

THE **DIGITAL** CONTENT **SUMMIT**

Fan Engagement · Social · Mobile
Interactive · Streaming

SUMMIT REPORT

THEMES, INSIGHTS & TAKEAWAYS

10 June 2026: Kings Place, London



Overview

Digital Content Summit 2026, sponsored by **Qvest**, brought together sports rights holders, broadcasters, technology providers, agencies and content specialists to explore the future of sports content creation, distribution and fan engagement.

The programme focused on:

- Developing strategies and workflows for a digital-first sports media landscape
- Understanding changing fan behaviours and evolving audience expectations
- Creating engaging short-form and mobile-first content experiences
- Maximising social media engagement through platform-specific storytelling
- Exploring AI and emerging technologies in sports content
- Analysing audience trends and innovations in content creation
- Expanding reach and unlocking new commercial content opportunities
- Creating, managing and distributing content beyond traditional broadcasting channels

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Digital Content Summit 2026: Key Themes

- 1) Live sport remains media's most powerful shared experience, yet fans increasingly struggle to find and access it, said Tobias Künkel, Managing Director, Qvest Engage in his opening remarks. He highlighted frustration caused by rights and platform fragmentation, with events, highlights and clips split across apps, paywalls and geographies.
- 2) Quality and quantity must coexist. Rather than organisations choosing between quality and quantity, in today's crowded attention economy, success requires both. High-quality content remains essential but producing it at greater scale is increasingly necessary to achieve visibility, reach audiences consistently, and remain visible on algorithm-driven platforms.
- 3) Habitual engagement matters more than reach. Success is increasingly measured through audience loyalty rather than traditional volume metrics. While reach and impressions remain useful indicators, the focus is shifting towards repeat visits, engagement frequency and long-term audience relationships. The ultimate aim is to build habits that move fans through the ecosystem and increase conversion, advocacy and lifetime value.
- 4) Some panellists warned that social content's value can still be underestimated internally. This means there is a need to connect audience growth, partner value and real-time storytelling to commercial outcomes, while proving why on-the-ground creators deserve proper resources.
- 5) Athlete and creator-led content is powerful because fans increasingly follow people, not just teams or sports. But brands should not outsource audience understanding to influencers; they need their own voice, repeatable IP and long-term fan relationships.



Click [here](#) to download photos of Digital Content Summit

Changing the game: IMG Digital Trends Report 2026

After the popularity of his presentation at last year's Digital Content Summit, Lewis Wiltshire, SVP and Managing Director of Digital at IMG, returned to Digital Content Summit 2026 to provide an update on the technologies and developments that will shape the sports media landscape for rights holders over the next 12 months.

Speaker: Lewis Wiltshire, SVP and Managing Director of Digital at IMG

"It's a myth that young people don't like long-form content. Young people don't like boring content"



Takeaways:

Quality and quantity must coexist Rather than organisations choosing between quality and quantity, in today's crowded attention economy, success requires both. High-quality content remains essential but producing it at greater scale is increasingly necessary to achieve visibility, reach audiences consistently, and remain visible on algorithm-driven platforms.

People outperform institutions online Fans increasingly want to hear from people – personalities, creators, athletes, and trusted individuals – rather than brands alone. Sports organisations should build content strategies around identifiable voices and talent, using people as the primary vehicle for storytelling, engagement, and audience growth.

Short-form attracts; long-form converts Short-form content remains essential for generating attention, but it is not necessarily enough to build lasting fandom. Organisations should view short-form content as the top of the funnel and invest in compelling long-form experiences that deepen engagement, loyalty, and fandom.

Click [here](#) to access IMG's Digital Trends Report

Streaming the Summer of Sport: How WBD is building a multi-platform digital experience for European sports fans

As Warner Bros. Discovery prepares to deliver more than 4,000 hours of live sport across HBO Max, TNT Sports and Eurosport, this fireside chat explored the digital strategy behind one of Europe's biggest summer sports operations - from streaming innovation and in-app features to localised social content, websites and audience engagement.

Speaker: Sam Lyon, VP Digital & Social at Warner Bros. Discovery Sports Europe

"Who is most successful won't just be who has the best rights. It will be who is creating the best, most meaningful relationships with audiences"



Takeaways:

Fan relationships outweigh rights ownership Sports rights remain essential, but competitive advantage increasingly comes from building continuous audience relationships across platforms. Success depends on creating year-round engagement, rather than relying solely on live event access to attract and retain viewers.

Digital must enhance, not replicate, broadcast The most effective digital strategies complement live coverage rather than compete with it. Value can be added with behind-the-scenes access, alternative perspectives, talent-driven content, fan participation and multi-view experiences, all while preserving the premium status of the broadcast.

Habitual engagement matters more than reach Success is increasingly measured through audience loyalty rather than traditional volume metrics. While reach and impressions remain useful indicators, the focus is shifting towards repeat visits, engagement frequency and long-term audience relationships. The ultimate objective is to build habits that move fans through the ecosystem and increase conversion, advocacy and lifetime value.

Beyond the game: Engaging sports fans with short-form content

A detailed look at how federations, leagues and broadcasters alike use Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms to engage with sports fans.

Speakers:

Thomas Roberts, World Sailing, Content Lead

Ben Goldhagen, Coolr Sport, Director of Sport

Russell Barder, World Horse Racing, Head of Audience and Content

Lauren Hughes, Freelance Social and Content Lead

Richard Craig-McFeely (chair)

Takeaways:

Short form feeds the funnel Short-form content is being used to drive awareness, discovery and conversion, especially among digitally native audiences. Panellists agreed it is often the entry point into a wider ecosystem of platforms, data capture and deeper engagement.

Story beats optimal length There was broad consensus that no universal “perfect” duration exists. The right length depends on the story, platform, purpose and retention data. Strong hooks matter, but content should not be padded simply to satisfy platform preferences.

Fresh perspectives unlock new audiences Several speakers highlighted the value of agencies, freelancers, influencers and non-specialists. Outside voices can help niche sports escape echo chambers, adopt familiar digital formats and create content that appeals beyond existing core fans.

Budgets and business education Speakers warned that social content’s value is still underestimated internally. Teams must connect audience growth, partner value and real-time storytelling to commercial outcomes, while proving why on-the-ground creators deserve proper resources.

LiveU: Beyond the Match

Speaker: Ophir Zardok, LiveU, Head of Sports Strategy & Business Development

Ophir spoke about how pan-European men's basketball competition EuroLeague has ramped up its live content activities with the LiveU Ecosystem. The LiveU solution allows field crews to move freely around host cities and generate exclusive behind-the-scenes footage. Graphics can be added dynamically and content published live on any social media platform with just a few clicks.

League of 72: Building a social-first football content brand

How do you create year-round engagement for 72 football clubs, millions of supporters and a new generation of fans? In this session, Dave Horner, Head of Sport at After Party Studios, and Oli Mitchell, Content Production Manager at Sky Bet, lifted the lid on League of 72, a creator and fan-led digital content channel designed to bring English Football League (EFL) stories to life beyond matchday.

Speakers:

- Dave Horner, After Party Studios, Head of Sport
- Oli Mitchell, Sky Bet, Content Production Manager

"These players want to talk in a natural format, it's just that they probably haven't been given the forum to do so beforehand."



Takeaways:

Personality-led content broadens audience reach Formats built around creators, talent and player personalities have expanded appeal beyond individual club fanbases and attracted wider football audiences.

Authenticity requires the right environment Audiences respond to genuine interactions rather than traditional interviews. Formats such as Team Talk succeed because participants are encouraged to relax, converse naturally and share experiences, creating content that reveals sides of players and managers fans rarely see.

Production quality still matters Informal content does not mean lower standards. The most successful formats combine spontaneous, personality-driven moments with professional production, strong editorial structure and platform-specific distribution strategies that maximise engagement.

Creating new and different viewing experiences for fans

"People don't just want to watch content, they want to shape it." In this session, speakers examined how new, alternative and/or interactive viewing experiences can engage the next generation of viewers and fans.

Speakers:

- Tom Bowers, Hypothesis Media, Founder (chair)
- Niall Hendry, Stats Perform, VP of AI Applications
- Moritz Ladwig, Green Producer and Content Creator
- Nikhil Acharya, JustSo, Head of Effectiveness

"Experiment responsibly while knowing your voice... understand your brand, understand your channel mission"



Takeaways:

Discovery is too fragmented Younger fans want more content, data and interactivity, but finding it across platforms is frustrating. The opportunity is not simply creating more experiences but reducing friction and building clearer routes into them.

Innovation must serve the fan Interactive formats, alt-casts, data overlays and creator-led experiences only work when they feel meaningful. The panel warned against gimmicks: experimentation is vital, but it must be rooted in audience need, brand voice and emotional value.

Creators help, but strategy matters Athlete and creator-led content is powerful because fans increasingly follow people, not just teams or sports. But brands should not outsource audience understanding to influencers; they need their own voice, repeatable IP and long-term fan relationships.

Craft still matters As sports experiences become more personalised, interactive and platform-led, production quality cannot be treated as secondary. The panel stressed that innovation should enhance the emotional power of sport, not distract from the craft of storytelling and live experience.

Beyond Highlights: Maximising a flagship fixture to deliver record fan engagement

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Little Dot Sport explained how they delivered record digital engagement during the 2025 England v India series, despite the battle for attention on social media being fiercer than ever before.

Speakers:

- Greg Stobart, England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Digital Content Lead
- Jimmy Graham, Little Dot Sport, Content Strategist

Takeaways:

Package highlights around drama Traditional match highlights are no longer enough when broadcasters, athletes and fans are all competing for attention. ECB's "key moments" approach worked because it took audiences straight to the decisive, emotional part of the action.

Access creates always-on storytelling The ECB's *Unfiltered* series showed the value of going beyond match action into dressing rooms, buses, food, gyms and travel. Small moments of player access can create meaningful engagement when they reveal personality and context.

Agility beats fixed content plans The team originally planned one episode per Test, then pivoted quickly after realising every day of Test cricket had its own story. Successful digital strategy depends on reacting to audience behaviour, not rigidly following the plan.

Qvest: Redefining the sports media lifecycle

Speakers:

- Tobias Fröhlich, Qvest Engage, Managing Director, Product + Founder
- Fares Birke, Qvest, Principal, Practice Lead Applied AI

As we increasingly move to a world of creating video experiences rather than broadcasts, Qvest shared how adopting an event-centric approach supported by AI, automation and data can help to reach younger audiences and deliver the best possible experience across platforms and use cases.

The Essential Digital Sports Production Toolkit: What you need

With the correct digital content creation, management, and fan engagement tools, federations, leagues and associations can personalise experiences, increase efficiency and scale their output. AI-driven tools can be used to generate real-time highlights, automate translations and create hyper-personalised content - and there are non-AI-based tools that can be just as effective. This session explored the pros and cons of various technologies, tools and solutions.

Speakers:

- Rhodri Williams, Freelance Video Creative
- Klaudia Gainza, International Sports Broadcasting, OTT & Media Platform Team Lead
- Claire Wilkie, Limitless, CEO & Founder
- Donald Sievwright, Matrox Video, Sales Director, EMEA
- Sam Stibbs, Reuters Imagen, Sales Executive

Takeaways:

Strategy beats speed alone Producing content faster is not enough. The most successful organisations combine rapid execution with clear planning, channel-specific distribution strategies, and defined priorities. Teams that know what content matters and why can respond faster while delivering stronger audience outcomes.

Content workflows must be built for digital Social, mobile, OTT, and broadcast can no longer operate as separate workflows. Production teams, social teams, and rights holders need shared access to content in near real time. Designing workflows around digital consumption from the outset enables faster publishing, greater engagement, and more effective use of resources.

AI's biggest value is operational efficiency Metadata generation, tagging, clipping, search, automation, and production scalability were identified as immediate opportunities for AI. However, AI's effectiveness depends on well-structured data, human oversight, and integration into existing workflows.

Content libraries are strategic assets Many sports organisations still under invest in content management despite archives being critical for storytelling, audience engagement, operational efficiency, and commercial value. Well-structured, searchable content libraries enable faster content creation, stronger historical narratives, better rights management, and improved organisational governance.

