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INTERVIEW: Michele Attisani, FACEIT Co-Founder – “We Want to Build Tools for the Community to Create Their Own Ecosystems”



by Graham Ashton — January 11, 2018 4 min read



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*interview.***Counter-Strike: Global Offensive**

From independent platform to tournament organizer, FACEIT has demonstrated how different esports business models can arise with enough community engagement. The London-based startup followed through on **its \$15 million funding round** in 2016 with a slew of partnerships last year. The most attention-grabbing of these was **an exclusivity deal with YouTube** for its Esports Championship Series—which concluded its fourth season in Cancun back in December.

[perfectpullquote align="right" cite="" link="" color="" class="" size=""]“I think in general there will always be a pretty natural, nice distribution of the content among different platforms.”[/perfectpullquote]

“There was a number of different reasons why we decided to get into that partnership,” says FACEIT co-founder Michele Attisani. “YouTube is the largest video platform in the world. Obviously it’s not been historically much of an esports platform, but when it comes to gaming fans and gaming audience, they’re definitely the leader globally.”

The ECS is a *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* tournament, a game which YouTube has been gunning for since signing a similar exclusivity deal for the ESL Pro League, announced just two months prior to the FACEIT agreement. Unlike the latter tournament, ECS introduced elements we’re now seeing in the emerging franchise model, such as inviting teams in as co-owners—which came with the initial promise **to pay out \$3.5M** in prize money and team financial support.

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When it launched, ECS was exclusive to Amazon-owned Twitch—a first-mover in the livestreaming space. The jump to YouTube was initially surprising, but Attisani said working with the Google-owned streaming platform allowed them to experiment, and leverage its commercial potential. “We developed a joint proposition for sales,” he says. “When it comes to digital advertising, I think we all recognize that Google is the global leader.”

This was realized in a new way last December, with the announcement that viewers of the ECS Season 4 finals stream would be rewarded with FACEIT “loot drops.” These could be redeemed for FACEIT points, which could then be exchanged for real-world prizes.

[perfectpullquote align="left" cite="" link="" color="" class="" size=""]“Ultimately, what I always say is that esports is a consequence of having a large and healthy competitive community for the game...”[/perfectpullquote]

YouTube’s pitch as an esports platform has typically been hindered by a lack of game categorization and ease of searching for specific competitions. Attisani said FACEIT decided to work closely with the YouTube product and engineering team, to develop new features and help introduce tools to the platform that would help make it more appealing for a live esports audience.

“The first one was to introduce widgets, to have dedicated stats regarding the tournament directly on the YouTube page,” says Attisani. “On top of that we started introducing other features such as custom emojis for the chat, which was one of the most requested features by the community.”

In working closely with the platforms their content will be shown on, league organizers can help develop long-term brand strategies within the industry. In February, Attisani will speak to this at [at Esports BAR](#). He’ll be joined on the panel by executives of DreamHack and Twitch, who renewed [their own existing partnership](#) in March 2017.

“...that is a streaming platform or the content itself.”

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FACEIT itself has been branching out into tools that can reframe the way viewers can enjoy esports and gaming content. In December 2017, a partnership **was signed with Znipe.tv**, that will offer “multiperspective streaming” to the FACEIT Pro League. Essentially, every player in the competition will be spectatable. “The ability to connect on a deeper level with them, follow their progress, see how they’re practicing, it’s extremely interesting,” says Attisani.

With a new year ahead, and a new series of ECS starting soon, Attisani says FACEIT’s goal in 2018 is to expand to more popular esports titles, and build more tools for the community that will allow them to create their own ecosystems.

“Ultimately, what I always say is that esports is a consequence of having a large and healthy competitive community for the game, and from that standpoint we want to be a driving force, and we want to nurture that process and help that process evolve as a company, a platform and a product.”



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