Chapter 2
eSports Stakeholders:
Important Groups and Relationships

ABSTRACT

Chapter 1 introduced eSports and many of the key stakeholder groups involved in the industry. This chapter builds on the introduction, expands the stakeholder groups, explores more deeply the major stakeholders in eSports, and delves into the relationships and interactions between and amongst these groups. In particular, Chapter 2 focuses on the most important stakeholder groups. The purpose of the chapter is threefold: (1) to learn more about the stakeholders and identify those most important to the field and its growth, (2) to assess the power dynamics amongst those stakeholders, and (3) to compare these stakeholders, relative to traditional professional sports.

INTRODUCTION

In any industry, the identification of its stakeholders is a key and important step towards understanding the industry. Table 1 describes a number of important stakeholders in eSports, provides a few examples for each group, and assesses their importance to the future growth and viability of the eSports industry.

By definition, a stakeholder is any group, party or set of individuals/ organizations who have a 'stake' in the future of the industry. Thus, a list of stakeholders can range from those who are deeply connected to an industry and rely on it for their livelihood, such as those who work for an eSports league, to those who have an involvement in the industry that is not part of

Table 1. eSports industry stakeholder groups

Stakeholder Group	Description	Examples	Importance
Publishers	These organizations own the intellectual property of the video games which eSports leagues, clubs and players compete in	• Riot Games Inc. • Valve Corporation • Activision Blizzard • EA Sports	Very High
Developers	These organizations are the creators of the games on which play occurs	• NetherRealm • EA Sports	Very High
Event Operators	Organizations or groups who organize and host eSports events	• ESL • FACEIT • Dreamhack	Medium to High
Leagues	The competitive set of events or tournaments, where teams compete for an overall title (championship)	• eSports Championship Series (ECS) • ESL's Pro League • The American Collegiate eSports League (ACEL) • The National Association of Collegiate eSports (NACE) • NBA 2K	High
Teams/Clubs	Sets of players who compete as a group, as an identified team, in an eSports league	• Fnatic • Astralis • Complexity Gaming • College Teams (e.g., Harrisburg University)	Medium
One-off Competitions	Major competitive tournaments that are not affiliated with a league	• The International • Apex • League of Legends India Champions Cup	Medium
Streaming Platforms	Organizations who offer, manage and develop platforms for online media and streaming by fans	• Twitch • YouTube Gaming • Twitter	Very High
Broadcasters	Traditional cable broadcasters who also offer streaming and other media services and outlets	• ESPN • Turner Sports	High
Sponsors	Brands who invest resources into eSports in return for marketing rights to achieve their own objectives	• Intel • Red Bull • Samsun • Coca-Cola • Audi	Medium
Players	The athletes/participants who compete as individuals or members of teams in leagues or competitions	• Fatal1ty • NaDeSHoT • Ninja	High
Gambling Organizations	Firms who offer fans and gamblers the opportunity to bet on eSports competitions	• Unikrn • Bet365 • SkyBet	Low
Federations and Associations	The governing bodies, typically not-for-profit organizations, who are responsible for the stewardship of eSports, its rules and its development	• International eSports Federation	Medium to High

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