accessible.

We can help you build a digital infrastructure that will allow you and both existing and potential partners to work seamlessly together.

Find out more by emailing us at info@n3xtsports.com or visiting www.n3xtsports.com



What's N3XT?

Digitalization isn't the only major transformation taking place across the sports industry. Other key trends include partnerships with private equity to launch commercial business arms of sports organizations, the growth of the sports ecosystem to embrace tech companies, startups, universities and research centers, and the evolution of sports organizations into entertainment entities. But digital transformation is the power behind all of those others.

The International Table Tennis Federation had already grown to have more than 3.4 million digital fans across social platforms when, with the help of private investors, it launched World Table Tennis in 2020. And when FIVB announced a partnership with CVC Capital Partners to launch its new commercial arm, Volleyball World, in February, that was built upon all of the work FIVB had already put into its ongoing digital transformation. Bringing CVC onboard will now accelerate that, improving the fan and athlete experience, and optimizing commercial performance for long term success.

After launching a new innovation department after London 2012, Team USA showed up to Rio 2016 with far more technology at its disposal than ever before. That included a swimming motion-tracking system that had been designed and built through a partnership with motor vehicle manufacturer BMW, and wasn't available to any other teams. In 2019, Team GB, another early pioneer of digital transformation within sports, signed a six-year partnership with the University of Hull to collaborate on research that may help British athletes. Not all of that work is sports performance-based, either. A researcher from Hull has been using data to assist with the process of sizing official team gear for each athlete ahead of Tokyo.



At the European Athletics Indoor Championships in March, IT services multinational Atos helped European Athletics capture, process and publish data for every event, giving fans at home access to detailed statistics on each athlete. The events themselves were also live streamed through the sports organization's redesigned website, and journalists were given access to their own virtual media center to help cover the championships. Another example of how digitalization is altering sports entertainment is the rapid growth of esports and virtual sports. IOC partner Intel ran an esports event at PyeongChang 2018, and the IOC's new Olympic Virtual Series began in May.

Whether with private equity, technology companies or entertainment properties, the benefits of all of these partnerships include sports organizations being able to leverage the expertise of the wider world. Sports organizations will be able to focus on what they do best, while delegating other areas to their partners. But to create that sort of ecosystem requires understanding who to partner with, building or using data and communications platforms that bring the groups together, and all of the other elements of digital transformation discussed previously in this report.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digital transformation for many companies, especially in the sports industry. It has tested the ability to produce content, extend a brand's presence and keep fans connected. Progressive organizations that had already invested in building their digital foundations were most able to adapt as the world shut down. Others quickly began embracing their own transformations as the crisis extended. All of those organizations will emerge from this situation with a competitive advantage.

Now is the time to prioritize digital transformation.

ABOUT N3XT SPORTS

N3XT Sports is an end-to-end consulting agency in the sports industry, bringing world-class expertise and experience to our clients through strategic management consulting and implementation support. We specialize in the modernization and transformation of organizations across the Olympic and professional sports sectors.

We work with our clients and partners to identify and address their most critical challenges, allowing them to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage within the rapidly changing sports landscape. Our clients include leading Olympic, football and basketball organizations, international sports governing bodies, investors, tech companies and government entities.

We invite you to use, share and build upon the insights and statements made in this report.

You can contact the **N3XT Sports** team through info@n3xtsports.com to gain further understanding of the insights presented in this report, particularly as it pertains to engaging in the development and implementation of a digital transformation strategy.

This report was produced as part of the ***N3XT Sports Reports series***, made freely available to the sports industry.

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