

Special Report: Marketers of the Year →

## HOW FAZE CLAN TRANSFORMED INTO MUCH MORE THAN JUST A GAMING COMPANY IN 2021

FaZe Clan ranks No. 9 on Ad Age's 2021 Marketers of the Year list



By [Erika Wheless](#). Published on December 13, 2021.



Credit: FaZe Clan

When an athlete lands on the cover of Sports Illustrated, it typically signals they have reached a high point in their career or are seeing a meteoric rise in popularity. So when a gaming organization does it for the first time - FaZe Clan made history in June when it was featured on SI's cover—it's certainly indicative of just how influential esports has become.

“That was a highlight for this year,” said FaZe Clan CEO Lee Trink. “That was a defining moment for us and the industry.”

FaZe Clan has spent the year building partnerships outside of the traditional gaming space. In April, FaZe partnered with Corona Hard Seltzer, a brand that would later help present FaZe’s in-person Summer Tip-Off gaming event in Las Vegas (where rapper Jack Harlow headlined). In May, FaZe partnered with Microsoft and Xbox 360 to celebrate its 11th anniversary and later struck a deal with artist Takashi Murakami on a line of jerseys and mouse pads.



Credit: Sports Illustrated

Amid pandemic lockdowns, consumers turned to gaming as a source of entertainment and a way to find connections. The image of the teenage boy in a blue-lit basement, game controller in hand, was quickly replaced by a more diverse consumer. This shift in perception was helped by professional athletes, who could be found battling one another when their leagues were shut down during the early days of the pandemic. Some of these athletes later became members of gaming organizations, bringing the “cool” factor with them.

“Historically, music was the driver of youth culture,” Trink said. “But now, gaming is youth culture. Athletes and musicians helped change that image and give context around gaming because they said it was cool.”

FaZe Clan members now include LeBron James’ son Bronny James Jr.; NBA player Ben Simmons; rappers Offset and Lil Yachty; and Arizona Cardinals quarterback Kyler Murray.

“It supposedly takes 66 days to form a habit, and gaming has had much more than that,” Dipanjan Chatterjee, VP and principal analyst at Forrester, said via email. “With the onset of the pandemic, the restrictions on out-of-home mobility created the perfect conditions for gaming to take hold. Now, a year and a half later, with the end still not in sight, the network effect of a growing community [is] feeding the momentum.”



FaZe Clan ✓  
@FaZeClan



The pick is in.

Please join us in welcoming the multi-talented, former 1st Overall @NFL Draft Pick, & now your newest FaZe Clan member:

Kyler Murray. @K1 | #FaZeUp

FaZe's other partnerships include working with DC Comics in September for Batman Month, where they co-released limited-edition comic book covers. Each version highlighted a founding member of FaZe Clan. The collaboration also featured clothing drops for esports jerseys, tees, a hoodie, a pajama set and a mouse pad.

The DC Comics partnership was a point of pride for Xavier Ramos, senior VP and head of marketing at FaZe Clan, who spearheaded the idea. "Having DC write and illustrate this 'made in America' story of kids who met on Xbox, and be in a comic book, I think it shows that gamers aren't nerds," he said. "We're here too and we can tell stories in different ways."

FaZe Clan also made it to the silver screen. James Bond star Daniel Craig joined FaZe talent on a stream to promote "No Time to Die," and players FaZe Mongraal and FaZe Nate Hill showed off the new Dune Fortnite skins in a livestream from the red carpet premiere in London with Timothée Chalamet and Zendaya.

Credit: FaZe Clan



"To take our talent out of the gaming environment, put them in black tie and have the film's actors be really excited to interact with them, that had never been done before," said Ramos. He added that the whole idea came together in two weeks and "cost us nothing."

The company spends very little on traditional marketing, according to Trink and Ramos, though they declined to provide specific figures. "I'd say we spend more money on dinners than we do on marketing" says Trink.

Instead, the brand leans into its Twitter and YouTube channels. In August, it welcomed more than 30,000 new members via Twitter following the team's Call of Duty Championship win. "FaZe Member for a Day" saw brands

including McDonald's, Axe, Steel Series and G Fuel all change their Twitter names to include the FaZe moniker.

"McDonald's has really understood how to connect with us and our fans," Trink said. FaZe and McDonald's had not actually discussed it changing its handle; it was done organically. "That was such an authentic way to show respect for our community."



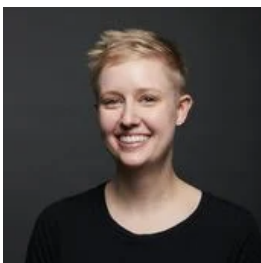
FaZe and McDonald's also worked together for a "Friendsgaming" event ahead of Thanksgiving. Players could buy a Crispy Chicken Sandwich Expansion Pack that included custom gaming gear along with a DoorDash delivery code to help them order from McDonald's.

Most recently, DraftKings became FaZe Clan's sports betting, igaming, daily fantasy and free-to-play partner, as well as a team sponsor for FaZe's Counter-Strike team. Looking ahead, FaZe is planning to go public via a SPAC in 2022 on the Nasdaq.

"We aren't abandoning our roots in gaming and esports, because that's so critical to who we are," said Trink. But he challenges the idea of

Credit: FaZe Clan

FaZe being just a gaming company. "We see ourselves as a youth culture company, a media and lifestyle platform that has esports in it, whose DNA comes from gaming."



### Erika Wheless

Erika Wheless is a technology reporter covering social media platforms, influencers, and esports. She was previously the e-commerce reporter for Digiday, and is a graduate of the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism.