

# Purpose driven sport, 10 global trends we will see in 2020

In the last decade, the sports industry has been growing with increasing amounts of money from broadcasters and sponsors. Fabien Paget, sports business specialist, Founder and CEO of 17 Sport, shares important global trends to take into account if you were deciding to create a business related to sports.

---

Millennials and Gen Z are losing trust in politicians and governments to build a positive future expecting brands and business to take on this responsibility and have a positive impact on society. Consumers increasingly make their consumption decisions based on how well a brand lives out its purpose. Brands, however, cannot simply talk the talk, they must walk the walk as well - every day. While the sports business sector has in recent years rapidly embraced this move towards purpose, the reality is that it has generally been slow to act. As the global sports industry grows with increasing amounts of money from broadcasters and sponsors the pressure to deliver real purpose grows.

Change is happening as fans, sponsors and athletes now understand that the sports sector has the power to drive positive change make the world a better place. We also see more and more progressive leaders and open thinkers that recognize purpose is one of the most exciting opportunities to come to sports in many years.

*“If you don’t take change by the hand, it will take you by the throat. – Winston Churchill”*

## Ten trends in sport to expect in 2020

Over the past decade, more and more sports organizations have started to develop CSR initiatives at the operational level, especially regarding waste, carbon reductions and offsets. The UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action Framework that came into effect in 2018 was a massive step in the right direction for sports even if signing a document is easy compared to actually executing it.

“Purpose” is about more than just operational considerations and efficiencies. It’s linked to the fundamental reason for existence, the « Why ». It totally changes the scope from which you make all your decisions and it opens a massive number of business benefits and can uncover new revenue streams that can build a solid competitive advantage.

Global Sports Week’s decision to place purpose at the centre of the debate in Paris in February this year is evidence that Purpose has finally arrived in sport. Successful pro-social initiatives from athletes like Megan Rapinoe, Colin Kaepernick, Serena Williams and Juan Mata; brands like Danone, Nike, Adidas and AXA; and structures like the IOC, Paris 2024, LA 2028, Rugby World Cup 2023, Formula E, The Ocean Race, Super Bowl 50 and the 34th America’s Cup have all given sport permission to embrace the age of social good. Even Formula 1 is committed to change with the new progressive management of Liberty Holdings announcing a bold new approach to sustainability, something Bernie Ecclestone saw no need for just ten years ago.

*Read also*

---

[Discover these companies and their positive impact on the environment](#)

Sport is one of the most powerful platforms that can lead the transition towards a sustainable future and here are the 10 main trends to watch for in 2020:

1. CSR will move away and Purpose will take the lead: The increasing adoption of Purpose within the Sport Industry presents an exciting opportunity for brands wanting to activate their organizations' purpose through their investment in sport. As a consequence, we will see more brands activating purpose-led campaigns in the next decade.
2. Together, Stronger: Progressive thinkers recognize that partnership with other stakeholders will enable them to achieve much more together than they would on their own. We observe a growing number of transversal partnerships that drive mutual benefit and meaningful value from a financial, social and environmental perspective.
3. From less bad to more good: It's time for everyone involved in sports venues, athletes and brands, to move beyond simply doing less bad to actively looking for ways to do more good through sport. This is particularly relevant for properties looking to build deeper relationships with their key stakeholders through purpose.
4. The purpose is a business discussion, not a CSR initiative: Sporting bodies and athletes need to define their own purpose and look for ways to monetize their commitment. They need to integrate their purpose as a key commercial driver and use it to develop new business models, new partners, new revenue streams, improved efficiencies and cost reductions.
5. Fans playing their part: Fans are actively looking for ways to be engaged in doing good for and alongside their favourite sports teams, leagues and athletes. Involving fans directly in purpose-driven goodwill build deeper engagement with them and will also attract a younger and more diverse audience.
6. Authenticity, transparency and long term: These three words are paramount. Every decision you make needs to be aligned with you, your purpose and your values. It also needs to deliver real lasting social and/or environmental impact and legacy. One off's don't work anymore. You need to play the long game. The fans will hold you accountable for what you say and don't do like never before. Just ask Roger Federer #WakeUpRoger.
7. Track and measure your impact: It's great to take purposeful initiatives and communicate about them through your marketing. But you remain accountable to show and explain how you measure and track your impact. Communication is not sufficient anymore. People now expect relevant, tangible and measurable results.
8. The Global Goals: The Global Goals are now a universal language, more and more a part of the mainstream consciousness. The next decade will be the decade of The Goals.
9. Contractual integration: We will see new versions of sponsorship contracts where brands can include purpose-related deliverables as part of the obligations of the contracts with entities and athletes driven to deliver. Purpose deliverables are no longer nice to have, they are mandatory in

any rights package and will become the norm in contracts.

10. Activist Athletes: Serena Williams, LeBron James, Juan Mata, Colin Kaepernick, Lisa Zimouche, Megan Rapinoe... these progressive athletes have understood the power they have and are using their voices to drive social change and give back to their communities, both local and global. With the next generation coming, we expect an increasing number of athletes taking a strong position and committing themselves to make the world a better place.

As a whole, I am convinced that the corporate world and big-name ambassadorial role models have the power to create a sustainable future. The brands, entities and athletes that embrace purpose as a central strategic principle will be the winners in the next decade... and those that don't will become irrelevant.

Fabien Paget is a sports business specialist and the Founder and CEO of [17 Sport](#)

Millennials and Gen Z are losing trust in politicians and governments to build a positive future. They now expect brands to take on this responsibility and have a positive impact on society. One broader example is the changing commercial emphasis on Black Friday. Several retailers closed their doors or their e-commerce platform on this important shopping day, or donated proceeds from the day to causes that they support. Since 2017, CAMIF.FR the French leading online home & garden retailer, offering top quality sustainable Made in France furniture has been leading the movement and shutting down its online platform to support sustainable consumption.

Among employees, 71% agree "it's critically important for companies to respond to the world's issues. Having a job with "meaningful societal impact," and believing that a company can simultaneously "increase profits and improve the economic and social conditions in communities" are among growing sentiments.

Over the summer of 2019, The Business Roundtable issued a statement on the "Purpose of a Corporation" in which they committed "to lead their companies for the benefit of all stakeholders - customers, employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders. The BRT essentially expanded its purpose beyond simply wealth creation for shareholders, to taking care of their employees and improving their communities.

As consumers continue to allow their purchasing behavior be guided by their values and stances on social issues we are seeing mounting evidence that brands putting purpose first are actually winning in the consumer marketplace. Consumers increasingly make their consumption decisions based

on how well a brand lives out its purpose. Brands cannot simply talk the talk, they must walk the walk as well – every day.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, and the broader acceptance of the climate change emergency, people understand the necessity to develop a new kind of capitalism that sustains our economic system while solving social and environmental challenges at the same time.

The continued relevance of the Milton Friedman -“shareholder first” model that has dominated western business schools and the management philosophy in business for

the last five decades is now being questioned. People today are calling for a new “stakeholder first” approach from business where the interests of all stakeholders – including the planet and all its inhabitants – are considered as much as the interests of the shareholders of a business. This is changing the way that business is done. A new form of capitalism – « Stakeholder first » is emerging. Read the new World Economic Forum’s manifesto [here](#).

And what about the business of Sport?

While the business sector has in recent years rapidly embraced this move to purpose, the reality is that it has generally been slow to do so. Indeed, the sport industry is growing with increasing amounts of money from broadcasters and sponsors.

However, things are starting to change as fans, sponsors and athletes now understand that the sport sector has the power to drive positive change and make the world a better place. We also see more and more progressive leaders and open thinkers that recognize purpose is one of the most exciting opportunities to come sports way in many years.

« If you don’t take change by the hand, it will take you by the throat – Winston Churchill »

Here is what we can expect in 2020!

Over the past decade, more and more sports organizations have started to develop CSR initiatives at the operational level especially around waste and carbon reductions and offsets. The UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action Framework that came into in 2018 was a massive step in the right direction for sports even though it is easier to sign the document than execute it.

But Purpose is about more than just operational considerations and efficiencies. It’s connected to the reason of being, the « Why » and the mission of the organization. It totally changes the lens through which you take all your

decision and it opens a massive number of business benefits from new revenue streams to a solid competitive advantage.

Global Sports Week decision to place purpose at the center of the debate in Paris in February this year is evidence that Purpose has finally arrived in sport. Successful pro- social initiatives from athletes like Megan Rapinoe, Colin Kaepernick, Serena Williams and Juan Mata; brands like Danone, Nike, adidas and AXA; and properties like the IOC, Paris 2024, LA 2028, Rugby World Cup 2023, Formula E, The Ocean Race, Super Bowl 50 and the 34th America's Cup have all given sport permission to embrace the age of social good. Even Formula 1 under the new progressive management of Liberty

Holdings has announced a bold new sustainability commitment, something Bernie Ecclestone saw no need for just ten years ago.

Sport is in our opinion one of the most powerful platforms available to lead the transition to a sustainable future. So here are the 10 main trends I see for 2020 :

1. CSR will move away and Purpose will take the lead : The increasing adoption of Purpose within the Sport Industry presents an exciting activation opportunity for brands wanting to activate their organizations purpose through their investment in sport. As a consequence, we will see more brands activating purposefully in the next decade;
2. Together, Stronger : Progressive thinkers recognize that partnership with other stakeholders will enable them to achieve much more together than on their own. We observe a growing number of transversal partnerships that drive mutual benefit and meaningful value from a financial, social and environmental perspective.
3. From less bad to more good: It's time for sports properties, athletes and brands to move beyond simply doing less bad to actively looking for ways to do more good through sport. This is particularly relevant for properties looking to build deeper relationships with their key stakeholders through purpose.
4. Purpose is a business discussion not a CSR initiative : Properties and Athletes needs to define their own purpose and should look for ways to monetize their commitment. They need to integrate their purpose as a key commercial driver will be develop new business models, new partners, new revenue streams, improved efficiencies and reduced costs;
5. Fans playing their part : Fans are actively looking for ways to be engaged in doing good for and alongside their favorite sports teams, leagues, athletes. Properties, brands and athletes that involve fans directly in doing good will

build deeper engagement with them and attract a younger audiences;

6. Authenticity, Transparency and Long term : These three words are just paramount. Every decision you make needs to be aligned with you, your purpose and your values?. It also need to deliver real lasting social and/or environmental impact and a legacy. One off's don't work anymore. You need to play the long game. The fans will hold you accountable for what you say and don't do like never before. Ask Roger #WakeUpRoger;

7. Track and measure your impact : It's great to take purposeful initiatives and communicate around them. But you remain accountable to show and explain how your measure and track your impact. Communication is not sufficient anymore. People now expect relevant, tangible and measurable results.

8. The Global Goals : The Global Goals are now a universal language, more and more into the mainstream consciousness. The next decade will be the decade of The Goals;

9. Contractual integration : We will see new versions of sponsorship contracts where Brands should include Purpose deliverables as part of the obligations of the properties and athletes that they sponsor and make delivery contractual. Purpose deliverables are no longer nice to have, they are mandatory in any rights package and will be featured in the agreement contracts

10. Activist Athletes : Serena Williams, Lebron James, Juan Mata, Colin Kapernick, Lisa Zimouche, Megan Rapinoe....these progressive athletes have understood the power fo their voice to drive social change and give back the communities. With the next generation coming, we expect an increasing number of athletes taking strong position and committed to make the world a better.

As a whole, I am convinced that 1/ the corporate world and role models have the power to create a sustainable future 2/ that the brands, properties and athletes that embrace purpose as a central strategic principle will be the winners in the next decade...and those that don't will become irrelevant.