

**“Unlocking the Next Level”:  
A Foundational Study to Support the Development of a  
Competency Framework for the Gaming & Esports Industry**

A Strategic Analysis of the Global Esports Industry  
and the Application of  
Competency-based Human Resource Management

An Independent Research Initiative  
from Talent Tree Labs

by  
Lorenzo Miguel Bonifacio

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## Executive Summary

The global gaming and esports industry has gone through a monumental shift since its inception—from arcades, to computer shops, to what it is now—a multi-billion-dollar economic powerhouse. This period of hyper-growth, however, has outpaced the development of the specialized talent required to manage its commercial and operational complexities. This report addresses this as a critical human resource management challenge and seeks to introduce a foundational competency framework tailored to the industry's unique requirements.

A generic, off-the-shelf competency model is insufficient for an industry that sits at the convergence of three distinct professional domains: Technology, Entertainment, and Sport. To provide a strategically relevant framework, this report proposes a multi-domain structure that organizes the industry's value chain into five interdependent domains:

1. **The Core Product:** The technology and intellectual property dimension—i.e. the games themselves.
2. **The Competitive Ecosystem:** The sporting dimension, including team operations and league governance.
3. **The Community Ecosystem:** The fan base dimension, cultivated through grassroots programs and the creator economy.
4. **The Spectator Experience:** The entertainment dimension, where gameplay is productized and turned into spectacle.
5. **Foundational Business Enablement:** The corporate, technological, and infrastructure dimension that enables stability and sustained growth.

By deep-diving to the pipes and levers within each of these domains, this report manages to define specific job clusters and competencies that can enable total-industry success. Key findings include the need to prioritize holistic athlete and creator development, a need to pivot from sponsorship-dependent operating models to direct-to-fan monetization, and the impacts of the "Games as a Service" (GaaS) business practices.

This framework is designed to be a tool for leaders and other industry actors to shape or align their human resource initiatives (talent acquisition, learning and development, and performance management) with the industry's growing competency requirements. Further, as the world of gaming and esports continues to adapt with emerging trends like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Web3, and Cloud Technologies, this framework can help future-proof organizational capabilities. Ultimately, it aims to offer a people-first approach to cultivating the *meta-competency* of "Ecosystem Thinking" which can be defined as "the ability to navigate the interdependent relationships between industry players to build enduring and successful enterprises in the dynamic world of gaming and esports."

## Section 1: The Strategic Imperative for a Competency-Based Framework

### 1.1 The New Professional Reality: From Niche to Mainstream Economic Powerhouse

The global gaming and esports industry has seen a tremendous transformation over the years—going from a niche subculture into a sophisticated, multi-billion-dollar entertainment and technology sector.<sup>1</sup> This evolution—which occurred more or less within the span of two decades—has created a complex and deeply interconnected ecosystem of game publishers, third-party tournament organizers, professional teams, broadcasters, and a vast network of service providers.<sup>3</sup> The industry's maturation is evidenced by its economic scale. Projections indicate the global esports market will expand from a valuation of approximately \$2.3 billion in 2023 to over \$16 billion by 2033, which represents a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 22%.<sup>5</sup> This growth rate is fueled by a massive global audience—expected to surpass 640 million people by 2025—and a highly desirable demographic that is young, relatively affluent, and digitally native.<sup>6</sup>

This economic expansion is not merely a byproduct of increased viewership, rather a direct result of the industry's increasing *legitimation*. The industry as a whole has seen many viable new career pathways open up for players and professionals alike.<sup>8</sup> Governments now formally recognize esports as an official sport and a driver of economic diversification, investing in infrastructure and educational programs to home-grow local talent and host global events.<sup>10</sup> This is further supported by the growing development of franchised leagues, dedicated high-tech arenas, and significant investments from both endemic and non-endemic brands.<sup>12</sup>

This period of hyper-growth, however, has created a notable "competency gap." The talent pool required to operate within this new professional reality has not matured at a rate commensurate to the industry's commercial growth and operational requirements. In its nascent stages, the industry was built by passionate enthusiasts and driven by informal networks.<sup>2</sup> While this passion remains the industry's lifeblood, it is no longer sufficient on its own to manage the progressively intricate demands of a global business ecosystem.<sup>14</sup> The influx of corporate sponsorships has led to the rising expectations that come part and parcel with nine-figure venture capital investments: professional accountability, measurable return on investment (ROI), and scalable business ventures.<sup>12</sup> For example, it is hard to imagine how any outfit using ad-hoc processes in a startup environment can effectively navigate the legalities of international media rights sales and the logistics of handling a \$60-million dollar prize pool like the Esports World Cup.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, the industry is experiencing a pronounced demand for seasoned professionals with skills in more traditional (and less “sexy”) specializations like finance, law, marketing, human resources, and operations—all of whom must be able to adapt their expertise to the unique context of gaming and esports.<sup>16</sup> The demand for these competencies now far exceeds the supply of these types of talent.<sup>14</sup> Therein lies the business case for the implementation of a competency-based people strategy and framework, like those promoted by SkillsFuture Singapore for national workforce development.<sup>17</sup> It can provide the gaming and esports industry with a common, structured language for defining “what good looks like,” and thereby enable organizations to systematically identify, recruit, develop, and manage the critical competencies necessary for sustainable success in this new professionalized era.

## **1.2 The Convergence of Talent: A Hybrid Human Capital Challenge**

A generic, off-the-shelf competency model is likely to prove inadequate for the gaming and esports industry given that the sector represents a unique intersection of three distinct professional domains: Technology, Entertainment, and Sport. In order for any talent strategy to be effective, it must recognize and support this hybrid nature.

First, the gaming and esports industry is fundamentally technologically driven. Its core offerings—the games themselves—are software applications built, stored, operating, and distributed via digital platforms. This necessitates premier talent across various technology disciplines—including game design, software engineering, cloud infrastructure management, and data science—to establish and maintain the digital framework that supports the entire ecosystem.<sup>19</sup> Ever more so given that the global demand for low-latency, high-availability global gaming services is immense.<sup>21</sup>

Second, the industry competes within the entertainment sector. At the end of the day—whether end-users engage as a player or viewer—video games vie for audiences’ prolonged attention. Thus, success in this domain depends on competencies traditionally found in media and entertainment, such as live broadcast production, content creation, narrative storytelling, and influencer marketing.<sup>22</sup> The ability to create a community—whether grassroots or global—through high-quality content and activations is a primary driver of commercial value.

Third, the ecosystem is driven by a competitive spirit. It involves the highest level of play from players who function as high-level athletes, supported by organizations, coaches, analysts, and other staff—all operating within leagues and tournaments governed by rules and commissions.<sup>2</sup> This domain requires competencies in athletic management, performance

coaching, player health and wellness, and game analysis, all of which mirror those found in advanced traditional sports.<sup>25</sup>

Failure to adopt a hybrid competency model that caters to each of these domains may introduce the risk of "silo incompetence." This occurs when organizations hire experts from one domain but who lack the critical contextual understanding of the other two. This leads to strategic misalignment and operational friction. For example, a traditional sports agent, an expert in the sport domain, might negotiate a player contract focusing solely on salary and prize money. In esports, however, a significant portion of a player's value is derived from their personal brand, streaming revenue, and content creation partnerships—elements of the entertainment domain.<sup>26</sup> An agent without competency in the creator economy will fail to maximize their client's earning potential and may agree to contractual terms that may undermine these other aspects beyond their scope of understanding.

Similarly, a seasoned television producer, who is presumably an expert in the entertainment domain, might be hired to run an esports broadcast. While they might produce a visually compelling show, if they fail to integrate features that esports spectators expect such as real-time data overlays, interactive chat features, and community-specific language, the product will not resonate with the target audience no matter how polished.<sup>23</sup> The most critical roles within the industry are therefore inherently multi-faceted. As such, a bespoke competency framework must explicitly map these overlapping requirements. It is not enough to define a generic competency like "Project Management." To be effective, competencies must be adequately contextualized so that talent is evaluated not just for a functional skill alone but for their ability to adapt and apply that skill across the unique convergences within the world of gaming and esports.

## Section 2: The Gaming & Esports Competency Landscape: A Refined Multi-Domain Architecture

### 2.1 Framework Overview: A New Architecture for a New Era

To effectively map the complex talent requirements of the gaming and esports industry, this report introduces a multi-domain competency framework. The structure is designed to provide a clear, logical, and strategically relevant overview of the human capital landscape. It aims to cover the industry's modern value chain and the dynamic interplay between its core functions.<sup>1</sup>

The framework organizes all job clusters into five interdependent domains:

- **The Core Product:** The foundational domain responsible for creating the games themselves. This is the engine of innovation, where the core intellectual property is developed.
- **The Competitive Ecosystem:** This domain represents the apparatus of sport. It encompasses the entire structure of elite competition, from team operations and player performance to the governance and rule-setting that ensures competitive integrity.
- **The Community Ecosystem:** This domain represents the human lifeblood of esports. It is a self-sustaining ecosystem built on grassroots participation, amateur leagues, and the vast network of content creators who cultivate and engage the fan base. It is the source of the industry's cultural vitality.
- **The Spectator Experience:** This domain acts as the industry's commercial and entertainment engine, transforming competitive gameplay into a compelling spectacle. It packages the action through large-scale events and media broadcasts and drives revenue through sponsorships, media rights, and direct-to-fan monetization.
- **Foundational Business Enablement:** This domain serves as the central nervous system of the organization, providing the essential corporate governance, strategic intelligence, and operational stability required for scale. It houses the shared services, including technology infrastructure and data analytics, that support and enable all other domains.

Together, these five domains illustrate a more precise flow of value: from product creation, to the structuring of competition, to the cultivation of communities, to the production of a commercial spectacle, all supported by a robust operational core. Understanding this interplay is critical for strategic talent management and organizational design.

2.2 Master Competency Map

The following table presents a master competency map, which serves as the central reference for this report. It provides a comprehensive, at-a-glance overview of the entire competency landscape, connecting each of the five domains to its constituent job clusters and their associated competency titles. Crucially, it includes a strategic rationale for each competency, articulating its specific importance within the unique context of the gaming and esports industry. This map is designed to be a high-impact, actionable tool for senior leadership, facilitating strategic workforce planning, organizational design, and talent development initiatives.

Table 2.1: Master Competency Map for the Gaming & Esports Industry

Domain	Job Cluster	Competency Title	Strategic Rationale
The Competitive Ecosystem	Esports Team Operations & Performance	Talent Scouting & Player Acquisition	Identifies and secures high-potential competitive talent, the primary asset of an esports organization. <sup>29</sup>
		Contract Negotiation & Roster Management	Manages the legal and financial aspects of player contracts, ensuring roster stability and compliance. <sup>30</sup>
		Performance Coaching & Strategic Analysis	Develops in-game strategies and improves player execution, directly impacting competitive outcomes. <sup>32</sup>
		Team Dynamics & Cohesion Building	Fosters effective communication and interpersonal relationships, critical for success in team-based games. <sup>33</sup>

		Player Health & Wellness Management	Mitigates the significant operational risk of player burnout by managing physical and mental health. <sup>34</sup>
		Performance Psychology	Develops mental resilience and focus, enabling players to perform under extreme pressure. <sup>35</sup>
		Player Development & Career Pathing	Manages the long-term growth of players, extending career longevity and maximizing talent asset value. <sup>37</sup>
		Esports Performance Data Analysis	Uses in-game data to identify performance trends and inform coaching strategies for a competitive edge. <sup>38</sup>
		Opponent & Meta-Game Analysis	Analyzes competitor strategies and evolving game dynamics ("meta") to prepare for matches. <sup>32</sup>
		Logistics & Travel Coordination	Manages complex travel and accommodation schedules for teams competing in a global circuit. <sup>40</sup>
		Compliance & League Regulation Adherence	Ensures the team operates within the rules set by leagues and publishers, avoiding penalties. <sup>4</sup>



		Gaming House & Facility Management	Manages the physical infrastructure where players live and train, impacting daily performance. <sup>34</sup>
	<b>League &amp; Tournament Operations</b>	Publisher Relations & IP Licensing	Manages the foundational dependency on game IP owners, a prerequisite for all league operations. <sup>3</sup>
		Tournament Design & Format Development	Creates compelling and fair competitive structures that are engaging for players and spectators. <sup>42</sup>
		League Governance & Rulebook Management	Establishes and enforces the rules of competition, ensuring a level and predictable playing field. <sup>4</sup>
		Competitive Integrity & Officiating	Manages referees and officials to ensure fair play during live matches, upholding the sport's legitimacy. <sup>22</sup>
		Anti-Cheat & Fair Play Enforcement	Implements technical and procedural measures to prevent cheating, a critical threat to the sport's integrity. <sup>38</sup>

<b>The Community Ecosystem</b>	<b>Grassroots &amp; Amateur Development</b>	Community Program Design & Management	Creates programs that engage the broader player base, fostering loyalty and brand affinity from the ground up. <sup>43</sup>
		Amateur & Collegiate League Operations	Manages foundational competitive structures that serve as the primary pipeline for future professional talent. <sup>45</sup>
		Path-to-Pro Framework Development	Designs clear pathways for amateur players to advance to professional ranks, ensuring ecosystem sustainability. <sup>47</sup>
		Volunteer & Community Leader Management	Mobilizes and supports passionate community members essential for running local-level events. <sup>44</sup>
		Educational Partnership Development	Builds relationships with schools and universities to legitimize esports and integrate it into academic programs. <sup>48</sup>
		Youth Protection & Safeguarding Policies	Implements policies to ensure a safe and positive environment for young participants in grassroots programs. <sup>50</sup>

		Local Event Management	Organizes smaller-scale, local tournaments that are the first step in the competitive journey. <sup>43</sup>
		Grassroots Sponsorship & Funding	Secures funding and partnerships specifically for amateur-level initiatives. <sup>43</sup>
	<b>Creator &amp; Community Engagement</b>	Creator & Influencer Partnership Management	Builds and manages relationships with independent content creators, a critical channel for authentic audience reach. <sup>51</sup>
		Digital Community Moderation	Manages and cultivates positive, engaging, and safe interactions on platforms like Discord and Twitch chat. <sup>30</sup>
		Fan Engagement Strategy	Develops and executes initiatives to deepen the relationship between the brand and its fan base. <sup>53</sup>
<b>The Spectator Experience</b>	<b>Live Event Production &amp; Management</b>	Event Planning & Production	Manages the end-to-end execution of live events, from initial concept to post-event breakdown. <sup>40</sup>
		Venue Sourcing & Logistics Management	Secures and manages the physical locations for large-scale stadium events. <sup>54</sup>

		Broadcast & Technical Integration Management	Oversees the complex integration of live gameplay, broadcast feeds, and on-site technology. <sup>40</sup>
		Participant & Team Relations	Serves as the primary point of contact for competing teams, managing their needs and communications. <sup>40</sup>
		Prize Pool Management & Distribution	Manages the administration and secure payment of prize money, a core component of pro competition. <sup>31</sup>
		Ticketing & Spectator Experience Management	Oversees all aspects of the live audience experience, from ticket sales to on-site engagement. <sup>31</sup>
	<b>Broadcast &amp; Content Production</b>	Live Broadcast Production & Operations	Manages the technical and creative execution of live streams, the primary medium for audience consumption. <sup>28</sup>
		Shoutcasting & On-Air Talent Performance	Provides the live commentary and analysis that makes competitive action accessible and exciting for viewers. <sup>30</sup>

		Broadcast Talent Development & Coaching	Recruits, trains, and manages on-air talent to ensure a high-quality, professional broadcast. <sup>40</sup>
		Content Strategy & Programming	Plans the schedule and type of content to be produced, optimizing for audience engagement and retention. <sup>55</sup>
		Video Editing & Post-Production	Creates highlight reels, features, and other pre-recorded content that extends the life of live events. <sup>40</sup>
		Motion Graphics & Broadcast Design	Develops the visual branding, overlays, and graphics packages that define the look and feel of a broadcast. <sup>56</sup>
		Streaming Platform Management	Manages the organization's channels and presence on key platforms like Twitch and YouTube. <sup>57</sup>
		Digital Storytelling & Narrative Crafting	Creates compelling storylines around players and teams to drive emotional investment from fans. <sup>22</sup>
		Media Asset Management	Organizes and archives the vast library of video and graphical assets produced by the organization. <sup>59</sup>

	<b>Commercial &amp; Revenue Operations</b>	Brand Management & Public Relations	Manages the organization's public image and communication strategies to build a strong brand identity. <sup>57</sup>
		Sponsorship & Partnership Sales	Secures revenue through partnerships with endemic and non-endemic brands. <sup>13</sup>
		Media Rights Sales & Distribution	Sells the exclusive rights to broadcast competitions to media companies and streaming platforms. <sup>31</sup>
		Merchandise & Licensing Management	Manages the design, production, and sale of physical goods, a key direct-to-consumer revenue stream. <sup>13</sup>
		Advertising Sales & Operations	Sells and manages advertising inventory across broadcasts, digital platforms, and live events. <sup>60</sup>
		Business Development & Strategic Partnerships	Identifies and develops new, large-scale business opportunities and alliances to drive long-term growth. <sup>40</sup>
		Market Analysis & Expansion Strategy	Researches and plans entry into new geographic or demographic markets. <sup>10</sup>

		Revenue Diversification & Innovation	Actively develops new income sources beyond traditional sponsorship to create a sustainable business model. <sup>61</sup>
		Fan Monetization & CRM Strategy	Develops strategies and systems to generate direct revenue from the fan base through memberships and digital goods. <sup>53</sup>
		Investor Relations & Capital Raising	Manages relationships with current and potential investors and oversees fundraising efforts. <sup>64</sup>
<b>Core Product</b>	<b>Game Design &amp; Development</b>	Game Concept & High-Level Design	Defines the core vision, genre, and player experience that serves as the blueprint for a new game. <sup>56</sup>
		Game Mechanics & Systems Design	Designs the rules, systems, and interactive loops that create compelling and balanced gameplay. <sup>56</sup>
		Narrative Design & World-Building	Creates the story, characters, and fictional universe that provide context and emotional depth. <sup>56</sup>
		Level Design & Environment Crafting	Builds the specific virtual spaces and environments where gameplay takes place. <sup>56</sup>

		Character Design & Articulation	Creates the visual appearance, personality, and animations of the game's characters. <sup>56</sup>
		Game Engine Proficiency	Demonstrates mastery of core development platforms like Unreal Engine or Unity. <sup>56</sup>
		Gameplay Programming & Scripting	Writes the code that implements the game's features, mechanics, and player interactions. <sup>56</sup>
		AI Programming & Behavior Design	Develops the artificial intelligence for non-player characters, creating challenging opponents or allies. <sup>56</sup>
		Graphics Programming & Optimization	Writes low-level code to create visual effects and ensure the game runs efficiently on target hardware. <sup>56</sup>
		Technical Art & Pipeline Development	Bridges the gap between artists and programmers, creating tools and workflows for efficient asset creation. <sup>56</sup>
		User Interface (UI) & User Experience (UX) Design	Designs the menus, heads-up displays, and interaction flows to be intuitive and enjoyable. <sup>56</sup>



		Audio Design & Engineering	Creates and implements all sound effects, music, and voice-over to build an immersive auditory experience. <sup>56</sup>
		Game Monetization Design	Designs in-game economies and purchase models that generate revenue without compromising player experience. <sup>65</sup>
		Quality Assurance (QA) & Test Planning	Develops and executes plans to find and document bugs, ensuring a high-quality, stable product release. <sup>59</sup>
		Game Build & Release Management	Manages the process of compiling, packaging, and deploying game builds to various platforms. <sup>56</sup>
		Live Operations & Post-Launch Content Management	Manages the ongoing updates, events, and content releases required for a "Games as a Service" title. <sup>59</sup>
<b>Foundational Business Enablement</b>	<b>Corporate &amp; Shared Services</b>	Human Resources Management	Manages the entire employee lifecycle, adapted for the unique challenges of the esports industry. <sup>16</sup>

		Financial Management & Accounting	Manages the company's finances, including unique challenges like prize pool accounting. <sup>30</sup>
		Legal & Regulatory Compliance	Navigates the complex legal landscape of IP law, player contracts, global visas, and integrity regulations. <sup>66</sup>
		Project & Program Management	Applies structured methodologies to plan, execute, and deliver complex, cross-functional initiatives. <sup>68</sup>
		Stakeholder & Partnership Management	Manages relationships with a wide array of internal and external partners to ensure alignment. <sup>16</sup>
		Data Science & Analytics (as a service)	Provides data-driven insights as a core service to all other business units. <sup>39</sup>
	<b>Platform &amp; Technology Infrastructure</b>	Cloud Infrastructure & Network Architecture	Designs and manages the scalable, global server infrastructure required for online gaming and streaming. <sup>19</sup>
		Live Streaming & CDN Management	Manages the technology for video encoding, transcoding, and delivery for a smooth viewing experience. <sup>19</sup>

		Database Architecture & Management	Designs and maintains the databases that store player data, game state, and other critical information. <sup>70</sup>
		Cybersecurity & Threat Mitigation	Protects platforms from cyberattacks, such as DDoS, and secures user data against breaches. <sup>71</sup>
		Platform Scalability & Performance Engineering	Ensures that the technology stack can handle massive, concurrent user loads during peak events. <sup>19</sup>
		DevOps & Continuous Integration/Deployment (CI/CD)	Implements automated pipelines for building, testing, and deploying code to ensure rapid updates. <sup>59</sup>
		Hardware & Peripherals Integration	Ensures compatibility and optimal performance with a wide range of PC hardware and peripherals. <sup>56</sup>
		API & SDK Development	Creates tools and interfaces that allow third-party developers to integrate with the platform. <sup>70</sup>

## Section 3: Domain Analysis: The Competitive Ecosystem

This domain is now tightly focused on the apparatus of elite competition, combining team performance with the governance of the sport itself. It represents the core structures that define esports as a professional athletic pursuit.

### 3.1 Job Cluster: Esports Team Operations & Performance

The operational paradigm for professional esports teams has shifted from simple roster management to a sophisticated, holistic model of athlete development and performance optimization.<sup>29</sup> In the high-stakes environment of elite competition, sustainable advantage is no longer just about acquiring raw mechanical skill. It is about mitigating the significant operational and financial risks of player burnout and extending the career longevity of top talent.<sup>34</sup> Successful esports organizations now function less like amateur clubs and more like elite traditional sports franchises, investing heavily in support structures that address the physical, mental, and strategic needs of their players.<sup>2</sup>

This strategic shift is a direct response to the well-documented challenges of the professional esports lifestyle. Players face grueling training schedules, immense mental pressure, and constant public scrutiny, all of which contribute to high rates of stress and burnout.<sup>25</sup> This makes player health a direct and substantial risk to the organization; a star player sidelined by injury or mental fatigue represents a critical loss of competitive and commercial value. Consequently, competencies like

**Player Health & Wellness Management** and **Performance Psychology** are no longer peripheral functions but are central pillars of competitive strategy.<sup>34</sup> These roles implement structured training regimens that prioritize rest, provide access to nutritionists and physical trainers, and integrate sports psychologists to build mental resilience.

Simultaneously, the strategic complexity of top-tier esports has elevated the roles of coaching and analysis. The days of player-coaches relying on intuition are gone, replaced by a professionalized staff that includes head coaches, strategic analysts, and data scientists.<sup>32</sup> Competencies such as

**Performance Coaching & Strategic Analysis** and **Esports Performance Data Analysis** are critical for dissecting opponent tendencies, developing counter-strategies, and optimizing in-game execution based on thousands of data points.<sup>38</sup> This data-driven approach, combined with a focus on

**Team Dynamics & Cohesion Building**, ensures that individual talent is translated into effective, coordinated team play—the hallmark of championship-caliber teams.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.2 Job Cluster: League & Tournament Operations**

The governance of a sport is inseparable from the competition itself. This job cluster, formed by reallocating key governance functions, represents the "rules of the game" and the foundational structures that ensure a fair and legitimate competitive environment. The competencies here are distinct from the production of a fan-facing spectacle; they are about maintaining the integrity of the sport.

The most critical competency in this cluster is **Publisher Relations & IP Licensing**. Unlike traditional sports where the field of play is in the public domain, in esports it is a proprietary digital asset owned and controlled by a game publisher.<sup>3</sup> A tournament organizer's right to exist is contingent upon securing a license to use this intellectual property.<sup>41</sup> This relationship governs everything from the tournament's schedule to its rulebook and commercial model. Therefore, navigating this complex partnership is a prerequisite for all other functions.

Building on this foundation, competencies like **Tournament Design & Format Development** and **League Governance & Rulebook Management** are essential. The design of a tournament format—for example, double-elimination versus round-robin—fundamentally impacts competitive strategy and the player experience.<sup>42</sup> Its effect on the spectator is secondary to its role in creating a fair and engaging contest for the athletes. A well-designed format is a prerequisite for a legitimate sport. This cluster also includes the operational functions that uphold the rules during play, such as

**Competitive Integrity & Officiating** and **Anti-Cheat & Fair Play Enforcement**, which are non-negotiable for preventing scandals that could damage the credibility of the entire sport.<sup>22</sup>

## Section 4: Domain Analysis: The Community Ecosystem

Elevated to a distinct domain, the Community Ecosystem recognizes that the human element of esports is not merely a pipeline for competition but a self-sustaining and value-creating entity in its own right. It is the source of the industry's cultural vitality, brand loyalty, and future talent.

### 4.1 Job Cluster: Grassroots & Amateur Development

Grassroots esports is a strategic imperative for the long-term health of the entire competitive ecosystem.<sup>43</sup> It functions as the foundational layer of the competitive pyramid, serving as the primary mechanism for talent discovery and the creation of a robust "path-to-pro" for aspiring players.<sup>47</sup> Just as traditional sports rely on school and amateur leagues to develop the next generation of athletes, esports depends on a thriving grassroots scene to identify and nurture future stars. Organizations that invest in this cluster are building their future talent pool and, just as importantly, their future fan base.

The strategic value of grassroots development extends beyond talent identification. It is a critical tool for building deep, authentic, and resilient community-level brand loyalty.<sup>44</sup> While fans may follow professional players who change teams, their connection to a local club or a university team is often more enduring. This requires a distinct set of competencies focused on community building and program management.

**Community Program Design & Management** and **Amateur & Collegiate League Operations** are central to creating structured, engaging, and safe competitive environments for non-professional players.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the increasing integration of esports into the education system has made

**Educational Partnership Development** a critical competency for legitimizing the sport and creating a formalized talent pipeline.<sup>48</sup> Crucially, these programs must be safe spaces, elevating the importance of

**Youth Protection & Safeguarding Policies**, a pillar echoed in frameworks like the British Esports Federation's "Duty to Care" initiative.<sup>50</sup>

## 4.2 Job Cluster: Creator & Community Engagement

The modern esports "stadium" is not a physical venue; it is a distributed network of Twitch chats, Discord servers, and social media platforms, often curated by individual content creators.<sup>22</sup> This reality demands a dedicated focus on managing and engaging with these digital communities. This job cluster explicitly addresses the creator economy and the active, participatory nature of the modern fan base.

The central competency here is **Creator & Influencer Partnership Management**. This function is not a simple marketing tactic but a strategic necessity that blends talent management, authentic relationship building, and a deep, nuanced understanding of digital culture.<sup>51</sup> A partnership with a creator is not a media buy; it is a collaboration with a community leader who holds significant trust and influence with their audience.<sup>58</sup> This cluster also houses competencies like

**Digital Community Moderation** and **Fan Engagement Strategy**. These roles are responsible for cultivating positive, non-toxic environments where fans can interact with the brand and each other, transforming passive viewers into active community members. This active management of the digital space is fundamental to building the vibrant online communities that are the lifeblood of the industry.<sup>22</sup>

## Section 5: Domain Analysis: The Spectator Experience

This domain is now focused exclusively on the fan-facing, entertainment-driven aspects of the industry. It is responsible for transforming digital competition into a compelling entertainment product and driving the commercial success of the enterprise.

### 5.1 Job Cluster: Live Event Production & Management

This cluster is responsible for creating the large-scale spectacles that define the peak of the spectator experience. It encompasses the end-to-end execution of live events, from initial concept to post-event breakdown.<sup>54</sup> Key competencies include

**Event Planning & Production** and **Venue Sourcing & Logistics Management**, which are crucial for creating the massive arena productions that drive significant direct economic impact for host cities.<sup>73</sup> The technical complexity of these events requires strong competency in

**Broadcast & Technical Integration Management** to ensure a seamless experience for both the live audience and the millions watching online.<sup>40</sup> This cluster also manages the direct relationship with the event's participants and audience through competencies like

**Participant & Team Relations** and **Ticketing & Spectator Experience Management**.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.2 Job Cluster: Broadcast & Content Production

This cluster covers the creation, production, and distribution of all media content, which is the primary vehicle for fan engagement and narrative building.<sup>22</sup>

**Live Broadcast Production & Operations** remains the core function for delivering high-quality streams of competitive matches.<sup>28</sup> The quality of this broadcast is significantly enhanced by skilled on-air personalities, making

**Shoutcasting & On-Air Talent Performance** and **Broadcast Talent Development & Coaching** vital for creating an entertaining and accessible viewer experience.<sup>30</sup> To maximize the value of this content, organizations need strong competencies in

**Content Strategy & Programming** to plan their editorial calendar.<sup>55</sup> Finally, the ability to weave compelling narratives around the competition and players through



**Digital Storytelling & Narrative Crafting** is what transforms a simple broadcast into an emotionally resonant entertainment product that builds long-term fan loyalty.<sup>58</sup>

### **5.3 Job Cluster: Commercial & Revenue Operations**

This cluster contains the business-centric functions responsible for driving the financial sustainability and growth of the organization. The commercial model for the esports industry is in the midst of a critical evolution, moving to address the vulnerability of its historical dependence on B2B channels, primarily sponsorships and advertising.<sup>61</sup> A strategic consensus has emerged on the urgent need to diversify revenue streams and build a more resilient financial foundation.<sup>13</sup>

This is not just a revenue shift; it is an identity shift. The industry is moving from being a sports entity that sells sponsorship inventory to becoming a lifestyle brand that builds a direct commercial relationship with its consumer base.<sup>13</sup> This pivot is driven by the market's correction, which has exposed the fragility of a sponsorship-only model. Therefore, competencies like

**Fan Monetization & CRM Strategy** and **Merchandise & Licensing Management** are no longer ancillary functions; they are survival-critical.<sup>63</sup> The demand is rapidly moving away from hiring a traditional "Sponsorship Salesperson" and towards recruiting a "Head of Direct-to-Consumer Revenue" with a sophisticated, data-driven understanding of e-commerce, product design, and fan engagement analytics.<sup>53</sup> While

**Sponsorship & Partnership Sales** remains key, it must now be complemented by innovative approaches to **Revenue Diversification & Innovation**.<sup>13</sup>

## Section 6: Domain Analysis: Core Product

This domain is streamlined to focus purely on the creation of the foundational intellectual property that underpins the entire industry: the game itself.

### 6.1 Job Cluster: Game Design & Development

This cluster focuses on the entire lifecycle of creating the interactive entertainment products that are the core of the industry, spanning from ideation through to long-term post-launch support.<sup>56</sup> The modern game development process has been fundamentally redefined by the rise of the "Games as a Service" (GaaS) model, a paradigm driven by digital distribution and the player expectation for continuous content updates.<sup>65</sup> This has transformed game development from a linear, product-based pipeline into a cyclical, service-oriented one.<sup>76</sup>

Historically, development culminated in a finished, static product. The GaaS model has blurred these lines; the "post-launch" phase is now a perpetual state of "live production".<sup>59</sup> This operational reality has profound implications for talent. Competencies once considered final-stage, such as

**Live Operations & Post-Launch Content Management**, are now as critical to a game's long-term commercial success as core production skills like **Game Mechanics & Systems Design** or **Gameplay Programming & Scripting**.<sup>20</sup> A game's release is no longer the end of the development cycle but the beginning of an ongoing relationship with the player community.

This service-oriented approach necessitates the integration of other functions into the earliest stages of design. **Game Monetization Design** cannot be an afterthought, and **Quality Assurance (QA) & Test Planning** must shift to a continuous testing methodology that supports rapid, iterative updates.<sup>59</sup> An effective human resource strategy for this cluster must prioritize talent that thrives in an agile, responsive, and data-driven environment.

## Section 7: Domain Analysis: Foundational Business Enablement

This domain houses the critical support functions that provide the operational stability, governance, and technological power for the entire organization. It includes the technology infrastructure, reinforcing its role as a cross-functional enabler.

### 7.1 Job Cluster: Corporate & Shared Services

As the esports industry professionalizes, its support functions must evolve from administrative roles into strategic business partners.<sup>14</sup> This cluster encompasses Human Resources, Finance, and Legal, which provide the essential framework for the organization to operate effectively and manage risk.

The key challenge for talent here is not just functional expertise, but the ability to apply it within the unique context of the esports ecosystem.<sup>16</sup> For example,

**Human Resources Management** in esports must contend with a global, remote-first workforce and the pervasive risk of player burnout.<sup>34</sup>

**Financial Management & Accounting** requires expertise in complex revenue recognition from global sponsorships and managing multi-million-dollar prize pool distributions.<sup>30</sup> The

**Legal & Regulatory Compliance** function is perhaps the most uniquely challenged, requiring mastery of intellectual property law, complex player contracts that include streaming rights, and the patchwork of regulations surrounding global visas and competitive integrity.<sup>66</sup> The structure of these competencies aligns with established public sector models, such as the Philippine Civil Service Commission's framework, which defines core, organizational, and leadership competencies for government roles.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, the emphasis on ethical conduct and accountability mirrors the values-based competency framework of organizations like UNICEF.

### 7.2 Job Cluster: Platform & Technology Infrastructure

Technology in the modern esports industry is analogous to the power grid for a city. It is not the reason the city exists, but without it, nothing works. By relocating this job cluster here, its role is correctly framed not as a core product, but as the mission-critical utility that enables all other domains to function at scale. The industry has matured beyond the point where

simply building the platform was the business; now, the technology is the enabler of the business of competition, community, and entertainment.

This cluster encompasses the development, maintenance, and optimization of the foundational technology that powers games, streaming platforms, and live events.<sup>19</sup>

**Cloud Infrastructure & Network Architecture** is fundamental, as modern games rely on distributed servers to minimize latency for a global player base.<sup>19</sup> This architecture must be engineered for extreme scalability, making

**Platform Scalability & Performance Engineering** a critical discipline. For the spectator, **Live Streaming & CDN Management** is paramount for ensuring a smooth viewing experience for millions.<sup>19</sup> Given the high stakes,

**Cybersecurity & Threat Mitigation** is a non-negotiable competency to protect against attacks and data breaches that could destroy the integrity of a competition.<sup>71</sup> Finally,

**DevOps & Continuous Integration/Deployment (CI/CD)** practices are essential for enabling developers to ship updates rapidly and reliably without compromising platform stability.<sup>59</sup>

## Section 8: Strategic Implementation and Future Outlook

### 8.1 Activating the Competency Map

This competency framework is designed not as a static academic exercise, but as a dynamic strategic tool to be activated across the entire human resources lifecycle. For senior leadership, its primary value lies in creating a common language for talent, aligning human capital strategy with business objectives, and providing a clear roadmap for organizational development.

- **Talent Acquisition:** The map provides the precise language for effective job descriptions. Instead of generic tasks, recruiters can specify exact competencies, such as "demonstrated experience in Publisher Relations & IP Licensing" for a Head of League Operations or "proven ability in Fan Monetization & CRM Strategy" for a Commercial Lead. This allows for structuring behavioral interviews that assess for these specific capabilities.<sup>18</sup>
- **Learning & Development:** The framework serves as a diagnostic tool for identifying critical competency gaps. For example, an analysis may reveal that the commercial team, while strong in Sponsorship & Partnership Sales, lacks capability in Merchandise & Licensing Management. This provides a clear business case for targeted L&D initiatives, allowing for a more efficient allocation of training budgets.<sup>18</sup>
- **Performance Management:** By integrating relevant competencies into performance reviews, managers can provide clear, consistent, and objective feedback. This links an individual's behaviors directly to the organization's strategic priorities, creating a more motivating and accountable performance culture.<sup>18</sup>
- **Career Pathing & Succession Planning:** The framework provides the architectural blueprint for creating clear career ladders, much like a "skill tree" in a video game. An employee can see exactly what competencies they need to develop to advance. For instance, a Community Moderator in the Community Ecosystem can understand that to become a Head of Community, they must build upon their skills by developing competencies in Creator Partnership Management and Grassroots Program Design. This empowers employees to take ownership of their development and provides the organization with a structured methodology for identifying and preparing high-potential individuals for future leadership roles.<sup>18</sup>

## 8.2 Future-Proofing the Framework

The gaming and esports industry is characterized by relentless evolution. A competency framework must therefore be a living document, subject to regular review. Several emerging trends are poised to reshape the competency landscape.

- **AI in Coaching and Analytics:** The proliferation of artificial intelligence will augment, not replace, human coaches and analysts. This will create a demand for a new hybrid competency: AI-Enhanced Performance Analysis. Professionals will need not only deep game knowledge but also the data literacy to effectively interpret and apply the outputs of AI models.<sup>38</sup>
- **Mobile Esports Expansion:** The explosive growth of mobile gaming, particularly in emerging markets, will necessitate a greater emphasis on competencies in Mobile-First Game Design and Mobile-Centric Marketing to reach this massive audience.<sup>46</sup>
- **Web3 and Blockchain Technologies:** While still nascent, technologies like NFTs and blockchain present potential new models for digital ownership and revenue generation. Organizations experimenting in this space will require new competencies in Digital Asset Management and Decentralized Community Governance.<sup>60</sup>
- **Globalization and Regionalization:** As the market expands into new regions, particularly the Middle East, competencies in International Market Entry, Cultural Localization, and Global Regulatory Navigation will become increasingly critical for successful expansion.<sup>11</sup>

Ultimately, navigating this complex environment will demand a new meta-competency for industry leaders: **Ecosystem Thinking**. This transcends any single functional skill. It is the holistic ability to understand the interdependent relationships between all key stakeholders: publishers, players, teams, creators, fans, sponsors, and league operators. A decision made by one actor, such as a game patch from a publisher, has immediate ripple effects on team strategies, tournament rules, and commercial partnerships.<sup>1</sup> Leaders who can see this entire value web and make decisions that create synergistic outcomes will be the ones who build enduring enterprises. This revised five-domain framework should be used not merely to develop individual skills, but to cultivate this essential, overarching mindset, preparing the next generation of leaders to thrive in the dynamic world of gaming and esports.

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