



IT'S GAME ON FOR ESPORTS

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Procurement Director

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THE RISE AND RISE OF ESPORTS

Esports is a multi-billion-dollar industry and has come a long way since 1972 when a group of Stanford University students played Spacewar! against each other to win a year's subscription to Rolling Stone magazine. It's quite possible this could have been the first example of a video game sporting event.

Today, thousands of people worldwide are professional video gamers with many millions more watching their exploits either at large-scale in-person events or via online channels like Twitch or YouTube.

At the center of this growth was ESL - the number one esports company in the world. It is also considered the first 'unicorn' of its type, having been acquired by Savvy Games Group, a holding company owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, and merged with gaming platform FACEIT in 2022 for a reported \$1.5BN to later form ESL FACEIT Group (EFG).



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From humble beginnings in 2000 as an online gaming league and magazine in Germany, EFG has grown revenues 20-40% year-over-year to its current position, and now has over 1,000 employees worldwide. It has four core master brands - ESL, FACEIT, DreamHack and DreamHack Sports Games. The first, ESL, is the events brand associated with hosting live competitions that attract hundreds of thousands of people in-person and hundreds of millions more watching live online. The second is its online platform FACEIT, where the community connects to live their competitive passion beyond the standard gameplay. The third is the DreamHack gaming festivals that celebrates the culture of gaming across the world. Lastly, DreamHack Sports Games is where traditional sports meets esports, creating competitive leagues and tournaments in esports for the biggest sports organizers in the world.

RAPID GROWTH AND A VAST PLAYING FIELD

Keeping pace with rapid growth presented EFG with several challenges. “When ESL first started, it was all about the product first. Financial processes didn't play an important role,” notes Thomas Brill, Procurement Director, ESL FACEIT Group, who joined the firm in 2017. “When we tried to get an accurate picture of our data five years ago, it was almost impossible because internationally and locally we were not talking the same financial language.”

The focus on Product was successful and quickly attracted a huge customer-base, and the rapidly growing customer base attracted investors. But an inability to have quick accurate access to financial information was holding EFG back. “As soon as you start dressing up for investors, you need to have proper structures in place,” points out Thomas.

EFG realized it needed a single platform that could provide total visibility into business spend.

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AGILITY ENABLES REINVENTION

ESL FACEIT Group deployed the Coupa Business Spend Management platform to deliver complete standardization and visibility across its entire operation. An additional benefit has been the unprecedented levels of agility the platform delivers for EFG. “Coupa has really helped us establish a global process. We standardized everywhere and that gave us the visibility and the data that we needed,” adds Thomas.

“We are not a classic media company nor are we really a gaming company. We are the community hub for hundreds of thousands of players across the globe, and we have reinvented ourselves a few times,” says Thomas, “Agility is key for us to work together with our suppliers. Coupa fits in here perfectly for us. They support this agile workflow that we need. They are very slick, flexible in all the requirements that we have, and really help us if we have a challenge.”

The agile procurement platform provided by Coupa enables EFG buyers to quickly select cataloged items or other items from preferred suppliers. Those items have pre-negotiated prices and EFG can be sure the suppliers are reliable, and that the firms have a purchasing agreement in place.

THE KEY STRATEGY FOR WINNING HAND

“Today, I think no-one can envision how a world without Coupa would work in our company. We have orders across the globe. Orders could be initiated in the US and approved in Australia. And it all works. This is a global system,” states Thomas.

EFG’s key metric for success is penetration rate in terms of the percentage of spend that takes place with a purchase order. When EFG started out with Coupa, invoicing and the purchase to pay process was around 20-25%. Today it is at 99% across the globe.

Key to the rapid and near ubiquitous uptake of Coupa is that it is a cloud-based environment, easily accessible anywhere, and that it provides people with a user-friendly online shopping experience, according to Thomas.

Outlining the top three benefits delivered by Coupa, Thomas notes that number one is visibility, number two is much more reliable cost approvals, and number three is compliance. “I still recall the moment when I had an auditor and she was not looking forward to the review. But then I showed her the new Coupa procurement process and she really got excited. She was impressed by how easy Coupa made the audit process.”

“Our vision with Coupa is to drive profit from the purchases,” shares Thomas. “Spend management is something everyone needs to be aware of. It’s absolutely key if you want to be a profitable market player.”



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