



How the CFL measures partner performance with SponsorPulse

CASE STUDY



"It's a full 360 for us in terms of both our internal and external objectives being measured in one."

Jess Szabo

Account Director of Global Partnerships, CFL



The Canadian Football League is the highest level of competition in Canadian football with 9 teams distributed across the country and a roster of over 30 strategic partners.

Highlights

Challenges:

- Adjusting to the return of live events following the global pandemic.
- Measuring campaign impact on league fandom.
- Demonstrating value to long-standing partners.

Solution

- SponsorPulse Impact Reports allow the CFL to measure league fandom across the country and demonstrate campaign impact to key partners.

Results

- Demonstrable fandom growth among core demographic groups.
- Transparent reporting for internal & external stakeholders.
- Data driven approach to new business development.

Introduction

Jess Szabo is an Account Director of Global Partnerships at the Canadian Football League, where she and her team are responsible for strategically managing 30+ CFL partners.

As the world adapted to the rebound of live events following the pandemic, the need for more sophisticated measurement and reporting became clear, so that properties like the CFL could demonstrate the value they bring to long-standing partners.

That's why Jess continues to leverage SponsorPulse Impact Reports and the Insights Platform to guide sponsorship decisions and demonstrate value to CFL partners.



"There is a gap for brands wanting more insights tied to the property side," explains Jess Szabo, Account Director of Global Partnerships. "We recognized the importance of investing in reporting that ensures partner objectives are established from the onset, allowing us to measure performance and apply key learnings to tweak campaigns."



Breaking through the noise in a post-pandemic world

Jess and her team work closely with the CFL's marketing division and are focused on many shared objectives and key results, which include everything from marketable fan engagement to measuring partner impact as an extension of league campaigns.

It's also important for Jess and her team to understand the reach of the CFL's partners and look for ways to integrate that awareness within their own campaigns.

When it comes to the leagues' partners, the CFL is always looking for forward-thinking brands, whether that's technology companies looking for ways to advance the game or national partners who care about making an impact in their communities, like the Purolator "Tackle Hunger" campaign that's entering its 20th year.

But, like many industries, live sports were hit particularly hard during the onset of the pandemic, experiencing cancellations and postponements.

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“Coming back from the pandemic, everyone is so busy getting right back into live events to the point it feels overwhelming. Trying to break through the clutter and ensure the investments that your partners are making with your property makes sense for them strategically has been a significant shift.”

To overcome this challenge, Jess and the team at the CFL trusted SponsorPulse to measure sponsorship outcomes and deliver better value for both sides, while understanding the impact that the economic climate has on the CFL as they engage in new partnerships.

And that also means properties need to be nimble enough to measure and adjust mid-campaign if they notice something is not working.

Why the CFL Chose SponsorPulse

Jess has been using SponsorPulse from the beginning. So the decision to engage SponsorPulse for Impact Reports once she returned to the CFL was an easy one to make.



“I've actually been using SponsorPulse since the start. To me, it's an industry best practice.”

SponsorPulse Impact Reports have been a key part of the partnership renewal process for Jess and the team at the CFL since she first joined. Since then, she's presented reports to CFL and NBA partners and been on the receiving end of SponsorPulse reports on the brand side for major companies including TELUS throughout her career.

Naturally, when she returned to the CFL 18 months ago, she called on SponsorPulse to conduct an Impact Report, measuring everything from property health to the performance of individual partners' activations.

How the CFL used SponsorPulse to understand league fandom and connect with new audiences

Currently, the CFL is exploring the possibility of adding a 10th team to the league. Using SponsorPulse data to measure the impact of their “Touchdown Atlantic” initiative, which annually brings one regular season game to the East Coast, the league has gained solid data to help gauge the level of fan interest and support for a club based in Nova Scotia.



“Using SponsorPulse Impact Reports, we were able to measure the fandom ahead of that event and then after. It was incredible to see the direct impact that event had on fandom on the East Coast, and it was really surprising to see how much we over-indexed in younger fans compared to national fandom trends.”

The findings of the Impact Report showed that among CFL fans in Atlantic Canada, 60% are male and 44% are between the ages of 18-34 – that’s 17% higher than the general population! There was also a 10% growth in Atlantic Canada fandom year-over-year.

Knowing that the CFL is connecting with different demographics regionally on the East Coast, is allowing them to prepare a more tailored event for fans in 2023.

The results from the Impact Report also highlighted growing fandom among other demographic groups too.

In 2022, the CFL launched the “Women In Football” program in partnership with KPMG, a mentorship program where one woman joins the football operations department of each of the league’s nine member clubs.

The program was a success, having a significant impact on CFL fandom among Canadian women. In fact, women make up 40% of CFL fans in Canada, and among them, 37% of women are avid fans (9% YoY increase).



“Sports typically over-index in having male fans. In 2022, it was interesting to see that we increased in avid female fandom.”

More recently, Jess and the CFL team have started to use the SponsorPulse Insights Platform to access real-time insights and data to drive new business forward. Having quick access and the ability to analyze brand usage arms the team with real-time data points that they are then able to show right away to partners who have activated at various events.

The Results

When it comes to the business impact that SponsorPulse has had on the CFL, there are a few examples that come to mind for Jess.

Impact Reports have become a best practice for the team, as they help demonstrate how internal objectives are being met, while signaling how partner programming is performing.

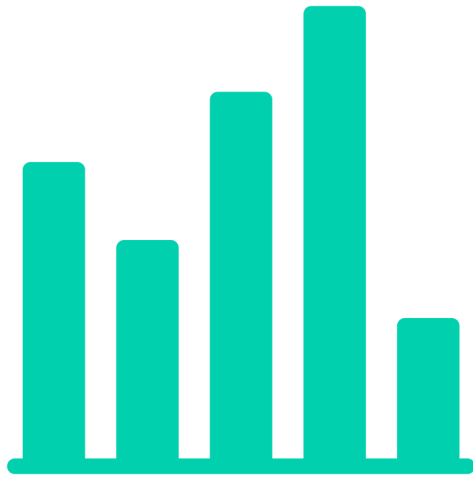


“It’s a full 360 for us in terms of both our internal and external objectives being measured in one. We're also sharing the increases in awareness, favorability and purchase consideration with our partners to measure the effectiveness of their CFL programming.”

In addition to Impact Reports, the SponsorPulse Insights Platform has become an important prospecting tool that empowers the new business team to find consumer data insights. Property analysis features have helped guide the team's research and enabled them to identify and reach out to brands that align with the CFL’s fandom.



“We had a pretty great year last year in terms of new business development, so you can attribute that to the research that we were pulling and the partners that we were bringing in.”



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Learn more about our solutions, or contact us to
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