



MediaCentral launches e-sports platform

The *Now* and *Georgia Straight* parent co wants to monetize through ads, not subscriptions, as it capitalizes on this trend.

[By Patti Summerfield](#)

3 hours ago



E-sports are having a moment, and one media company has already capitalized on the rise of the genre.

MediaCentral launched its newest digital platform, ECentralSports.com, in a beta test a week ago and expects a full launch to happen by the middle to late May.

E-sports content was first tested on both *Now* and *Georgia Straight*. That showed 37% longer session lengths on e-sports content, a 10.5% improved clickthrough on newsletters with e-sports content and 8.5% above-average page views for e-sports content.

Brian Kalish, CEO of the alternative media company, says, “Some estimates of the value of the e-sports [and] e-gaming sector peg it at over \$150 billion in the U.S. and Canada alone. The market is rapidly increasing in size. A lot of that as of late has been spurred by Covid-19, which

has people moving into their homes. I'm seeing the emergence of what I call the 'remote economy'."

In the last year, Media Central has purchased Vancouver Free Press Corp. which operates Georgia Straight and straight.com, and Now Communications, owner of *Now* Magazine. It also owns the digital cannabis platform Canncentral.com. Its total monthly audience is approximately 6.5 million.

Kalish says, "We have a pretty good understanding of who our reader is. We've been focusing on understanding psychographics from day one. We recognize that our market – the 6.5 million [people] we have that have been reading *Now* and the *Straight* for the last 40 to 50 years are also the same people influencing the policies and trends in cannabis, sneaker culture, the e-sports and e-gaming world, and in psychedelics."

ECentralSports.com, as with all MediaCentral publications, is not a subscription property. Kalish says, "We're relying on integrating our readers, our publications, new channels that we're developing in the world of video, to monetize our audience. We haven't really tested the waters yet on how effective paywalls would be with what we're doing. We're right now very happy with the subscriptions around our newsletters and email opt-ins."

Yesterday, MediaCentral also announced that it was adding ongoing coverage of the burgeoning psychedelics sector to its Canncentral digital magazine. Kalish says the company found that the market for psychedelics fits well with the cannabis profile but he's not sure that it's ready to be a standalone platform yet.