

## USER FRIENDLY

# Fandom in the metaverse: Digital fan engagement at the BNP Paribas Open

**Host:** Hanish Patel, User Friendly host and digital transformation leader, Deloitte Consulting LLP

**Guest:** J.R. McCabe, chief business officer, consumer products, Sinclair Broadcast Group

**Hanish Patel:**

I'm Hanish Patel, and this is *User Friendly*, the show where we explore emerging trends in tech, media, and telecom and how they impact business, operations, and the world around you. Virtual fan engagement is increasing in popularity, but organizations are challenged to come up with new and innovative ways to connect with fans both in venues and at home. The focus now has turned towards building interactive and immersive community experiences that blend the physical and digital worlds. For sports, this ultimately leads to new business models, enhanced loyalty, and increased fan viewership in a virtual environment. So what are the commercial

opportunities for enterprises? What new revenue streams can create, and how does it generate long-term business value? On today's episode, we'll explore how Deloitte and Sinclair Broadcast Group are collaborating to build a fandom metaverse experience that deepens engagement with its viewing community and drives new revenue streams through experiential gaming.

Joining me to discuss how this innovative proof of concept can demonstrate commercial viability is J.R. McCabe, chief business officer, consumer products, at Sinclair Broadcast Group. J.R., welcome to the show.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Thanks, Hanish. Happy to be here.

**Hanish Patel:**

All right. Now, this is a super exciting topic for me as I know it is for you, J.R. so I'm fanning out on what we're going to explore. And I'll open up with, I'm a pretty demanding sports fan myself. And I know fans like myself are really demanding of their teams or who they follow. And it's not just the experiences in that moment at the particular event or game, but it's often before and after. And with that backdrop, I want to start off with getting your perspective, J.R., and kind of what are

sports fans really looking for today? And how may have their expectations evolved over the years? And certainly in more recent times, where is their expectation now when they look back at sports overall?

**J.R. McCabe:**

Well, I appreciate that. And you know my passion for this space is like yours. And, you know, I appreciate being here to discuss it because it's really fascinating and ever changing. I think the real answer here for me is that right now fans of all walks, whatever the fan wants—sport, team, region—it's all about being deeper and more immersed, right? They want more connectivity with their passion group. They want to feel like, in real time, they're a part of something instead of finding out about it later. For me, it's they really are craving that ability to participate. And what we're really seeing in that space is it's creating this community access. At our core, at Sinclair, we're all about community. And whether that's for a sport or a team or an area of content, it's all about creating that community and that passion group, giving them access.

So I think, Hanish, to your point, in what I've seen and what we're seeing and what the data continues to point toward, is more immediate and deeper engagement and something that's ongoing. You mentioned it in your early part of the question, I think what we're also seeing is people want to participate beyond just the game, beyond game time.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

They want to participate in the community pre-game, they want to talk about it post-game, they want to talk about the games that are coming up in different hours and parts of the day. So for us, it's a matter of understanding the communities that are gathering. It's understanding that they want to participate where they want, when they want, how they want. And then it's participating in their desire for bringing something to the table that they haven't been a part of before.

**Hanish Patel:**

Right there you touched upon something that I really want to explore a bit more. You mentioned "community" a number of times, and I'm with you totally on the importance and why that, in some ways, should really be at the core of what the fan is looking for and that fandom. And again, when I go see a match, I'm sitting there with 60,000 other people. I feel I'm a part of a community in that moment, but I'm also part of a community before that event and after that event.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Sure.

**Hanish Patel:**

And if I think about what you've described and what we're craving all as fans, and then I think about what people may be traditionally aware of which is that physical experience, and we're seeing more and more now of those kind of digital worlds come into play. When you think about that experience of blending maybe the physical and the digital worlds in—and I'll use the M-word, *metaverse*, that we've heard over the last couple of years—how do you think that's really helping them achieve what you describe those fans are truly looking for?

**J.R. McCabe:**

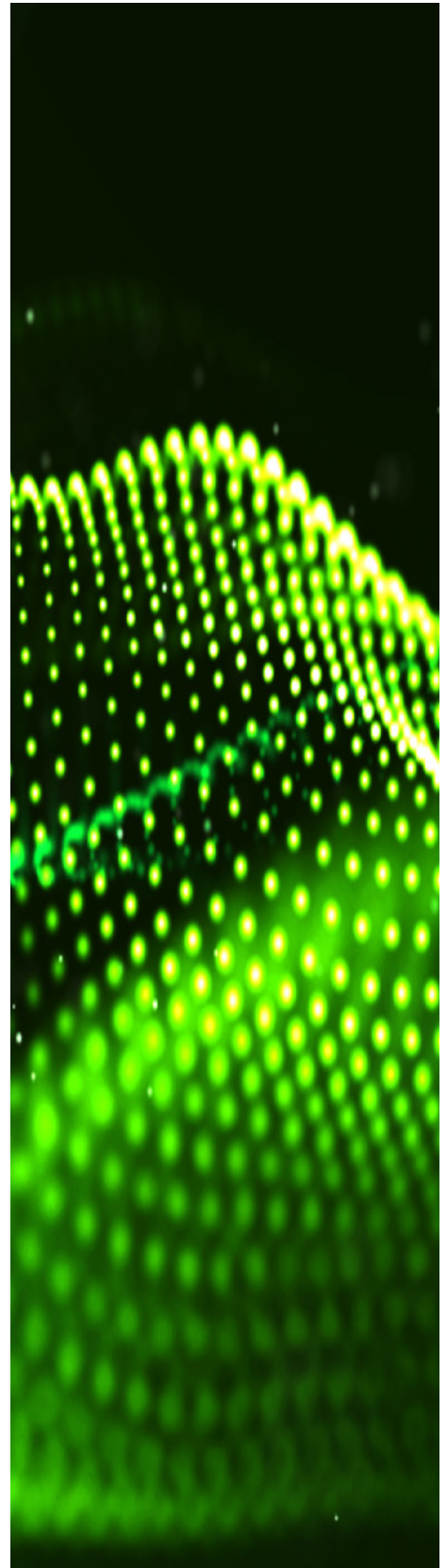
It's interesting 'cause you talk about whether you're sitting there in, you know, in the stadium in a seat on the pitch, or we're sitting there in a—

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

—American football stadium or, of course, baseball season's now upon us, Major League Baseball in the US. I think what it's really done is it's connected that fan more so than ever. You may be watching something in real time, but there's the physical, but there's also the ability for someone who's not in the stadium to be connected in real time. And so that combination of physical and virtual has provided access, it's provided the ability, the bridge, if you will, for lack of a better term, to participate even when you're maybe not there. So the combination of the



physical and the virtual has allowed and will allow more fans to be a participant in the moment. And I think the idea of moments and moments making a difference and the “moments matter” kind of saying—

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

—is real. The passion-based fan, what we’re seeing, what we have seen, what I believe we’ll continue to see is that fan’s desire will only deepen the more they feel they’re a part of something special. And if we can combine that physical with the virtual, you’re almost, almost never out of touch, Hanish, right? You’re in a situation where, wherever you are, at that moment, during the match, during the game, pre-game, post-game, etc., you’re almost never out of the conversation, and therefore you’re almost never out of the community. So I think that’s what the physical and virtual combination will provide, and does provide, for today’s fan and for tomorrow’s fan.

**Hanish Patel:**

I love that. ‘Cause again, I kind of look upon myself, and I’ll get into that, kind of, I feel down in the dumps when the season’s over, right? Because it’s like a—

**J.R. McCabe:**

Yep. Yep.

**Hanish Patel:**

—season long, and you’ve been so immersed in it and experiencing all those great emotions, some high, some low, depending on the team you support, right? (laughs) But, um, you’ve got all of that and then you’ve got that excitement as you’re building up to maybe even a new season or a particular event. But it does strike me that with the blending of that physical and digital—particularly the digital aspect—that there’s a great opportunity for franchises, teams, leagues, you name it, to really have us as fans engaged, and community of fans engaged, throughout the year, and not just when there is an event, right? And particularly on that digital side.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Yeah. I think, I think that’s exactly right. And again, what you’re doing is you’re really not just increasing the moment—

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

—the session length, but you’re also, in my opinion, you’re increasing participation. And you’re increasing that whole potential FOMO [fear of missing out] model—

**Hanish Patel:**

Right.

**J.R. McCabe:**

—for that friend who might be just a little bit more of a casual fan than you and I are. But all of a sudden, that casual fan now feels, “Wait a minute. Well, what am I missing? What have I not participated in? Wait a minute, why are Hanish and J.R. having such a great time? Wait a minute, there’s not even a game going on.”

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

You’ve elongated potentially the interaction. But you’ve also then potentially exposed others, other maybe casual fans, maybe that sometime fan—you’ve now given them something to think about. So you’re talking about season, you’re talking about session, you’re talking about entire lengths of engagement can be drastically changed based on the offering of the physical and the virtual experiences coming together.

**Hanish Patel:**

I love that. I’m going to pivot from casual fan to ardent fan.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Uh-huh.

**Hanish Patel:**

And the reason I say that to a certain degree ‘cause, as most people know who have listened to this, I’m a huge fan of football. And that’s *my* football, J.R., right, it’s the

S-word out here, which I always have trouble saying. But—

**J.R. McCabe:**

(laughs)

**Hanish Patel:**

—another sport that I really do love is tennis. Right? And I truly am an ardent fan when it comes to tennis. So this is me kind of getting back to that geek-out moment that I talked about before. I would love for you to describe the most recent fandom experience that yourself at Sinclair Broadcast Group did with us at Deloitte to really kind of create that real engagement of fans and community, as well as being there physically but also virtually. And this, what I’m talking about here for our listeners here, is the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, California, and one would argue one of the most important tennis events of the year. And I certainly love it and have followed it for years, so I’d love for you to kind of help us paint the picture, as best as you can, knowing that it is such an immersive, interactive experience. And we’re in a—I’ll call it—audio format here, but if possible J.R., I’d love for you to be able to describe for our listeners what that body of work was because it was just fantastic.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Thank you, Hanish. And I’m happy to do it, I’ll try to do it justice. The idea was and remains that we wanted to create this mesh, this creation of physical and virtual, and wanted to also bring together what’s possible today. For us, it’s about creating use cases, right? We are trying to head where we know our consumers and fans are going. But we also want to be mindful of showing proofs of concept because we need to create those business models and the commercial plans beyond.

And so, together in the Unlimited Reality practice inside Deloitte, we developed a very unique experience. And that experience really tapped into a lot of what the metaverse, you know, really is about. It’s everything from that custom avatar creation, dropping you into a locker room experience, to being able to guide your own avatar into areas where you could have a debate with

another person or people, you could have the ability to co-view a live stream, you would have the ability to go visit a restaurant, you would have an ability to have a point of view from the restaurants literally on sight in Indian Wells. And what I mean by that is there were 360 [degree] video captures.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

So as you navigated your way around the experience, we weren't talking about what might be possible someday. What was unique and what is unique about what we did and what we brought to market is we're bringing what's possible today. And so, beyond that, you know, you even had the ability to play games, right? As we create opportunities for engagement in this session like I talk about, and you talked about your fandom of football—uh, your football and my soccer—and tennis, we want to be able to give people the ability to participate. So, in this experience, you also are able to hit, you know, on the court, your avatar in a mini-game, but you're also able to do other types of mini-games as well, including spinning the wheel and earning points. All leading up to the ability to create a currency for yourself, creating an ability to potentially, in the future, shop and buy things through commerce.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

And then also as I mentioned before, join others, but now have others join you, have the social functionality and that ability to bring people in. At the core of all this, we're super focused on the consumer. It's all about the consumer experience first, second, and third. Once we please the consumer, then we begin to build on what are those commerce opportunities.

**Hanish Patel:**

Right.

**J.R. McCabe:**

What's the commercial piece, how can sponsors be integrated beyond just a message, right? It's fine to just sponsor

branding and logos, but what if I can take Hanish and his friends into a store and let you purchase something that you on your avatar were wearing or that a tennis player [was] wearing after you sampled it, in the metaverse experience, and then ship it to your home? All these things are elements of what we put together in this proof of concept, and the idea over that 12-day period was to expose it to people by invitation, because we want to use it as a learning, to build these use cases. With Deloitte's Unlimited Reality practice and with using the Epic Unreal Engine on the back, it really gave us the ability to drive a really strong consumer experience, and I think [it] gave us amazing learnings that will allow us to build a very viable commercial offering the back half of this year into 2024, in ways that now that data will drive the next iteration.

In building this and bringing this project to market, it certainly took tireless effort from the team at Tennis Channel who worked on this, our partnership with BNP Paribas, which offered us the opportunity to tap into such an amazing event to bring this virtual experience to life. All of these elements had to come together to really lay the groundwork for what I think has exceptional upside in the future.

**Hanish Patel:**

I love that. And I remember going through that experience, and you listed a number of fantastic elements to kind of really paint the picture for our listeners. And I remember going in there and I was just pretty blown away by just the upfront avatar customization and, frankly, I've shown my two kids and they were like, "Whoa, daddy, you can do this. You can do that." And that just had them hooked, right? And they're kind of mini tennis fans, as I speak, and they love that.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Yeah.

**Hanish Patel:**

Even the spatial audio, just the way that that was all set up; the way that, you know, the team had put that together, yourself and the Unlimited Reality team, it was pretty cool. And then I loved the fact of, like you

say, the event-driven pieces around the player interviews. Having the kind of premier capability of kind of doing those global docuseries and all the elements around that. It was a really comprehensive experience that got me certainly, and I know others, really excited about the event itself.

And it goes back to, I think, what we were talking about before of just what you can do in and around the event, and not just in that one moment in time, which I thought was pretty compelling. And I'm sure is going to continue to be compelling for fans, in terms of experience and those type of events.

**J.R. McCabe:**

No, I appreciate that. And I, like you, I'm, you know, I'm a fan of what we do and very fortunate every day to be able to do it and make a living at creating very cool consumer experiences. I think, and you tapped into a few more really fantastic elements, the idea is we want to make it—and we want to make every one of these experiences—as realistic as possible to what that reality is.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

We are not attempting to jump into 20 or 30 layers from here. We want you to spend time now. We want you to find joy in it now. And I will say that the findings, so far, the data suggests that we had excellent feedback on people spending time as you did and going back and also trying things a second time, exploring and finding things, not quite like Easter eggs, but finding things that they didn't know were there the first time through. And I think that's also a part of it, right? Is that that expectation that here's what I know is happening and then, oh my gosh, here's this excitement of something I didn't even really expect. Oh, I can do that today.

And I think that's really what we're doing is unlocking the promise and bringing things to market that we all can be very proud of, but with a mind to it needs to be executable today, and how can we build a business model around it—

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

—and I think that's also the combination here of what we're trying to do.

**Hanish Patel:**

So let's stick with that train of kind of where you were going, J.R., right? 'Cause it's probably a case of our listeners are going to be in two camps right now. There's going to be those that, "I should've got on the action, and I can't believe I missed that opportunity." And there's probably the other camp that's like, "Wow, I would absolutely love that. What's next?" Right? And you kind of touched upon the objective of what you're going to do, right? So, what can we give our listeners an idea of what does the future like? Where is kind of headed now that we've gone through this and you've seen fantastic feedback come back? What's next or what can we open up the aperture thinking around what that experience could look like for our fans?

**J.R. McCabe:**

Yeah. I think it's interesting. The world is fairly wide open as it relates to this. For us, the longer term, and I say longer term, you know, six to 18 months in this space is long term.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

I think we see this as being able to enhance relationships with fans, with sports, with sports teams, with leagues, with players. I think we believe that there will be opportunities for brand advertising and brand messaging to participate and actually create transactional elements, that in the quote-unquote "metaverse" you're not really seeing yet outside the real gaming space.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

There are some worlds out there that, you know, I'll keep nameless, where a lot of brand awareness is happening but

you can't transact. I think personalized fan journeys are going to be very big. You know, you talked about the custom avatar characters with the kids. I think the reality is more personalization for your journey will be coming with each iteration. We see this being something that every sport, every team, every community of fans is going to want to participate in at some level.

But we also need to be very mindful of the fact we can't do that for everyone. So, more of a pointed answer to your question, I think we are going to and have developed the ability to create a template with additions of what we've already done and take that to market next. And what I mean by that, right, is the event that drove this will be part of what we do going forward, but we'll be building in more commerce opportunities. There'll be advanced avatar customization, there'll be more exclusive content, you may get into token-gated streaming—

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

—right? That comes out to a rights management issue, but all of a sudden—again, you talk about spatial audio. Imagine you and I are in the same virtual experience with all the things I just mentioned and we get to watch a live feed and maybe afterward watch a concert—all virtual world.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

And so those are things that we're actually planning for. Without trying to do too much, those are things that the proof of concept allowed us to actually build and know and prove that it works.

**Hanish Patel:**

I'm just—I paused for a sec, so I'm just like, wow, I can't wait, right? And some of the things I was just thinking about, as you're describing are going to be phenomenal experiences for the fan, right? Like you say the exclusive content that may come ahead and just continue to build upon that community and

being [given] access to the kind of first look at certain stuff. If we were to maybe pivot away from the fan for a second, right?

**J.R. McCabe:**

Mm-hmm.

**Hanish Patel:**

And look at it from a business perspective now. What do you see is maybe some of the long-term business value that can really be gained from this type of experience and some of that kind of future-looking type of experiences that you explained for Sinclair Broadcast Group? In the instance of this example, say the Tennis Channel, and particularly as you think, well I feel like sponsors and advertisers are just other partners in the ecosystem as a whole.

**J.R. McCabe:**

I think, you know, the reality is for us, there are still only a couple ways to make money in this space, in the media space. One is, of course, ad revenue.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Another one is, you know, actual transactions, transactional commerce, then memberships and subscriptions. And then if you're in the gaming space, you know, in-game purchases. I think as you combine some of those elements here, you could be able to monetize that physical and digital, sort of, as I alluded to, in the fact that we see commerce as a very big solution here, a very big opportunity. I think if you combine both events in sports and teams with innovative brand advertisers and sponsors who want to participate, who seek direct-to-consumer sales, I think there's one very big opportunity there.

I think you actually look at different types of advertiser engagement that we haven't seen before. There's been a move clearly from passive advertising into more interactive advertising for years.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

So I think we're going to see that happening exponentially. You would also look at event sales, ticket sales, things that would allow you to create a marketplace, Hanish, right. I mean, beyond, you know, I talked about merchandise, but beyond that, there's a marketplace that may be created beyond goods. Maybe services, maybe things that actually you transact in the virtual world only. And so you look at that.

I think you also have to look at, and it's certainly something that some people who know me know I'm keen on, is the gameplay business.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Both free-to-play and fantasy and, where legal, real-money gaming. And I think the opportunities here are extraordinary. We need to be careful on customer fatigue. We need to be careful on knowing our consumer, our customer, and we need to make sure from an age point of view that we're mindful of that. But subject to those considerations, of which we're sincere, I think there's a huge opportunity.

Imagine if you are in a virtual world with your friends, watching a concert and an event comes on or an event is about to happen. So, you're watching a concert in pre-game mode.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

And then you're allowed to place a bet, or place a bet with friends in a pari-mutuel way, a peer-to-peer type opportunity. These are real. These are all natural, specific outgrowths of what the experiences that we built and the experiences that are coming.

And so I think as you look at those types of revenue streams, it leads me to the last one, which is that permission-based, that utility, that token-gated model. I think that the blockchain, of course, is incredibly important to the authentication of Hanish being Hanish and J.R. being J.R.—

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

—right? It authenticates who we are. And I think blockchain can provide opportunities for tokens to be utilities, to gate access, to offer privilege, to offer things that are unique, that you've earned or you've purchased. And I think that's a very significant piece of the commercial model as well. All these have to be mindfully put into a package that really offers a smooth consumer experience, that you and I talk about it in pieces—it naturally flows in the user journey. And that's, to me, how we build the next-best business model.

**Hanish Patel:**

I love that, J.R. Particularly like you said, how do you take out the friction? How do you make it smooth? And ultimately, I kind of look at it as how does it go back to what we opened up around, in terms of just sports fans are demanding, right? Um, and we want to build those communities—

**J.R. McCabe:**

We all are very demanding! (laughs)

**Hanish Patel:**

(laughs) Yeah, absolutely!

**J.R. McCabe:**

Yeah.

**Hanish Patel:**

But it's, how do we collectively kind of build those type of experiences such that actually it's additive, right, and it's not obstacles or it's not bringing in friction into the process of it, and actually people see the value of it, fans see the value of it. And in organizations, this wider ecosystem, as we talked about, and from a business perspective, all get the benefit, right. Whether it's tighter brand loyalty, there's greater conversion rates, there's greater attention, but ultimately we're putting smiles on fans' faces, right—beyond the team, right. It's surprising them, it's delighting them, and ultimately, it's feeding the fan for their fandom.

**J.R. McCabe:**

That's right on. Hanish, that surprise and delight, I would reiterate that. I think it's a perfect, perfect statement on your part. It's so true.

**Hanish Patel:**

Thank you, sir. Thank you. That's what I look for as a fan, right, of any kind of sport, right. It's beyond the performance of the team on the pitch, let's put it that way, kind of thing, right?

**J.R. McCabe:**

Exactly, exactly.

**Hanish Patel:**

J.R., tell me a bit more about kind of what an experience like this could bring from a loyalty basis. Not just for that sports team or franchise, but maybe the brands and the wider ecosystem that's involved.

**J.R. McCabe:**

I think what we're looking to do beyond growing that fan experience, is creating a potential loyalty for brands and brand advertisers. So, you know, we want the consumer to feel that they want to return. We want to incentivize that loyalty and reward it, but the brands have a very unique opportunity here as well. Because part of creating these experiences that are immersive and participatory, allow the brands to reward those consumers, who with regularity visit their brand, make purchases, share it with others. So I think what we have here combining the physical and the virtual is again a very unique opportunity to build loyalty, both to the experience but also to the brand. And I think what we're excited about is that building of the loyalty for both the consumer experience and the brand advertiser.

**Hanish Patel:**

I then think about what you've described from a business perspective, and we talked a bit earlier in terms of the experience itself with what was put together for BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells. Having gone through that, J.R., what are some of the things that you learned along the way and the feedback you received

from the fans, in terms of where you want to take that experience, in terms of improving? And I don't mean some of the, "Hey, we're going to add this component, we're going to add that component." "Cause we talked about some of that, but where is it along your journey of kind of overall improving the fan experience?

**J.R. McCabe:**

Yeah. It's a very fair question. I think for us, it's smooth and smoother. We want to create as little friction as possible. So, I know we've now used that a bit, but that's true. I think we also want ease of experience and intuitive experience. It's very important that as we look at these journeys that we build, that we remember that some people are experiencing them for the first time or the second or third time. And as a part of that, it's got to be intuitive to both the first timer, as well as a returning visitor. So, lack of friction, I think, intuitive basis. I think also highlighting and pointing out areas of interest is critically important inside the worlds that we build.

And then I would also say that, for us, it's a matter of what are those other moments that are surprise and delight moments, to use your term, inside the worlds we create? For us, it's a matter of we want to execute on this in a way that works for the consumer, because without it, it's not something we're going to do again, right. We have to do that. And so with that in mind, it's really that mentality with which we come about.

Technology's going to continue to evolve, right? We'll find the best-in-class tech. The question mark is how we put it together. And I think as smooth and easy to navigate as possible is the key.

**Hanish Patel:**

So, I'd like to springboard off the back of that. As you kind of highlighted those kind of important parts and that, as you kind of build in that strategy around the execution of, as someone who's gone through that and fellow leaders who may be listening to this, what guidance, what kind of tips would you put forward for another executive, say in the tech or media or telecom spaces? They're considering exploring new business models

or new opportunities to generate new revenue streams for a virtual and physical experience or even just maybe a new form of a digital type of experience. What thoughts would you have to give to them?

**J.R. McCabe:**

I would share with them my learning so far—because there are so many more people out there much, much wiser—but I would say that my learning so far is that this is not a fad, I think.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

You know, you go back to the days of, you know, YouTube, in what, 2005? And you take a look at today and where we are. It's a generational point of view. If you look at that YouTube generation, you're talking 18 years. An 18-year-old now doesn't know a world without on-demand video. You're talking about, today, somebody who's 21 to 25 doesn't know a world without gaming of some sort. So, I think this is not a fad. I think we're looking at what I consider a generational transition.

**Hanish Patel:**

Mm-hmm.

**J.R. McCabe:**

Everyone really, really needs to be talking about the audience growth, where that audience is going. Audience is not leaving media. They're consuming media differently, but they're not leaving media, right. We know that. So, all of this is additive. So my learnings so far, Hanish, are that we need to be very consumer focused and driven, we need to super serve that consumer, both the current consumer as well as generationally the consumer that's about to come up. And what I mean by that, the one that is about to come up, that'll get the eyeballs and the advertising dollars in those categories where there's high spend ratio on disposable income.

I think also we want to make sure that they're looking at all the different ways to monetize in the business, but being sure that they don't provide consumer fatigue

in that way. We can't, you know, label everything as a sales opportunity, which is why also we need to be very mindful of what we do, whether that's in the physical and digital goods. We're doing things around betting or fantasy or free-to-play games, whether it's actually creating virtual areas and events in conferences. We need to be really mindful of it, and I think all of it has to be consented. First-party data is at the core. I think the world where we gather consented first-party data, which I'm emphasizing for a reason, that I think people need to be more careful than ever with their data, but when used properly, your personalized experiences can become immeasurably better, and I think that's a place where also blockchain's going to help us, as I talked about in authentication.

So, I think from those learnings, if anyone else is able to gather even one of those and put it to good use, I'll feel like we're doing something positive.

**Hanish Patel:**

You reiterated that kind of consented first-party data, and I can absolutely see how a lot of this will be data-driven experiences as we look forward, in terms of where those experiences can evolve. Can you talk a bit more about that side of it, and where else you kind of see the future of community, fan engagement, and how that's going to evolve? Along with the data-driven experiences, but other areas as well?

**J.R. McCabe:**

Sure. I mean, I think in the world of virtual consumption, every topic area that creates an area of passion for somebody is a potential area for the model. I think it's also really important that the data that we drive these experiences based upon is critical, and the reason I use that word "consented" so far is because everyone needs to be the proprietor of their own data. And really, I think everything we do, Hanish, everything we do—you talk about the technology that's out there. The connectivity that it provides. The speed at which you can do something, how easily you can do it. That will all be defined, right? And it's going to be simplified for the consumer. We also need to remember that this isn't a metaverse.

**Hanish Patel:**

Right.

**J.R. McCabe:**

We're connecting multiple metaverse experiences out there. They're unique unto themselves. I'll hold off from listing a few, but each of them is, is beholden to themselves. So it's multiple platforms and infrastructure, right? There are numerous experiences out there. There will need to be some level of connectivity for you to cross over from one to the next.

But really the idea here is that we're going to basically create ultimately new communities, and those new communities will actually evolve in their media. And the way they consume it will be more media than it ever has been before, and it will be more in a pattern of doing it with others, and a socialized consumption will just get greater and greater, and that's what I think the physical and virtual worlds can do together.

**Hanish Patel:**

I love what you've just painted there. Like you said, it's kind of a new community, those new experiences. My mind is racing. Having

gone through the experience that we all collectively put together for BNP Paribas Open, and just thinking about where you're describing where it could go, and how it's going to be a connection of kind of multiple experiences across metaverses—it's just huge. And I'm super excited to kind of see those future elements being rolled out from the POC that was developed.

And I would close with, firstly, J.R., thank you for coming on board and talking about the experience of really allowing our fans to understand what's next or what is truly going to be out there for fans and how they can engage in that and get more in whatever sport they are interested in as a fan, firstly. So, thank you for joining me today on that note.

**J.R. McCabe:**

You're welcome. My pleasure, Hanish. Thank you for having me.

**Hanish Patel:**

Of course, and also thank you for kind of really explaining through some of the things other executives need to be considering as they think about how they build upon

those experiences and create those experiences for whatever area they're in specifically. But what I want to do to close out with is I just want to say that enabling that kind of passion-based community to gather and connect in that immersive virtual environment as you described earlier, I truly believe there's a huge amount of applicability—not just in what we're talking about here, sports and fan engagement, but just beyond, which has got huge amount of opportunity for enterprises, as you described, to monetize, to generate new revenue streams, to build brand loyalty. To actually get the fan closer to the heart of where they want to be in that, like we said, that kind of frictionless way and "smooth way," to use your words, right? In terms of smoothing out that experience.

So I'm thoroughly excited, as a fan, for what that future holds based on some of the ground that you've been breaking for fandom and communities, in an example you put forward. And with that, I just want to say that, again, thank you for joining us. And so, to listeners out there, until next time, happy listening.

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