

# Activision Blizzard to bring live eSports to Facebook

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Activision Blizzard Inc. wants to make eSports mainstream by bringing the video game competitions not to TV, but rather to the world's largest social media company.

The Los Angeles-area [video](#) game-maker's Media Networks unit announced Thursday a trio of plans intended to increase awareness of eSports and hook viewers with specially formatted videos and smarter statistics. Among the initiatives is live streaming competitions on Facebook for the first time, expanding beyond gamer-centric online outlets such as MLG.tv and Twitch.

By the end of the year, market researcher Newzoo estimates more than 1 billion will have heard of eSports, which involves players battling in games such as "League of Legends" and "Dota 2" for up to millions of dollars in prizes. But the firm said Wednesday that just 292 million people at least occasionally watch matches.

Closing the gap will be crucial to attracting advertisers, which eSports teams, organizers and [media companies](#) such as Activision Blizzard expect to be a top source of income for the fledgling industry. That's why Thursday's announcement came at the NewFronts online advertising confab in New York City.

Media network Turner and talent agency WME/IMG will begin broadcasting matches on TBS this month in hope of finding new fans, and others are looking to television as well. But Mike Sepso, senior vice

president of Activision Blizzard Media Networks, said his team will focus on Facebook as video viewing there has skyrocketed.

"The size of the audience and the rapid pace of video consumption on Facebook has a lot of advertisers interested in it," he said. "And it generates a lot of new users to our owned-and-operated platforms."

He declined to say whether Activision Blizzard is among the [media](#) companies being paid by Facebook to use its live video tools. The first match broadcast is June 10.

The eSports division marks the latest media venture to adopt a divide-and-conquer approach to online video. A recently beefed-up video production team will produce different versions of highlights and commentary videos for different outlets, whether it's Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook or YouTube. They'll be tailored to fit each service's length requirement and to speak to the type of audience encountered.

"We may have to cover one story in seven or eight ways," Sepso said, describing it as worthwhile because viewers will find it easier to access short, more relevant clips faster.

Match broadcasts should get a new look in the coming weeks as Activision Blizzard rolls out a new tool that automatically analyzes statistical databases and pops findings onto the screen. If a player picks up a certain gun in "Call of Duty," the software then would look into the archives to see how successful a killer he or she has been with that weapon over the past year based on data collected by game-makers and broadcasters. Directors may pluck or reject certain statistics based on relevancy as well.

The expectation is that the data-mining will produce fresh "storylines" that lead viewers to dive deeper into eSports, Sepso said.

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