



# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO STREAMING AND TICKETING

FOR THE SPORTS INDUSTRY



**TicketCo**

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# Why should you read this guide?

**“Club’s that don’t explore live streaming are crazy, to put it simply,”**

**Bill Waterson, co-chairman at Altrincham FC**

Maximising a unified streaming and ticketing platform is a powerful way for leagues and clubs to master hybrid fixtures and a global market.

Having the ability to broadcast content direct to supporters is a huge opportunity for leagues, competitions, clubs and individual competitors. It increases fan engagement, commercial opportunities and ultimately revenue and should be combined with the marketing of tickets for physical attendees to deliver hybrid events.

The TicketCo platform positively impacts all the important stages of the purchase process and digital experience. Getting these key issues right is important to being a successful online broadcaster and monetising your digital content. Additionally, in the modern digital era, having smartphone-first ticketing is key to commercial success at all levels of sport.

The aim of this guide is to provide the best, most up to date and comprehensive guide for sports leagues, tournaments and clubs to learn how to live stream and how to integrate it into sales and marketing. It has been created by gathering the insights and expertise of our team, our partners and our customers. It has been written by people in the sports industry for the sports industry. We hope it will provide excellent value for you and help you get the maximum value out of streaming and ticketing for your league, club or yourself.

This is not an instruction manual, or a sales pitch. It is proper advice collated from people who have streamed or sold tickets and care about the sports industry. We hope it helps and gets you into the endless opportunities of streaming and digital ticketing.

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# How does it work?



## Streaming

Live streaming sport does not need to be complicated. You will need some equipment and there are a few pitfalls to avoid. The big misconception is you will need lots of expensive equipment and a team of on-site experts. You do not. You will be surprised at what you can achieve. You can make live streaming simple.

Broadcasting matches starts by holding an account with a live streaming provider – a way to get your sports event online and into fans' homes via the internet. You then need a ticket office to sell your stream and give fans access to watch the game. At TicketCo, our platform combines the ticket office function and live streaming to create a seamless experience for ticket buyers.

You will need cameras to film your fixtures, or interviews, plus a way to broadcast sound to enhance the matchday experience. The same approach applies whether you are broadcasting a badminton match, a hockey tournament or a football fixture, or whether you are professional or semi-professional. There are various ways you can do this. You could start by filming interviews and behind the scenes footage with a smartphone on a selfie stick, or tripod and a handheld microphone. Many professional sports clubs use this set-up for pre-match and post-match interviews. It is simple, cheap and highly effective. All communications officers will have a smartphone as part of their duties, so all that you would need to purchase for this approach would be a tripod and a microphone which are inexpensive and readily available online.

It would be possible to also film live fixtures via this sort of set-up, but most clubs opt for making a modest investment in better equipment. This enables you to zoom in on action, enable greater clarity and improve your provision to your viewers. Many clubs have the equipment already, which is used for filming at the training ground, player interviews and club events. What is usually missing is the streaming know-how, which we cover below. Some clubs start out with one camera in a fixed and elevated position, usually in the stands in the middle of the playing area. This is perfectly acceptable and provides the viewer with a good view of the action. From there you can expand as you become more experienced and if your budget allows. Some clubs have a multi-camera and microphone set-up with a mixing console and vision mixer to allow for different camera angles and replays. The equipment is reasonably priced and there are online tutorials to help you develop your technical skills. Many clubs we work with use volunteers from within fanbases to provide matchday filming requirements. It is available to clubs at grassroots level as much as professional ones.

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The audio and video feed needs to find its way onto a computer in order that it can be uploaded and then streamed over the internet. Viewers watch this feed by heading to where you have told them the stream will be.

In TicketCo's platform, fans choose the match they would like to watch, click purchase or book which takes them to the booking page. They can then add tickets to their cart and check out by entering payment details (choosing their GDPR preferences). They will then be sent an e-ticket with a link and instructions on how to view the match or event.

Our system generates a unique, non-sharable code which means fans can enter it into any of the various methods of watching a TicketCo stream – be it an Apple TV, Amazon Fire Stick or just a simple web browser on supporters' laptops, phones, tablets, or smart-TVs.

TicketCo's streaming engine is powered by Amazon Web Services (AWS). If you are broadcasting a fixture online you will be automatically issued a streaming key an hour before the game begins. This key is what allows your computer and show feed to be uploaded to Amazon's servers ready for deployment to people's devices. This automated process from AWS automatically ensures supporters get the best possible experience based on their device and internet capability.

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# How does it work?

## Ticketing



Leagues, tournaments and clubs now face fierce competition when selling tickets to attend fixtures and other events physically or virtually.

Families and individuals have multiple options on how to spend their spare time and live sport is readily available on television. Therefore, making sure tickets are marketed well and are easy to purchase are important. Additionally, offering unique content has proven to be successful.

People are used to being able to search for and buy things they desire very easily and quickly online, on any device. Consider how you purchase goods online and ask yourself whether your league or club's system is fit for the modern age.

Digital ticketing ensures a smooth process for the ticket buyer. Supporters can choose their preferred seat from a stadium or seating plan at the touch of a button. We have found providing this functionality enables supporters to select their favoured spot in a stadium and helps reduce the amount of telephone calls and visits to club ticket offices. The technology gives the ticket buyer the power to select what they want online.

Technology can be a solution, but using it sensibly is key to success. Keep the number of requests you ask of ticket buyers to a minimum. Remember the point of the ticket office function is to sell tickets as quickly and efficiently as possible. Asking supporters for lots of information will frustrate them and you risk losing a sale. Remember digital savvy shoppers expect transactions to be quick online.

Once a ticket for a physical event has been purchased our system sends the buyer a QR code which they can then scan at the stadium to enter on a matchday via their smartphone, or a printout. This system enables supporters to purchase tickets right up to the beginning of a fixture, without having to queue up at a ticket office. Each QR is unique and cannot be shared. If a supporter using the same ticket enters a venue, the system would pick up if someone tried to enter with the same code and be refused entry. When tickets for a virtual event are purchased the ticket buyer is sent a confirmation and a non-sharable code to the event.

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# What does it require?



An effective streaming set up for less than £5000 might be:

- 2 BlackMagic Design Pocket Cinema 4K Cameras,
- 2 Manfrotto Fluid Head tripods,
- a GoPro Hero 8,
- a BlackMagic Design ATEM Mini Pro
- a (well specified) computer running Open Broadcast Software.
- a way of capturing audio
- a robust internet service of at least 12Mb upload.

This setup would allow you to fix a camera to cover the entire playing area in addition to capturing close-up shots which bring viewers closer to the action.

This setup also supports the addition of graphic, images and overlays to make the stream appeal visually to fans and sponsors. You could include the live score, a live clock, plus details of key information like competitors, or team line ups, formations, goal or points scorers.

On top of this you might need to install a new broadband line to ensure your live stream will be able to cope with fans' demand. For venues with poorer light quality, it is worth noting that light level and colour for cameras can be complicated at first. You could film some training sessions via a private stream at first to stress test your equipment and facilities. This could be followed by streaming development squad, academy, or pre-season fixtures for free as 'test' events to gain confidence in your live stream before asking supporters to pay to watch games digitally.

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# The lingo

- PPV = Pay Per View is a type of webcast service that enables fans to purchase access to a fixture and to view it via a private online broadcast. The broadcaster shows the event at the same time to everyone who ordered it.
  - VOD = Video On Demand is a system that allows people to select and watch video content of their choice on their smart-TVs, or digital devices.
  - OBS = Open Broadcast System is the software used to communicate your video and audio onto a live stream server. There are many others available including WireCast and vMix.
  - Stream Key = The unique code used when communicating with a streaming server to show the stream online.
  - Streaming = the process of broadcasting a signal over the internet for people to watch.
  - HD = A TV format that denotes the technical standard of a broadcast by defining the resolution of the frame – ie 1920×1080 would be 1920 pixels wide by 1080 pixels tall – the HD standard.
  - Frame Rate = The number of individual pictures that when played together give the illusion of a moving image – this often quoted as 25fps (ie 25 picture per second).
  - Bit Rate = How much data you can upload per second.
  - Deployment = How your image and audio gets to its audience.
  - UI = User Interface or how your website works for people.
  - Latency = Sound processes quicker than video and the delay between the two is called latency and sometimes lag. You can correct this by delaying the sound so that it appears in sync with the picture.
  - Encoder = A way of capturing your audio and video and translating it into something that can be uploaded OBS is ultimately a fancy encoder.
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- Aspect Ratio = This is the relationship between height and width. TV today is (broadly) 16:9 whereas old TVs were 4:3. Don't dismiss 4:3, it has its uses.
  - Upload and Bandwidth = How fast your broadband connection allows you to upload to the internet.
  - Closed Captioning = The visual display (as text) of audio on media. This is the most common form of captioning and can be identified by the [CC] symbol. Closed captioning is often referred to as subtitles or subtitling, despite their differences. While subtitling involves translation into an alternate language, closed captions are in the same language as the original audio.
  - Ticket Office = This is where fans can buy tickets for fixtures. Our platform provides ticketing for either a physical or digital attendance of sports events.
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# The broadcasting part:

## How it works



Once you have got your audio and video stream on your computer, a piece of software needs to communicate to TicketCo. This is done by connecting your computer over an RTMP protocol (Real Time Messaging Protocol). In simple terms it is a way of computers talking to each other in a continuous way that allows audio and images to be broadcast.

TicketCo issues the RTMP link and Stream Key an hour before the fixture is to be broadcast online. This gives you enough time to get everything set and tested thoroughly. You can see the signal arriving at the servers. There is usually a 40 second delay as the 'pipe' fills up.

The stream ends up at Amazon Web Services and at this stage, various things happen to your signal. Firstly, the signal can be told only to deploy (be available too) specific Geo Locations. For example, league level agreements might prevent fixtures in your division from being broadcast domestically or outside the UK – Geo Locations allows you to comply with these regulations.

The stream is sent out to all the people that have access to it. The AWS servers create several versions of the streams in various formats to ensure the end-user – your supporters – get the best version for their device and broadband speed.

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# Ticket office



A modern online ticket office solution is crucial to the smooth operations and commercial success of any sports club, league, tournament or cup final.

Supporters now demand immediate and easy access to tickets online. Technology is rapidly replacing outdated systems of staffing multiple telephone lines and sales booths and printing out and posting paper tickets. The transport sector is way ahead in the adoption of digital ticketing and sport is catching up.

The beauty of digital ticketing platforms is they are accessible and affordable for all leagues and clubs, regardless of size. By offering ticket buyers a digital buying solution, clubs radically reduce the pressure on ticket office functions. The accessibility and ease of purchase of tickets online means ticket buyers will not telephone ticket offices to purchase tickets, plus tickets will not need to be printed out and posted. The benefits are vast –it make tickets more accessible, but it also cuts costs in facilitating sales.

Queues at ticket offices on a matchday, or on the day tickets are put on sale for a big fixture or season tickets are launched can be stressful for ticket office staff at clubs. Managing demand is difficult for a small team if they are operating a manual system, or a digital solution that is ineffective.

If the system is ineffective, they must juggle supporters who are physically queuing up at sales booths with telephone line queues. They must help supporters select their seats, process their card details, print off the tickets, put them in an envelope, frank the envelope and put it into a sack for the mail service to collect.

On matchdays at clubs that still use traditional ticketing solutions, it sometimes results in supporters who have not purchased a ticket in advance having to queue at the ticket office to buy a ticket and then having to queue again at the turnstile to enter the stadium. It negatively impacts on the supporter's matchday experience and the club risks losing sales. Offering a digital solution in QR code is automatically and immediately sent to the ticket buyer's phone removes this barrier and improves accessibility.

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Transitioning to a digital solution takes the headache away. Fans can pick their seats, complete the transaction, and receive a QR ticket automatically. Clubs that have introduced strong digital systems have been able to reduce the burden on the ticket office and become more efficient operationally. Processing queues quickly is a major benefit of digital ticketing and helps crowd control stewards manage fixtures more efficiently. Furthermore, the digital ticket office is never closed, meaning no one has to think about opening hours, queues or other issues.

Digital ticketing also reduces the need for cash, which makes accounting and reporting easier and improves security. The TicketCo system allows for tickets to still be printed out to allow for ticket buyers who do not have a smartphone.

Additionally, by making tickets easier to buy clubs sell more. The TicketCo platform can be integrated with club's Facebook pages, websites and apps.

The ticket office for a streamed event is straight forward. It can all be delivered digitally and via one smooth platform. A ticket buyer can purchase a ticket and the platform will automatically send them a confirmation and details of how to watch their event. An hour before the event they will be sent an access code.

**“The scanning of digital tickets at the gate is far more efficient and ultimately gets fans into the stadium quicker. Minimising queuing time eases congestion issues in and around the ground and makes for a considerably better fan experience”**

**Ty Smith, FC Isle of Man Commercial Director**

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# Season tickets



Season tickets are a significant portion of a club's annual revenue. There is usually a tight window of opportunity to sell season tickets before the value they offer becomes out of date. There is then a gap before half-season tickets are promoted and sold.

There is more to season tickets than getting the pricing right. For people to commit to attending every home game the matchday experience, facilities and overall vibe about a club all needs to be good. Communications needs be excellent to attract and retain engagement.

Marketing and making tickets accessible are vital to successful season ticket campaigns. Therefore, a strong integration between marketing and ticketing departments and functionality is important. Providing seat maps online is important to enable supporters to select the seat they want. Digital functionality ensures season ticket holders' seats are held for an allotted period to enable them to renew if they wish. This can reduce the volume of requests for venue or stadium visits to look at seats by potential season ticket buyers, which traditionally requires physical resource.

On the marketing side, having a digital platform enables you to send push-notifications out to all ticket buyers on your database quickly and efficiently. You can also segment your fanbase and send tailored, relevant messages. This could be done in age groups and focus on special prices, or even to individuals. For example, if someone has a week left to run on their renewal the system sends a 'don't miss out' reminder. Using the platform, you can set up and create campaigns which are then fully automated. Such messaging can go directly to individuals via an app, text, or email, and can also go out publicly via websites and social media. It can also be fully branded.

One common bugbear for people having multiple digital accounts is having to remember usernames and passwords. This understandably can frustrate ticket buyers and cause people to telephone ticket offices, or worse still give up on a purchase. The TicketCo technology means ticket buyers do not need to remember their log-in details. The transactions are assigned to the mobile phone number of the purchaser.

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Providing easy systems for ticket buyers to use also helps achieve sales quicker. When it comes to season tickets this makes a big difference and helps clubs generate revenue streams during a quieter revenue generating periods and forecast with confidence.

Digital ticketing also removes the need for clubs or leagues to produce plastic season cards for supporters to access fixtures. By replacing them with QR codes on phones it saves clubs or leagues time and money and is better for the environment.

For companies who bulk buy season tickets for colleagues to share for team days out or to reward staff digital ticketing can also be used. The TicketCo platform can put group season tickets into separate digital tickets – one for each game. It enables the season ticket holders to distribute their tickets from their phone or computer, saving time and hassle.

Clubs can offer either a physical or virtual season ticket – offering solutions to fans who have a clear position on whether they want to physically attend matches in person, or whether they want to watch the via a stream. The latter would for example suit supporters who are based abroad and not impacted by domestic streaming restrictions.

**“Three out of four supporters now are purchasing their tickets where and when they want, either through their phone or their computers. As a club this saves us a lot of expenses. It also spreads the sales throughout the whole week meaning we don't need to staff up our ticket office prior to match day”**

**Mats Thorbjornsen, Head of ticket sales at SK Brann**

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# Marketing a live stream fixture



When a league or club chooses to live stream fixtures, it means they are committing to marketing two ways to watch an event.

Supporters' return to stadiums mean clubs have the opportunity to promote physical and virtual tickets. Both types of ticket buyer will require similar key information:

- What event is happening?
- When is it taking place?
- Where is it taking place?
- How much is a ticket?

These questions can be addressed universally through matchday posters, league and club websites, local media activity, social media posts, infographics and e-shot campaigns.

If you are new to streaming it will be important you build trust with your ticket buyers that the process is simple, and the user experience will be good. Clear messaging can help establish fans' faith in your live stream model. But the majority want to know and understand what they are buying before they commit to a ticket.

The truth is poor quality and unreliable live streaming options on the market can create misconceptions. Partnering with a quality provider is vital, but alongside that there are some marketing solutions you can deploy to build trust within your audience.

Broadcasting development or academy fixtures, or pre-season friendlies free of charge is one way of marketing your live stream and helping your fanbase to understand your streaming's quality. It presents an opportunity to build awareness and trust with regulars and market to casual fans, who do not attend every match. There is also an opportunity to market to away supporters and neutrals, who do not like to travel. Many follow their clubs or a sport via social media, or mainstream media, so there is an opportunity to attract them to your live stream fixture.

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The more professional your stream and fans' ticket buying experience, the more likely you are to receive repeat business.

Selling digital tickets means they can stay on sale – and you can maximise sales from those who make an on-the-day decision to watch a fixture.

Building momentum and creating a buzz around your fixtures makes a big difference to ticket sales. It helps raise awareness of the fixture, but also creates a sense of occasion around it and even a 'fear of missing out' among ticket buyers. This can be done in numerous ways, from upbeat media interviews by staff and players, to direct appeals to supporters to back their club and cheer on their team. Video, social media and e-campaigns are all key tactics to use. High impact and repetitive messaging are proven methods of engagement.

You can create themes and campaigns around certain fixtures. For example, Christmas, Easter, Community Day, Charity Day or Military Day. This can help promote your fixture as a bigger event and appeal to people to get involved. It also means delivery partners can help promote the fixture to their database via their communications channels.

It is important to keep your audience in mind and assess the mood at the time of marketing a fixture. Use appropriate messaging – your narrative will be very different if you are on a promotion push compared to if you are on a losing run. Getting the tone right is important to engaging ticket buyers and not putting them off.

Maintaining a robust database is vital to successful marketing. It means you can communicate regularly with your ticket buyers. You can build a profile for each ticket buyer and then send them relevant push-notifications. For example, you can wish them happy birthday, tell them you have missed them if they have not purchased a ticket for a while, or send them ticket bundle offers to encourage them to increase their activity.

The TicketCo platform enables you to white label tickets. You can even make them personal to the supporter. It can include a league or club's badge and colours. But remember away supporters too, you could bespoke your design to them too.

Branding on the TicketCo website covers several areas including the event page, organisation domain, online broadcasting platform, checkout and PDF / wallet. Once your branding is set up it will become your default option, unless otherwise specified. This will ensure you achieve consistency with your event branding throughout your campaign.

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# How streaming will grow your fanbase



Heart-breaking stories of supporters unable to watch their team or favourite individual's big match due to a sold-out venue can now be a thing of the past, thanks to streaming.

Live streaming also removes the barriers that prevented fans from attending matches for health, work, family, travel or financial reasons. Streaming matches provides leagues, tournaments and clubs with the power to provide supporters with access to live matches online, without relying on terrestrial broadcasters. This is huge for the lower leagues and minority sports.

By streaming matches, you open your sport, individual or club to a global audience. If people have access to the internet, they can tune in. This makes your venue's capacity limitless. Leagues and clubs that adjust their thinking around marketing will soon benefit from this opportunity. Promoting a fixture is no longer confined to selling tickets to a venue. You can now engage with exiles base in other countries, people who cannot attend for whatever reason, new people, away fans and neutrals.

There are ways to encourage supporters to virtually watch games too, with some clubs and charities hosting 'watch-a-longs' that unite home and away supporters who otherwise would have no one to watch the game with. Live streaming is an excellent way to develop your fanbase and build long-lasting communities and relationships.

**“Understanding there is an audience beyond the rink has injected real optimism into the club regarding the future and connecting with our fans that cannot attend matches”**

**Stephen Nell, owner of Swindon Wildcats Ice Hockey Club**

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# Up-selling: how to maximise your supporters' digital journey



Most sports fan will vouch that attending a game is only part of the matchday experience. Once supporters have purchased a digital ticket, there are further opportunities to generate revenue and boost the overall supporter experience. The TicketCo payment platform has built-in functionality to offer additional products and services at the point of sale while your supporter is in a 'buying mood'. This could mean selling anything from food and drink to merchandise and vouchers.

Consider marketing matchday programmes, club scarves, shirts, caps or other items supporters would ordinarily purchase at the club shop. You can offer the opportunity for supporters to collect their order at the turnstile on a matchday, or to have it posted. It is also possible to incorporate matchday raffles and 50-50 draws into this section of fans' ticket buying journey.

The up-sell opportunities apply to ticket buyers of both physical and virtual tickets. For those watching a fixture via a live stream you could offer products to be posted. There are also opportunities to work with league or club sponsors and partners to improve commercial partnerships to the benefit of everyone. For example, you could deliver food and drink, along with a programme or magazine to virtual ticket buyers' homes on matchday to improve their experience. Some clubs have added children's holiday courses and camps to the upsell section, when the platform identifies a parent is purchasing tickets.

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# Sponsorship and commercial opportunities

Businesses sponsor a league or club for a variety of reasons. The owner is a fan, or the employer wants to reward colleagues or entertain clients. Many want to increase their brand awareness or attract new customers and partners. While others want to play an active role in the community.

Live streaming and video on demand have created new commercial revenue generation and engagement opportunities. This can be data driven, which enables leagues and clubs to report back to sponsors or prospects key information about engagement levels and audience (in accordance with GDPR).

Leagues and clubs can communicate with fans on a matchday in ways they previously could not. This could be achieved via a live chat function, which could be sponsored. Or via live 'in-play' competitions and partner offers. For example, local food and drink offers that are tailored to live scores.

Digital graphics and streamed behind the scenes footage and interviews offer additional sponsorship opportunities. Supporters could even purchase space to broadcast birthday messages. Traditional matchday commercial inventory items like match-ball or man-of-the-match sponsorship could be doubled – with physical and virtual packages offered. But be careful not to upset your physical matchday sponsors, though, by exploiting digital's capabilities.

Clubs that broadcast matches have experienced this benefit by adding live stream sponsors for goals, man of the match awards and during natural game breaks.

**“Graphics and advertising banners help make our stream stand out and appeal visually to our fanbase. The game is simply part of fans’ matchday experience, so the same approach should apply to our digital customers too”**

**SStuart Robinson, Director of Bees Ice Hockey Club**

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# Fan engagement



What is sport without fans? Nothing.

Having supporters inside venues on a matchday is key for atmosphere, support and the overall sense of community and experience. However, online broadcasting now means leagues and clubs can be even more inclusive.

Supporters who have emigrated, for example, can still tune in and be as close to the action and their club as possible.

Many streaming platforms will host a chat function, the ability for viewers to engage with each other via an instant messaging service while they watch the game. Commentators should monitor this feed – mentioning a supporters' name or view during a broadcast can further add to the engagement.

While most of your viewers will be tuning in to watch the home team, it is likely the number of away supporters you welcome to your live streaming platform will increase as your service grows in reputation. Many live stream services are unbiased. Commentators and/or presenters provide balanced opinions that would reflect the thoughts of the neutral viewer. While some clubs partner with their local BBC radio station to provide matchday commentary and offer fans the option to have the home or away commentary team audio.

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# League level agreements

For digital ticketing and streaming a league partnering with one supplier enables it to offer a total solution to its member clubs.

It can help a league market and promote its sport better, be more audience focused and user friendly. Having a common system helps improve services to fans.

Additionally, it provides strong commercial upsides. Using one platform across a league results in making tickets more accessible and easier to buy. It also provides increased ticket buyer insights and can integrate with other marketing and CRM platforms. This can help make a sport and a league more targeted in its marketing and sponsorship.

Away tickets is often labour intensive for clubs to facilitate and manage. By using the same platform clubs can sell digital away tickets for their own matches (physical and virtual) through their own ticket office, including seat maps and tagging of each ticket in the CRM system. It means supporters all get the same buying experience and digital journey. Clubs we work with feedback that fan experience is important to building attendances.

Furthermore, a league level agreement creates buying power: together you are strong. It means leagues can secure and offer clubs more favourable commercial terms than they can achieve via an individual agreement with a supplier. This approach helps enable leagues to support its member clubs and ultimately helps make clubs more sustainable.

In the UK, the Southern Football League signed a multi-year Media Rights deal with TicketCo Media Services to make semi-professional football available online to supporters. The league level agreement will digitally transform how 82 clubs in tiers seven and eight of the English football pyramid engage with supporters on a global scale via live streaming and football on-demand.

**“Through the annual handling of close to 2 million tickets at our clubs each year, it is obvious that the ticket function must be forward-looking and customer-friendly. The fact that we have established this as a common system is incredibly important. Now we can always offer the best service to our fans”**

Leif Øverland, CEO of Norsk Toppfotball

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# Live streaming versus video on demand



Live streaming allows people to watch in real time – there is no rewind button or second chance, this is broadcasting at its purest. Although you can of course add instant replays to key moments in a match.

Viewers cannot be late, if they are they will almost by definition miss the game's key moment. The first minute goal or try, a game winning serve, or a red-card offence. Like a pint is best served chilled, sport is enjoyed best live.

All the risks associated with live broadcasting can be attributed to live streaming – commentator error, failing to capture important moments, background noise that is out of your control. As a live stream provider, you will grow to deal with these issues as a team. But it is what the format is all about. You are live – enjoy it.

A live broadcast can later be made available to watch via video on demand. Although team performances and match results are readily available online, this option appeals to both the domestic and international viewer. Why, we hear you ask.

For the domestic viewer, their ability to watch live sport via streaming might be impacted by restrictions imposed by a sport's governing body (see below). This means, in some examples, broadcasting a fixture online might only be possible via video on demand. Fans on a global scale are likely to be unaffected by these restrictions. But video on demand still has its appeal due to time differences. Video on demand offers the viewer greater flexibility, which is essential if they are watching a team or individual compete on the other side of the world.

Talking of flexibility, consider making watching the game on-demand a lower price than the live event. People that attended the game physically might then be more persuaded to tune in again if the game was particularly memorable for them. Video on demand also allows producers to add features such as close captions, foreign language captions or audio descriptions.

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# Broadcasting restrictions

In some examples, organisations responsible for overseeing professional and amateur aspects of play might impose live streaming restrictions to protect traditional ways of how supporters engage with their chosen sport.

This might mean fixtures in a particular league or tournament cannot be legally broadcast in specific countries during selected hours. Clubs or individuals uncertain of streaming restrictions in their sport must contact their governing body before considering live streaming.

A good example of how streaming restrictions can alter season-by-season is football and its television blackout rule. The rule states clubs cannot broadcast Saturday afternoon matches that take place between 2.45pm and 5.15pm to domestic viewers.

The rule was lifted during clubs' 2020-21 campaigns so supporters staying at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic could watch their team play. It has since been reimposed. Clubs can still, however, live stream midweek games and make matches available to watch on-demand.

Most sports – particularly at a semi-professional level – are free of broadcasting restrictions, but it is essential this is checked.

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# Most common problems

It is unrealistic to expect to enter the world of live streaming without thinking you will encounter a few challenges along the way. Like many things it can be stressful. But the positives far outweigh the negatives, and the pandemic has served as an accelerator for change.

Here are some tips to help you on your way to streaming success:

1. Will an online event reduce physical ticket sales or reduce the appetite for live sport in person? Broadcasting live sport is not a fresh concept. For decades we have been watching sport digitally via national broadcasters. A live stream should not damage your physical sales.
2. It is expensive? Live streaming can be as expensive as you wish. Sure, cameras can be purchased for tens of thousands of pounds. But second-hand equipment can be purchased for a fraction of the price too. The cost of live streaming should not be a barrier.
3. This whole thing relies on the internet – it needs to work flawlessly. This is true. If your internet line is not capable of live streaming content, you will need to invest.
4. The stream has stopped working. What do we do now? This can happen. But the reason the stream is not working is likely to be within your control. It might be that you are trying to stream too much information that may not be compatible with your live streaming provider.
5. Our ticket office team is dealing with so many inquiries. This is good and bad. Good there is interest and demand but bad it is adding to a workload of the team. It is avoidable. A good digital ticketing platform will move sales inquiries away from the telephone and in person visits to the internet. Additionally, by updating copy on your website and on your e-tickets you can address a lot of commonly asked questions. Go through ticket buyers' journey yourself and do it on as many devices possible. Get as wide a demographic to test it for you. There should be no weak spots. Do not let your user interface or confusing copy be a reason not to book a ticket.

Remember, when you sign up to TicketCo Media Services integrated ticketing and streaming service, you will receive a copy of our '10 Steps to Streaming Success' welcome pack which guides you through the live streaming process.

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# The future is here, and it is hybrid



Digital is here to stay. It means leagues and clubs can embrace hybrid models.

At TicketCo, we are not blinded by bias and do not claim watching sport digitally is as good as being at a venue: the atmosphere, buzz and anticipation of thousands of people packed under one roof. Sport without fans is simply not the same. So, of course, physical attendance must be prioritised.

But the pandemic has taught us that there is a demand for digital delivery, and we have learnt that live streaming allows leagues and clubs to engage with audiences in more ways. Why should people miss out on watching and being part of a fixture if they cannot physically visit a venue on a particular date?

There are so many scenarios that mean people cannot always attend a fixture at a venue: touring abroad with the armed forces, health reasons, family or work commitments, being on holiday or an away supporter unable to travel. Streaming and on-demand breaks down so many barriers and keeps people connected. People have become more tech savvy and watch digital content in multiple ways.

Between January and November 2020, the BBC attracted 1.1 billion UK plays of radio, music and podcasts on BBC Sounds. That was up on the previous year's statistics where 630 million plays were registered. If the capabilities of audio can be double in a year, think about the possibilities of visual production that does not cost the organiser a fortune to create and deliver.

Live streaming a match can include pre-match build-up, interviews, behind the scenes footage, fans' opinions and expert analysis. Unique and specialist content is what viewers will want to see, training ground snippets and exclusive interviews. It is exciting to think of the opportunities live streaming presents and how it can in turn benefit your fan engagement.

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# The importance of a robust host

If something does not work often supporters will discuss it on social media and via online chatrooms and the negative news will spread like wildfire.

Therefore, making sure you have a robust host for your stream is vital to ensuring your ticket buyers enjoy a smooth experience. There are a several things you can do to minimise the risk of disruption at every step. Back-up systems might be in place for a faulty PA service, capacity will be available to cover for the ticket scanner which does not work, and a malfunctioning scoreboard might be replaced with a more hands-on approach.

The same processes should be followed for a live stream. Think of everything that could possibly go wrong and put measures in place to minimise the risk of it happening. As a minimum, you will require a robust platform that has been tested and re-tested and then tested once more. You need an infallible user interface and secure ticket office too. It is in your interest to make this possible. After all, money has been invested in equipment to make streaming possible so do not fall at the final hurdle.

It has been proven that free streaming platforms are not built with sustainability in mind. They are unreliable, prone to cutting out and host mid-stream adverts that will not align with your club values and may compete with your title sponsors.

What about your website? The problem with website streaming is you enter without knowing your capabilities. It is impossible to run a beta-test when at least 2,500 people are required to logon to complete a full test. You do not want to discover your bandwidth issues just as you press Start Streaming – it is stressful enough.

Your money is better placed in getting something on-screen and happening rather than working out the back-end technology. TicketCo's Live Stream engine is hosted by Amazon's AWS Elemental and Cloud Front services. It is reassuring to tell your Board your stream is being hosted on the same infrastructure that runs Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Hulu and the BBC.

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# How to use promo codes



People are now used to using online promocodes when shopping and so the sport industry should maximise the opportunity they provide too.

The key to success is using your data and creating offers that encourage your fanbase to make a purchase. Can you offer a fan a bulk ticket deal? Or a discount to a match if they have not attended for a while? Or perhaps a New Year offer, or a birthday treat? The beauty of digital promo-codes is they can be created and distributed instantly and once they are live the process to redeem them is fully automated. Plus, the way they are coded means bespoke or unique offers cannot be shared or reused.

Promocodes can also help you develop your database and buyer profiles. Each time a ticket is purchased using a promotion code, data is stored. From this information, you can invest in effective tactics that help maximise future revenue opportunities via proven methods.

On the TicketCo platform, it is possible to develop specific promotion codes for different audiences. This could mean distributing free tickets to partners, VIP guests, journalists and colleagues. You can also engage on a community level by creating group promo codes for schools or charities. Consider too the use of half season passes or bundles that cover several fixtures for a discounted rate.

The TicketCo platform prevents virtual streaming tickets from being shared by ticket buyers. If one person logs in under the same pass while a viewer is watching, the new viewer will be declined access. This is made possible because ticketing and the broadcast of an event is integrated on the TicketCo platform.

TicketCo Media Services is a pay-per-view streaming and video on demand service built into a robust payments platform. The foundation of TicketCo Media Services is TicketCo, a unified cloud based platform for efficient event payments. Integrated into this is a live streaming and a video on demand feature built on broadcasting grade technology from Amazon Web Services.

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# CONTACT US

Let's talk sports and streaming

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