



How BLAST uses Pulsar to grow its esports audience, and the ecosystem

Case Study – BLAST

How BLAST uses Pulsar to grow its esports audience, and the ecosystem

Challenge

The esports ecosystem is exploding in popularity. And global media network BLAST sits right at its epicenter.

BLAST manages and produces leagues, events and other media, in which the world's leading esports teams duke it out in front of arenas full of fans – or, in 2020– in front of even larger audiences at home.

With a recent fundraise of \$13.5M and a new partnership with the BBC to stream its BLAST Premier tournament on the broadcaster's digital platforms, adding to the company's portfolio of global broadcast partners that has reached 105 territories and over 151M households in 2020, BLAST is rapidly expanding, at a time in which a global pandemic has accelerated existing entertainment trends, and made it crucial to be able to connect with audiences digitally. But especially in such a rapidly growing entertainment category like esports, understanding your audience is a key to being able to connect with them.

"We still get excited by celebrities unmasked as secret esports fans, or by the latest content creator or actor getting signed to an organisation," tells us Emily Medd, who has been BLAST's Head of Digital for over two years.

- * Global media network broadcasting esports tournaments, including PRO and PREMIER.
- * Reached 105 territories and over 151M households in 2020
- * In the same year, raised \$13.5M for expansion and debuted on the BBC iPlayer



We recently undertook a huge audience research project and look forward to being able to use this data and findings to engage better with esports fans, authentically in their environment with the content or the product that they are after,"



Medd's job spans from managing the BLAST social team, working closely with the production and content teams, to –crucially– understanding which platforms BLAST should be betting on for future growth.

So how does Medd manage to measure, and understand the impact of BLAST's myriad activity streams, while expanding the audience for its activities and the ecosystem as a whole?

One key part to BLAST's brand-building, ecosystem, and audience development are the esports teams themselves.

Blast uses Pulsar too:

- * Get a bird's eye view of 12 partner teams' social engagement, and the impact their activity has on the brand
- * Monitor conversations around tournaments to ensure civility, monitor reactions and buzz
- * Spot product & sponsorship opportunities



For any brand operating in esports or wider entertainment, social success can be so fleeting,” says Medd. “You have a great moment where a piece of content has hit the right mark and it gets all the thought leaders and influencers talking about it, but 10 minutes later the conversation moves on.”



Using Pulsar CORE to measure the outreach of esports partners

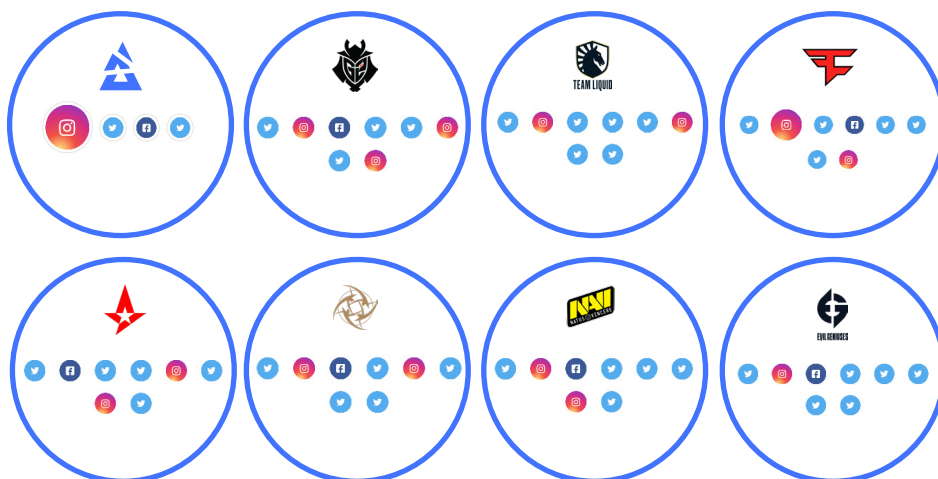
BLAST sees its future as very much tied to the ecosystem as a whole: “Our tournaments are not just about showcasing the performance of the highest ranking teams in the world – but recognising that the ‘best’ players, organisations, broadcast talent is potentially going to look very different in the next 2-3 years and we want to be ahead of that, says Medd.

Today, there are 12 “member teams” who work with BLAST, in their BLAST Premier tournaments and beyond them, for a 12-month period, as part of an arrangement designed to both raise awareness of individual teams and build long-term audiences for BLAST.

BLAST turn to Pulsar CORE to help maximise their digital output with partnered teams while extending their reach. CORE is an owned-channel analytics suite that tracks audience growth and content performance across Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and ties them to Google Analytics on web properties. But it is also a key tool to track other public channels’ content and audience performance – competitors or partners.



How do we build and invest properly together in the ecosystem of esports so that we are giving so much more than just gameplay, tournaments or victories? How are we future-proofing this ecosystem together?



By plugging in each member of the team into a CORE, Medd can understand how each team is growing its audience, and how they are creating buzz around BLAST's tournaments and the overall ecosystem.

Are they driving engagements and impressions? Is their content getting in front of new audiences? And, if not, what existing content strategies have worked, and can be leveraged moving forwards?

Running a quarterly report on these teams means that Medd can get a bird's eye view of how they can best leverage their existing brands to benefit BLAST, while also informing longer-term BLAST strategy. And that doesn't simply mean a better, more insightful standard of internal planning, but also a better proposition for large brands who want to partner with BLAST to reach and resonate with their highly engaged audiences.

By approaching these teams with the 12-month content plans and monthly engagement targets that CORE provides a quantitative basis for, BLAST are able to position themselves as "not just an esports org who can give you exposure next to the best teams in the world, but also a media and production company that can give you a long-term strategy, with content milestones along the way".

Spotting product & sponsorship opportunities with Pulsar TRAC

At the same time, Medd and team also utilize Pulsar TRAC, to investigate the wider conversation about their tournaments and esports beyond owned social media channels, and so discover potential opportunities or pitfalls for the brand.



The 12 teams have an average of four profiles per org, with players, coaches, analysts primarily using Twitter and Instagram. We track all these profiles to see how often they have talked about BLAST, shared our content, how much engagement that's generated and the overall impact it has on our brand.



During tournaments it's very much about feedback, because a lot of the chatter is just going to be about what's going on in the game which is great and it's fun and means people are watching and are engaged.



During tournament season, Medd's team "expands further as we contract added team members around these key tournament and production moments that require increased output" with freelancers and community moderators to produce content and ensure that their Twitch and YouTube channels remain welcome and safe spaces for all communities who want to participate. During this time, TRAC is used to monitor the overall conversation, and spot potential problems, as well as opportunities and ideas, offering a mix of reputation management, customer service, and business intelligence.

Once the tournament is over, Medd will sift through the conversation to extract insights about what worked, what resonated, and what created a buzz or controversy, then deliver those to other parts of BLAST, from events to commercial, to stakeholders and investors.

That analysis helps refine BLAST's offering both in terms of how future events will play out, and in terms of partnerships, as well as take the pulse of their community.

"During non-tournament moments, when we create content that gets people talking, we deliver a report showing how the community felt about what we've just done and feed that back into our future creative."

Overall, because BLAST's future is tied to that of the ecosystem it is inhabiting, Medd sees value in listening not just to BLAST's audience, but to the broader community and ecosystem, to understand "what this audience are talking about this month" and tuning in to the broader esports conversation to "report on this ecosystem and audience conversation in general".



After each tournament I take a look through TRAC and filter to see what people thought about our production value, our talent lineup, our content segments, or our ad breaks, and feed that back to the relevant teams.



McCANN

DANONE



The Guardian

VMLY&R

Pulsar is the leading
AI-powered audience
intelligence platform

Get in touch

info@pulsarplatform.com
www.pulsarplatform.com

PULSAR*