



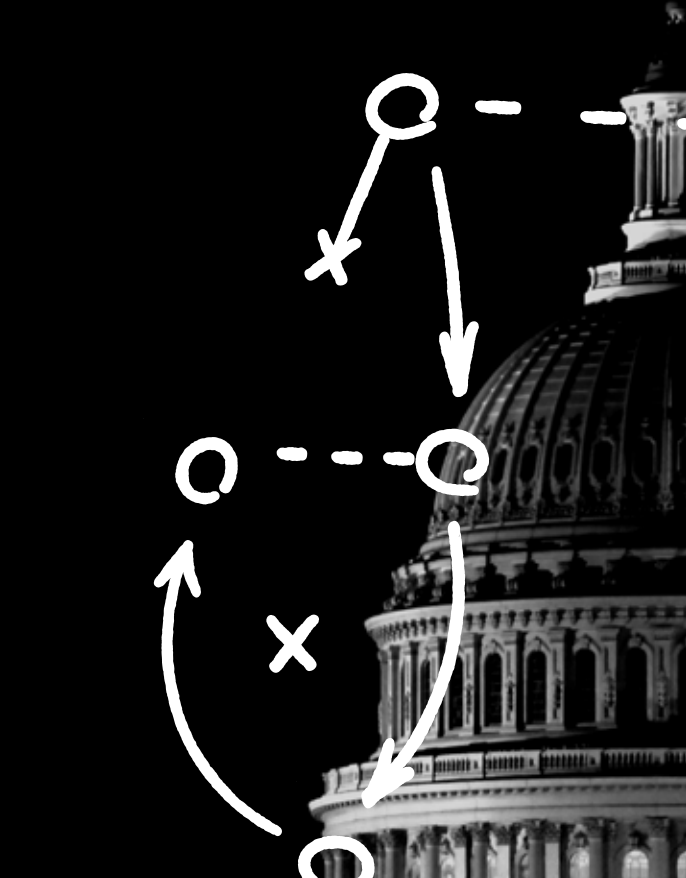
Crafting a New Playbook for Sports Event Marketing:

Tips & Tricks From Industry Leaders

Explore the insights and learnings from the inaugural **BizBash Sports Summit**, where 85 prominent players in the sports industry from companies like **Barstool Sports**, **College Football Playoff**, **MSG Entertainment**, **New York Mets**, **Under Armour**, and **Visa** teamed up to grow their networks, discuss their successes (and fumbles), and ruminate about the **future of sports event activations and marketing**.

BIZBASHSPORTSSUMMIT

November 27-29, 2023 • Washington, D.C.

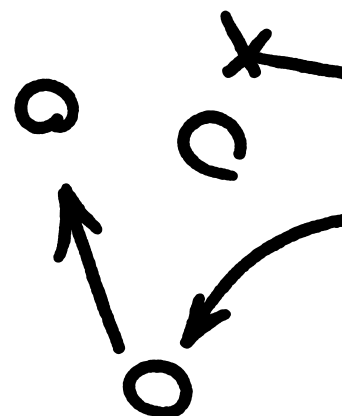


Introduction

With the sports event marketing industry poised for exponential growth, BizBash Sports aims to support and uplift all the players who foster fan engagement—on and off the field—through their experiential concepts and innovative ideas. To help us reach our goals, BizBash enlisted industry leaders and innovators to serve on our Advisory Board, allowing them to share their expertise and insight in order to form a world-class franchise.

To keep the ball rolling, the inaugural BizBash Sports Summit—held November 27-29 in Washington, D.C.—united planners and suppliers involved in events for professional sports leagues and teams, collegiate sports, brands, media, and creative agencies. Through unique networking opportunities, education sessions, intimate dinners, interactive workshops, and more, attendees were invited to share their wins and losses in a collaborative setting.

Here, we break down what was discussed and share highlights from the summit's game-changing conversations—a kind of post-game analysis, if you will.



About the Participants

The BizBash Sports Summit brought together competitors and peers from the sports event industry. The game-changing B2B event, which was designed to be “an experience for experience makers,” served as a productive start to building the BizBash Sports community, allowing those in attendance to grow their networks and discuss the future of the industry.

Kim Aimi
Sr. Director, Global Sponsorship Marketing, Visa

Sally Aisner
Director, Experiential Marketing, Bleacher Report

Priscilla Almeida
Vice President, Events, Las Vegas Raiders

Ashley Alspaugh
Senior Event Experience Manager, Houston Texans

Ilana Avergun
Brand Strategy & Activation, New York Yankees

Annie Benson
Senior Director, Special Event Sales, Los Angeles Football Club

Nicole Bianchini
Events Supervisor, Penn Entertainment

Maddy Blakeman
Director of Fan Experience, Premier Lacrosse League

Gary Bordman
Chief Experiential Designer, AE-ES

Lauren Buck
Vice President Sports Partnerships & Marketing, SiriusXM

Tessa Caffrey
Vice President, Corporate Events, Boston Celtics

Kurt Carr
Executive Vice President of Sales, The Decor Group

Jacquelyn Carroll, CMP
Director of Events, The Kansas City Chiefs Football Club

Mary Cline
VP National Sales, Wolfgang Puck Catering

Tyler Cofer
Director of Event Presentation and Entertainment, Seattle Seahawks

Molly Cosby
Program Director for Athletics Advancement, Leadership Events, University of Notre Dame

Taylor Dickson
Senior Manager, Events, Barstool Sports

Lou DiSabatino
VP, Events, NBA

Allison Doughty
Director of Events and Hospitality Services, College Football Playoff

Rachel Downie
VP, Live Events, Warner Bros Discovery

Robyn Duda
Co-founder & CEO, RacquetX

Analise Duenas
Manager, Special Events, Golden State Warriors

Ashley Duffy
Director of Business Development, EIS Group

Gregg Dukofsky
President, Interactive Entertainment Group

Lucy Eckard
Event Manager, NFL Players Association

Maureen Elliott
Director, Event Marketing, ESPN

Ashley Fadrilan
Special Events, Golden State Warriors

Nilo G. Low
CEO, Kapture Vision

Brian Gallagher
President, Pitch 5 Productions

Bram Goldstein
Chief Experience Officer, BIG HQ Inc. and Custom Sevens

Ashley Hamilton
Director of Event Location Strategy and Planning, NFL

Jessica Harran
Senior Manager of Events and Brand Experiences, New York Yankees

Disney Harris
Senior Director of Event Experience, Houston Texans

Katie Hawkes
Director of Brand & Experiential Marketing, Boston Athletic Association

Taylor Heneghan
Manager, Events, MSG Entertainment

Angelyse Henry
Manager, Event Sales, Nationals Ballpark Enterprises

Heath Hill
President, Lime Media

Anthony Holman
Managing Director, Championships & Alliances, NCAA

Mark Horsburgh
Senior Director, Warner Brothers Discovery

Troy Hughes
Experiential Expert, Lime Media

Crystal Isley
Senior Manager, Live Events, New York City Football Club

Blake Jungmeyer
VP Growth & Partnerships, Czarowski

Anna Karefa-Johnson
Vice President, Brand Experience & Community Engagement, Overtime Elite

Chris Koenig
Executive Director, Dodgers 365, Los Angeles Dodgers

Sydney Layne
Director, Experiential Marketing, Los Angeles Rams

Dalena Le
Senior Experiential Producer, Hypebeast

Keytra Lewis
Director of Marketing and Communications, Spokane Sports

Lisa Litvack
VP, Live Events, Barstool Sports

Michael Madsen
Founder / CEO, ShowPro

Erin Magnuson
Brand Manager, Spokane Sports

Elizabeth Malafa
Head of Experiential Marketing, Global Events & Entertainment, Under Armour

Lucas Mason
VP Customer Experience, TentCraft

Megan Miller
Manager, Events & Experiences, Fenway Sports Management

Simon Miller
Founder, Chief Creative, Brand Activation Services

Quincy Morris
Sales Manager, Pinpoint Promotions

Courtney Oversby
Senior Director, Marketing, XFL

Bernard Ozarowski
President, Pixis Drones

Victoria Paccione
Events Manager, Penn Entertainment

Kristina Parente
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VP, Events & Derby Operations, Churchill Downs Racetrack/Kentucky Derby

Ashley Patton
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Amy Pettigrew
Event Manager, NFL Players Association

Corey Poches
CEO, World Pickleball Tour

Alexandria Price
Director, Event Operations, Special Events, Houston Astros

Joe Rivers
Sr. Director, Experiences, Czarowski

Neil Roberts
VP Marketing and Brand Partnerships, Tennis Channel

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Vice President, Events, New York Mets

C.J. Rugh
Sr. Events Manager, Minnesota Vikings

Valerie Ryan
Vice President, Fan Experience & Hospitality, X Games

Lindsay Schattenstein
Senior Event Manager, NFL Players Association

Sarah Simpson
Global Events Lead, EA SPORTS, Electronic Arts

Justine Snyder
Director of Client Engagement and Experience, Cleveland Cavaliers

Caitlin Totty
Director of Marketing and Partnership, Caesars Sportsbook and Casino

Danny Urquia
Sports Lead, Consumer Events, Amazon Prime Video

Eileen Valois
President & COO, Go West Creative

Heather Vaughan
Senior Vice President, Marketing, Pac-12 Conference

Dan Wiseman
Senior Brand Partner, Citizens Bank

“As an industry veteran, I’ve been to many underwhelming events. The BizBash Sports Summit delivered an **incredible experience** that allowed me to **connect with peers** as well as take away some **exceptional learnings.**”

—Robyn Duda, Co-Founder and Managing Director, RacquetX



The Methodology

The BizBash Sports Summit kicked off with an icebreaker session, held at Nationals Park, that had participants share answers to three questions:

- What is a very YOU thing you've done lately?
- What's your mantra for when it feels like you're "losing the game?"
- What's a world record you think would be fun to hold?

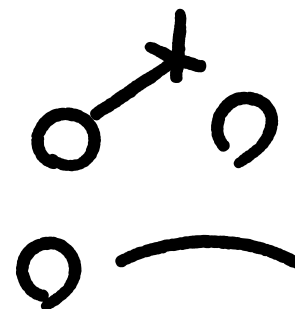
Facilitator Taylor Buonocore-Guthrie explained that the goal of the introductory exercise was to help the attendees "get past small talk" and "meaningfully connect" with their fellow attendees.

Following the icebreaker questions, participants were then pitted against each other to earn the title of "winningest failure in the room." Responses—all of which received groans from the group—included a pricey currency conversion miscalculation, an underwhelming flyover moment, and stage measurements gone wrong. Participants also shared something that is inspiring or informing their thinking for the year ahead.

These exercises teed up the remainder of the summit programming, which touched upon topics including community, VIP experiences, and technology.

“ BizBash Sports got a group of event professionals **in a room together** and let us **discuss and share** our best practices, biggest failures, and what's ahead. **This type of education is priceless.**”

—Lisa Litvack, VP, Live Events, Barstool Sports





Part 1. Learning From Fumbles—Yours And Mine

Like any top athlete, event pros are constantly learning from their flops, failures, and fumbles. But in a field that values winning, it's often difficult to acknowledge and examine those “losing” moments, especially among peers.

In her introductory exercises, Buonocore-Guthrie aimed to create a safe space where attendees could learn from their fumbles—not just the person who made it, but the whole room as well. As Frank Supovitz stated in his keynote: “It’s said that you learn way more from the things that go wrong than the things that go right, and I think that’s absolutely true. But take it from me: It’s a lot better to learn from something that went wrong for somebody else.”

During the speech, the industry leader—who’s produced major sporting and entertainment events such as the Super Bowl, Stanley Cup, and the Indy 500—recounted his own crises, including the infamous blackout at Super Bowl XLVII at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans in 2013, using them as teachable moments and axioms that he called “mega truths.”

Supovitz stressed that “problems don’t follow patterns, but solutions often do,” adding that you can’t plan for everything, but you can plan for how you’d respond to anything.

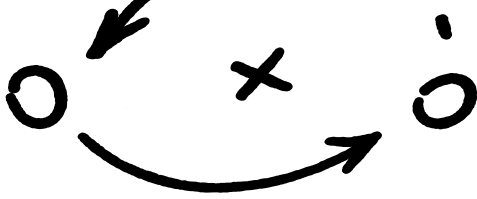
In order to prepare for the Super Bowl, Supovitz and his team conducted game-day simulations of possible calamitous scenarios—a kind of operational rehearsal. Although they had never rehearsed for a blackout situation, the response was similar to that for other challenges including first deciding what to tell the audience.

Part of problem-solving also includes trusting your team to do their job. He said that you have to empower your team with levels of authority to “enable you to manage without having to make every decision.” He referred to this method as the “web of command” in contrast to the conventional chain of command. This means dispersing decision-making across all levels, as opposed to always escalating to the top brass. “I think that’s the key to managing staff... and your team works better that way,” he said.

“ This was such a **great opportunity to network** with those in the sports experiential space. It was great to **hear others share their experiences** and how others are **executing and overcoming challenges.**”

—Sydney Layne, Director, Experiential Marketing, LA Rams





Part 2. Building a Sense of Community

As any fan understands, being part of a group of like-minded folks, cheering for the same outcome, fosters a tight sense of community. Even fans of rival teams share a kind of camaraderie as they support their favorite sport. This mentality carries across all sectors of sports event marketing as well—from brand to consumer and fan to player.

Brand

For example, Baltimore-based Under Armour, who hosted the attendees during the summit, is committed to helping the surrounding community, even enlisting brand spokesperson Stephen Curry to refurbish local courts and facilities. Elizabeth Malafa, head of experiential marketing, global events, and entertainment for Under Armour, explained that through its Project Rampart initiative—an ongoing six-year partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools that's designed to elevate the student athlete experience and improve academic outcomes through sport—the brand has seen an increase in the graduation rates within Baltimore. When kids participated in sports all four years of high school, there was a 98% graduation rate, as compared to a graduation rate of 62.9% for those who didn't play.

Consumer

Like being part of a team's fandom, consumers also associate themselves with specific brands, demonstrating a loyalty that extends to experiences outside the retail store.

During a panel discussion at Under Armour's headquarters, Blake Jungmeyer, VP of growth and partnerships at Czarowski, touched upon the concept of a brand as a network. He stressed the need for experience makers to ask themselves, "Are we actually broadening [consumers'] networks and their ability to reach further within the brand, within the lifestyle that they're trying to achieve?" It's a big question that we're at least asking ourselves as we're starting to design and produce events for our clients."

Fans

Today, going to a game involves a lot more than just simply sitting in a stadium seat. Pre- and post-game activities are now as important as the action on the field, and venues are taking notice. Jungmeyer pointed out that newer facilities and venues are extending their reach beyond the structure, such as The Battery Atlanta, a mixed-use development that's adjacent to Truist Park, home of the Atlanta Braves. It features a range of culinary options, retailers, a bowling alley, and even a mechanical bull, as well as a 4,000-seat venue for live music. And it's open 365 days a year, not just on game days.

Jungmeyer said that this community component that lives outside of the walls of the structure presents an opportunity for brands, teams, and leagues to engage fans even more—similar to how the NFL erects a fan experience outside the stadium hosting the Super Bowl.

Event Pros

Designed to be an experience for those who design experiences, the BizBash Sports Summit carried on the same ethos of community among attendees. Within a relaxed, informal environment, participants were able to network, build relationships, share insights, and more, all while experiencing D.C.-area sports venues like National Parks and businesses like Under Armour.

“ The BizBash Sports Summit was **truly a special event**—the opportunity to meet other experience designers dedicated to **bringing the love of sports to life** for fans everywhere was remarkable. Getting to do so in **venues that celebrate and are dedicated to athletes, sport, and fans** made it that much better. Happy to have been part of this inaugural event and excited to see how the connections I made can add value to my business.”

—Kim Aimi, Sr. Director, Global Sponsorship Marketing, Visa





Part 3: Designing Premium, VIP Experiences For All

This past summer's exorbitant concert ticket prices show that consumers are willing to pay a pretty penny for bucket-list experiences. As Jungmeyer pointed out, "coming out of the pandemic, fans and attendees are expecting more and are willing to pay for it."

For example, even though ticket prices for the recent Grand Prix race in Las Vegas eventually plummeted, the initial demand saw fans shelling out \$7,000 for a three-day package.

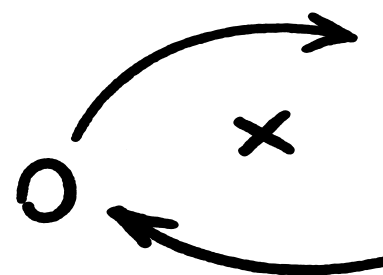
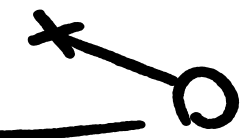
And it's not just the high rollers that need red-carpet treatment. Simon Miller, founder and chief creative for Brand Activation Services, said that everyone needs to feel like a VIP. And that includes personalizing experiences, which Miller said his client Fanatics excels at thanks to consumer data on purchases and event attendance. "It gives us the opportunity to market toward some of those customers with a very specific VIP experience that feels unique to them," he said.

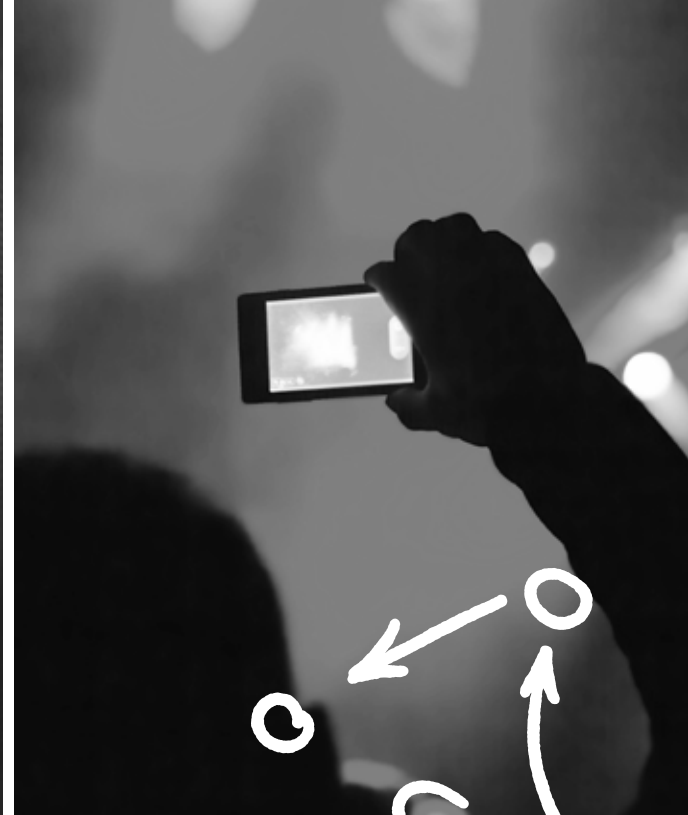
Referring to his company's transformation of stadium hospitality suites into Fanatics-branded spaces, he said that these activations "make people want to be part of that VIP-level experience," adding that his team plans to focus on these experiences going into 2024. "How can we narrow the focus in some ways to create these pockets of very special experiences rather than a cattle call-type of thing where we're trying to touch as many people as possible?"

Lucas Mason, VP of customer experience at TentCraft, explained that this type of hyper-personalization will require investment in building fan platforms by sports franchises in order to control and own data to help program experiences. "If these teams and leagues start building their own fan platforms, that's going to power events. You know exactly who the fans are, who's there, and you can tailor those experiences throughout," Mason said.

“ Coming out of the pandemic, fans and attendees are **expecting more** and are **willing to pay for it.**”

—Blake Jungmeyer, VP, Growth & Partnerships, Czarnowski





Part 4. Incorporating Tech Into Experiences

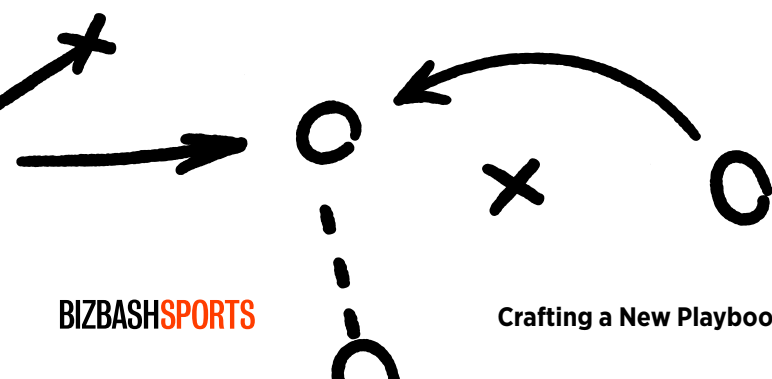
While generative AI is the hot buzzword in the tech world, it's still unclear how exactly it will be integrated into the events industry. And it seems like most of the summit attendees aren't in a huge hurry to start employing it, especially when you produce events with guests that span multiple generations with varying tech skills.

"When we're designing experiences, it's about how can that technology be incorporated seamlessly into the experience in a way that it doesn't feel clunky, in a way that it doesn't feel forced," Miller said. "When we start to roll technology into activations that we're working on, it's not necessarily something that is so brand new that people haven't necessarily experienced it yet."

He stressed the need for ease of interaction, "so it's not something that people feel like they have to read an instruction manual to participate in.... I think for us it's not about how amazing and new the technology is. But is it at a point where we can integrate it in a seamless way where people are really going to engage?"

For example, at this year's Super Bowl, Brand Activation Services produced an activation for Nike within the retail area that featured a 40-foot-wide LED wall with motion tracking built in. As folks moved to one side of the wall, the graphics would change and show support for the Philadelphia Eagles, and on the other side, the Kansas City Chiefs.

It also turned into a larger-than-life photo backdrop when people simply pushed a button. "There wasn't really much that anyone had to learn about it," Miller said, "but we were using so many of those different technology aspects to create that seamless experience."





BIZBASHSPORTS SUMMIT

November 27-29, 2023 • Washington, D.C.

Conclusion

The inaugural BizBash Sports Summit united players in the sports events industry who came together to network, share best practices, and learn from each other. As they say, **there's no "i" in "team,"** and that mantra extended to the summit attendees who, over the course of two days, formed **collegial relationships** and initiated potential **business partnerships**.

Across the education sessions, panel discussions, and more, some common threads emerged such as the need to **build a sense of community among fans and consumers**, as well as **trends to expect in 2024** like more premium experiences. The attendees expressed their gratitude for being able to share their "fumbles"—and to discover **processes that they could take back to their teams**—with a room full of like-minded people.

"BizBash Sports Summit brings together professionals from **all areas in the sports world** and lets attendees learn and teach each other," said Courtney Oversby, VP of special events for World Finals, Professional Bull Riders. "The programming they developed over the two-day event was **interactive and educational**, and there were many times that attendees could connect to share their experiences. This sports summit was **one of the best I have attended** over the course of my career."

This won't be the last BizBash Sports Summit. BizBash looks forward to further opportunities to bring the industry's best minds together to share insights that are valuable to all event professionals in the sports world. Stay tuned on how you might be able to participate in the future.

THANK YOU!

We greatly appreciate the time our BizBash Sports Summit participants took out of their busy schedules to spend with us on-site in Washington, D.C., and for their invaluable input and insights.