



Manaverse Saga



LGS STREAMING GUIDE

Get online, get noticed

-Tom Traplin-

INTRODUCTION

In this guide, I'm going to show you the basic equipment you need to get your store up and running on Twitch.tv and streaming your events online.

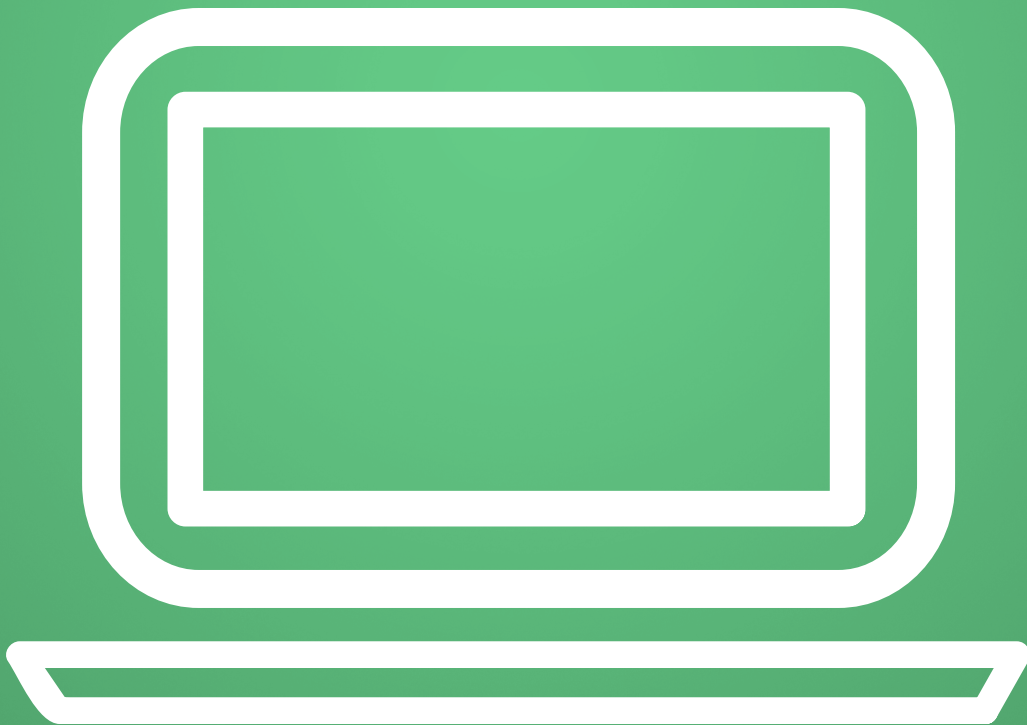
Setting up a stream can be a little tricky when you're just getting started so I'm going to break it all down to simplify the process. In this tech guide I'm going to talk about why you should be streaming, how it works and then go over the basic equipment you'll need to get started.

This guide will show you how to set up a stream in your store that will allow you to broadcast all kinds of content. I'm writing it with the focus that your setup will be used to stream Magic tournaments but you don't have to stop there. Your stream can easily be customized to showcase whatever content you want.

Other CCG's? Absolutely. Sessions of an exciting, new board game you got in this week? No problem. A soapbox to speak from? Sure.

Once all the pieces are in place your creativity is the limit to what kinds of content you can create and stream.

HARDWARE



Laptop/Computer

This is the core of the operation. It takes care of all the technical details for you. When it comes to streaming a game like Magic you actually have an advantage over other traditional streamers.

Since our aim is to stream a physical game, we can get away with much less when it comes to computing power. Any computer purchased in the last 3 years or so should be more than adequate for what you need. Specifically, you want at least 8 GB of RAM but you can always use more.

Something more important than the technical specs of your machine will be your internet connection.

A good connection is vital to having a smooth stream and creating a good experience for your viewers. An upload rate of 5 MB is the baseline here. If your upload isn't high enough, you may have issues streaming so getting on a higher plan will be a priority for you.

A second monitor can be a real asset for the tech setup, it allows you to manage the broadcast and also monitor the twitch chat and interact with your audience on the other screen. It's not strictly necessary but if the computer you're planning on using can support the second screen you should definitely take advantage of it.

Cameras

You have a few options when it comes to the cameras you can use and you won't have to break the bank to buy them either.

For the feature match table, it's vital to get a camera that can shoot in 1080p. If you plan on streaming Magic tournaments it's important that viewers can make out the cards being played during the match and anything less than 1080p makes that pretty difficult. Video and audio quality are crucial to giving your viewers a good experience and an HD camera is a big part of that.

A great option for a feature match camera is the Logitech HD Pro Webcam c920. It offers excellent quality video and the price is extremely reasonable for what you get.



The key to streaming good events is having good commentators. Solid commentating can make even the slowest game interesting and really ups the value of your stream. The second camera for the commentators could be another c920 but a cheaper option like the Logitech 720p Webcam C510 would also do the trick nicely.



Both Logitech cameras plug in via USB cables which means you are almost certainly going to need USB extender cables. With the setup we are going to talk about in a later section, the feature match table and the area where the commentators are will be by necessity away from each other. The 5" cables the cameras come with are virtually guaranteed to be too short for what we are going to need so be sure to pick a couple of USB extenders. Depending on the distance between the two areas, something like a 32-Foot USB 2.0 Extension Cable could get the job done.

Tripods/Mounts

When it comes to camera positioning a tripod is decent but a wall mount is better. A tripod like the Polaroid 42" Travel Tripod is a good choice if you can't mount a camera above the feature match table. Ideally, the camera is aimed almost vertically down onto the play space to reduce the glare as much as possible so the taller the tripod and more extreme an angle you can get the better.

If your setup allows it, mounting the camera to a wall above the table is a great way to record the action. The Arkon Wall Mounting Pedestal allows you to have your camera at a high angle above the action. This helps to reduce glare, which can be very tricky to eliminate if your lighting doesn't feel like cooperating, and you won't have to worry about the table shaking from the players resting their arms on it during a match.

An added benefit is you can leave the camera mounted between stream sessions and not have to worry about the equipment being stolen or damaged. If your floor plan allows you to utilize a wall mount I highly recommend it.



Microphone

To keep things easy, you should start with a Blue Yeti. It's an inexpensive but effective option for having quality audio for your stream. You can always upgrade later.

The Blue Yeti plugs directly into the computer you're using via USB which makes it simple compared to other options that require a separate mixer.

The real upside to the Blue Yeti is it's a stand alone microphone and ready to go out of the box. No need for a mic stand or boom arm or any other equipment to make it work. This makes the Blue Yeti a great option to start out with. Keep your barriers to entry low at the beginning and you will have a better chance of actually getting started.



Your Cell Phone

Chances are you already have the equivalent of a video production studio in your pocket right now. Smartphones made in the last three years are perfect for creating high definition, engaging, and inexpensive videos quickly and easily.

When it comes to video marketing or Facebook Live, your cell phone is the perfect tool. Just whip it out and start filming.

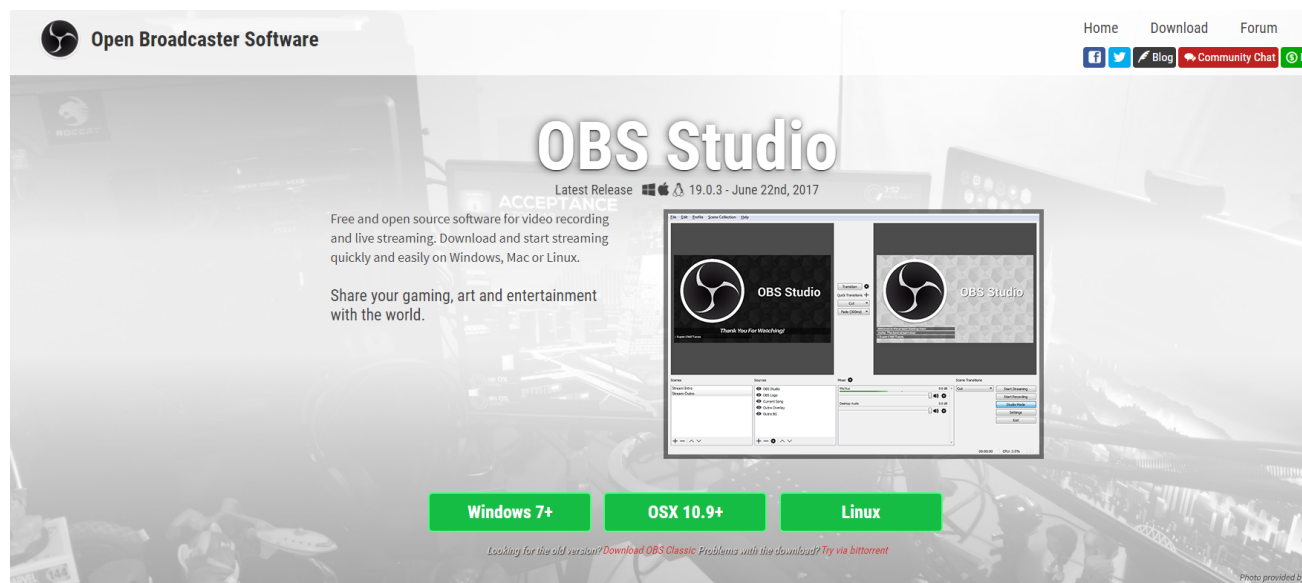


SOFTWARE



Open Broadcast Software (OBS)

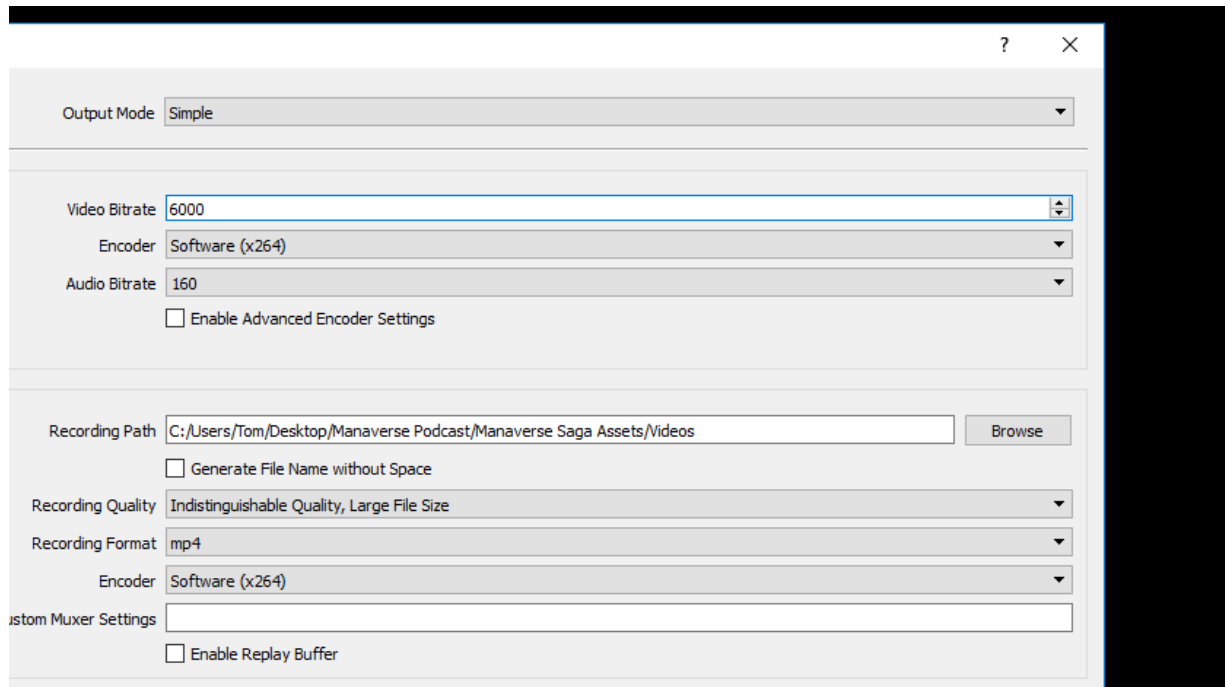
OBS is a completely free, open source program that handles the actual streaming you're going to be doing. You can download your copy of OBS from <https://obsproject.com/>, just choose the operating system you plan on using.



You'll see a screen that looks like this. Pick the operating system that your computer is running and install the software. Once you have OBS up and running with the correct settings, it can be a matter of one click to get your stream online.

Check out this video to learn how to get your OBS settings just right.

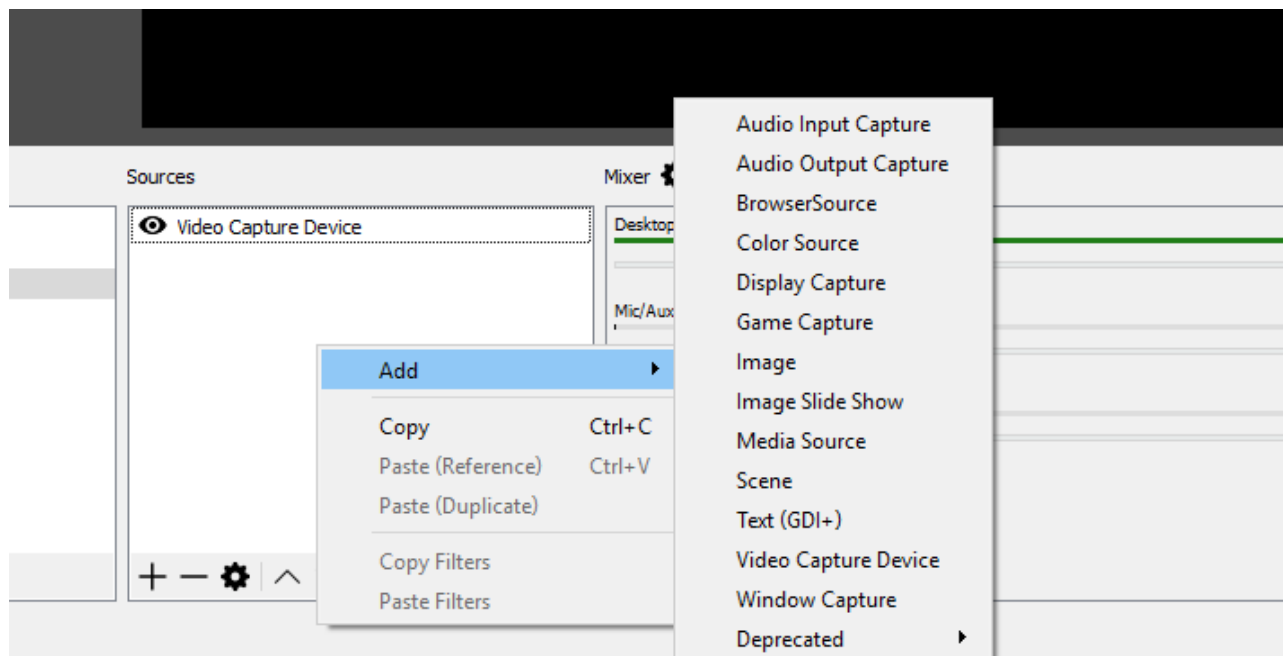
As part of configuring your settings for an optimal streaming experience, it's important to know the upload and download speeds of your internet connection. Go to <http://www.speedtest.net> and get the stats for your connection, this is how you know what your max bitrate setting should be.



Sources and Scenes

Once your settings are correct, the next step is to set up the scenes and sources you will need for your stream. A scene is like a scene in a movie, they are the different aspects of your stream that the viewer will see like the feature match area, the commentator's area in between matches, or the "be right back" screen that shows during breaks.

I recommend you have at least those three scenes set up and named appropriately when you're getting started. Once the scenes are created, you can begin adding sources to each of the scenes. The sources are the individual elements that make up the stream itself. Things like the camera feed, timers, and graphic overlays. Right click on the sources area of the scene and you'll see something like this:

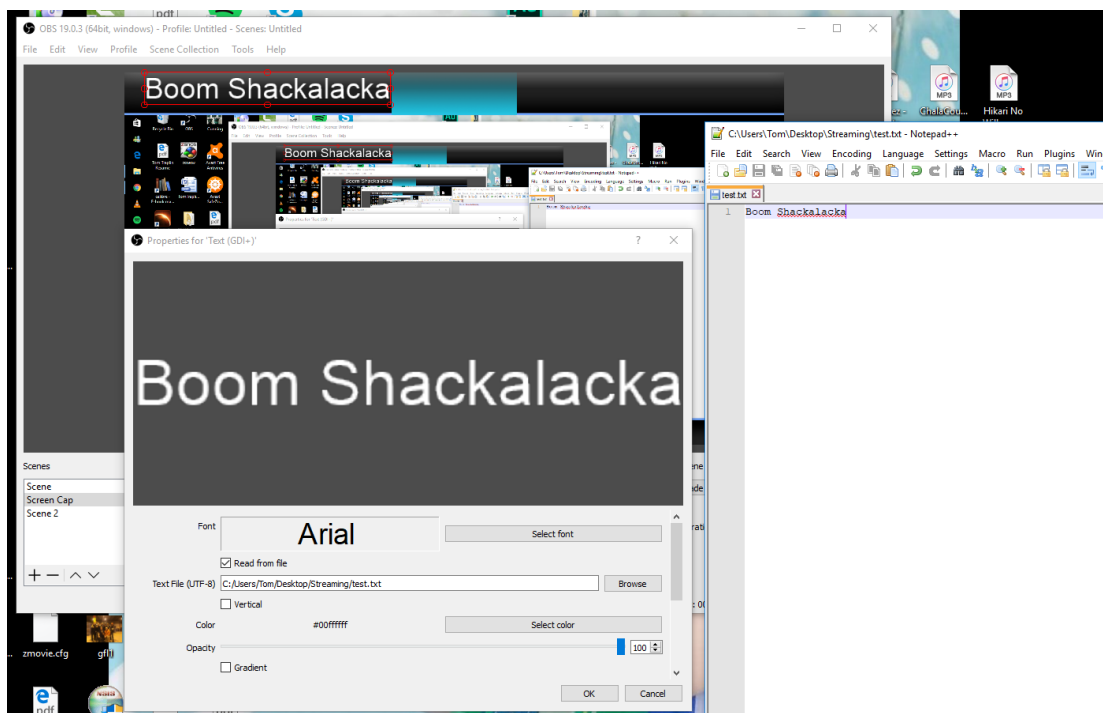


Start by adding the Video Capture Device (the camera) that's over the feature match area and then position it on the screen so that it takes up the whole area. To add a graphic overlay, and an image source and make sure that it's above the camera in the source list. That will ensure the graphic is layered on top of the camera feed.

The next step is to add the text to the overlay to track life totals and player names.



Once you add a Text source to the scene, all you have to do is choose a text file to read from. As you can see in the image below, by modifying the base file the text on screen will also change. This allows you to keep track of life totals and other game info without interrupting the flow of the stream.



Notepad++

Notepad++ is an extremely versatile program but at its heart it's a text editor which is what we'll be using it for. Notepad++ will be used in conjunction with OBS to edit text on screen without leaving the program.

Head over to <https://notepad-plus-plus.org/> and download it. Don't worry, it's free too.

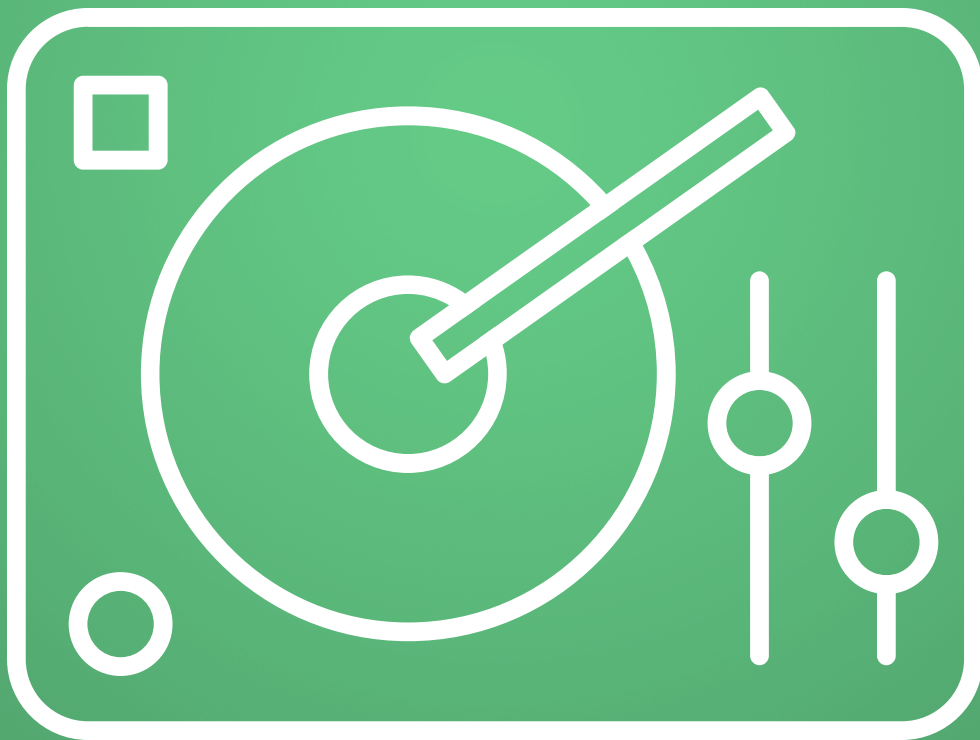
Adobe Photoshop

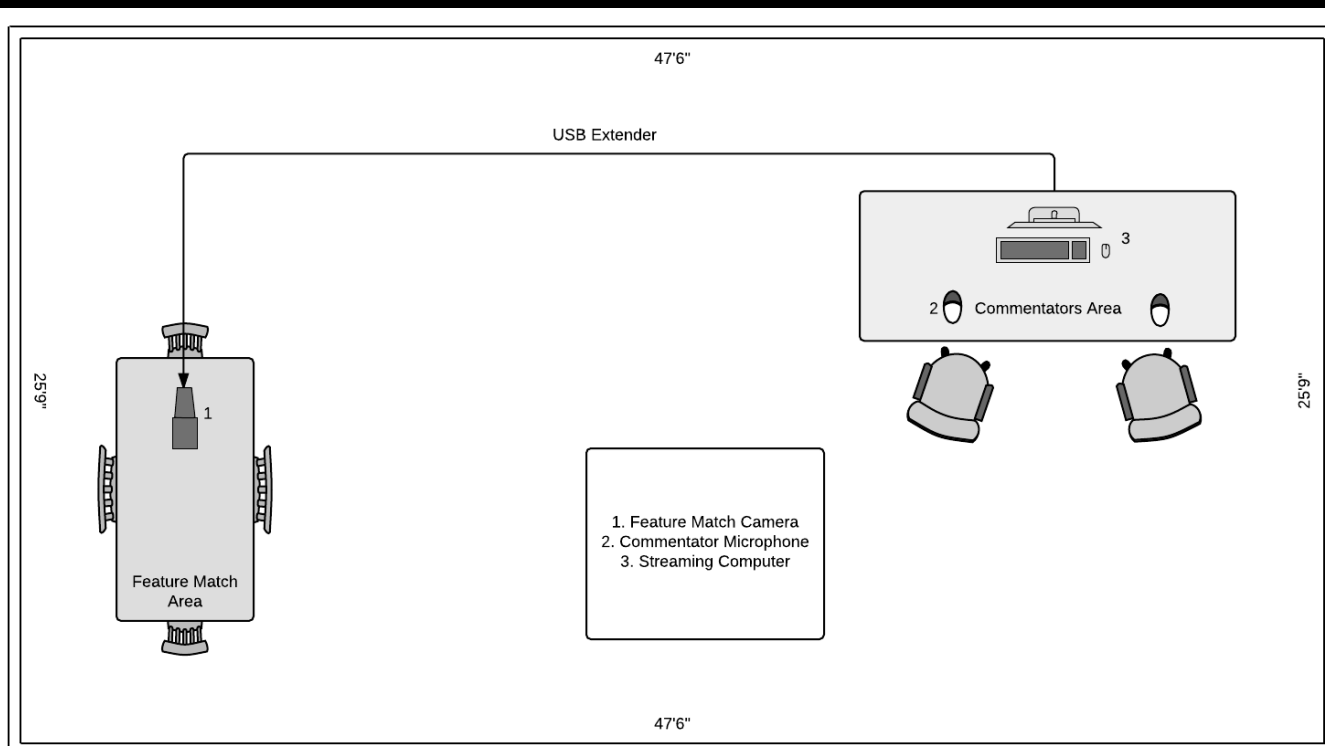
The last program you'll need to get your stream setup is Adobe Photoshop, and alas, it's the only program on the list that costs money. The good news is Photoshop no longer costs hundreds of dollars to acquire, you can sign up for a reasonably affordable monthly cloud subscription.

Photoshop is the program that will allow you to create excellent looking overlays for your stream. Overlays give your broadcast a more professional, polished look. They are the nifty graphics and text that tell the viewers more information about what is going on on screen.

Check out the Adobe website and pick a plan that works for you. Alternatively, you can go to [fiverr.com](https://www.fiverr.com) and hire a designer to create your graphics for you for about \$5.

THE SET UP





The basic setup is laid out in the infographic above.

Basically, at the center of the whole thing, you have a laptop or computer that is running the broadcast software OBS. The feature match table is set up before the tournament begins and at enough distance from the commentators' table that the players won't hear what's being said about the match and the commentators host the stream and comment on the gameplay in real time.

The setup can also include an optional audio mixer depending on which microphones the commentators are using and if they each have one. It's also possible for the commentators to share a microphone, you just have to be more conscious of the distance from the mic when speaking to each other.

GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE



Now that you have the technology know how to get started streaming on Twitch.tv, it's time to begin building an audience. Streaming can be an effective marketing tactic for your LGS but first you need to get the viewers to your channel. From there you can bring them to your store or your website.

Creating a community around your stream involves three components:

- Getting more exposure for your stream
- Keeping new viewers
- Keeping your viewers coming back again and again

Getting Exposure

No one will watch your stream if they don't know it exists. You have to get the word out.

When you schedule your events make sure you highlight the fact that you're going to have a feature match table and will be broadcasting the tournament. Post the link to the channel on your social media, mention it to the people who visit your store that you know might be interested.

If you are a member of any Facebook groups where local Magic players gather and discuss, post about your stream and ask for feedback.

Get your players and customers excited for the fact that you're streaming an upcoming event well before the day of. Build up the hype by offering giveaways to viewers.

Similar to running events in general, consistency is very important for building an audience for your stream. Set a schedule and stick to it, you don't have to stream every tournament you organize but being reliable is part of the commitment.

Keeping new arrivals

Once you have established your stream schedule and have the routine down, you will begin to attract viewers. Some of them will stay and some will watch for a little while and disappear. The trick to holding on to viewers is keeping your stream interesting and entertaining.

First, that means you have the fundamentals locked down. Your stream quality is smooth and matches the capability of the machine your streaming with. The audio sounds good and isn't breaking up. The cameras are pointing in the right directions, that kind of thing. The basics need to be in place.

Next, your commentators should almost always be talking. They should be discussing the match at hand, talking about the cards from the newest set, telling stories, virtually anything as long it's relevant and interesting. Think about professional broadcasts, dead air is a major faux pas.

When choosing your commentators, make sure they are dynamic and can carry a conversation, even if there is only one person. Interacting with the viewers is also important. Greet new viewers as they join the channel and keep them engaged.

Turning viewers into customers

Having a consistent, high-quality stream is an excellent way to connect with your customers. Viewers on their own won't help build your business though, you need to turn those viewers into customers, either online or in real life.

That involves branding your stream and not being afraid to promote.

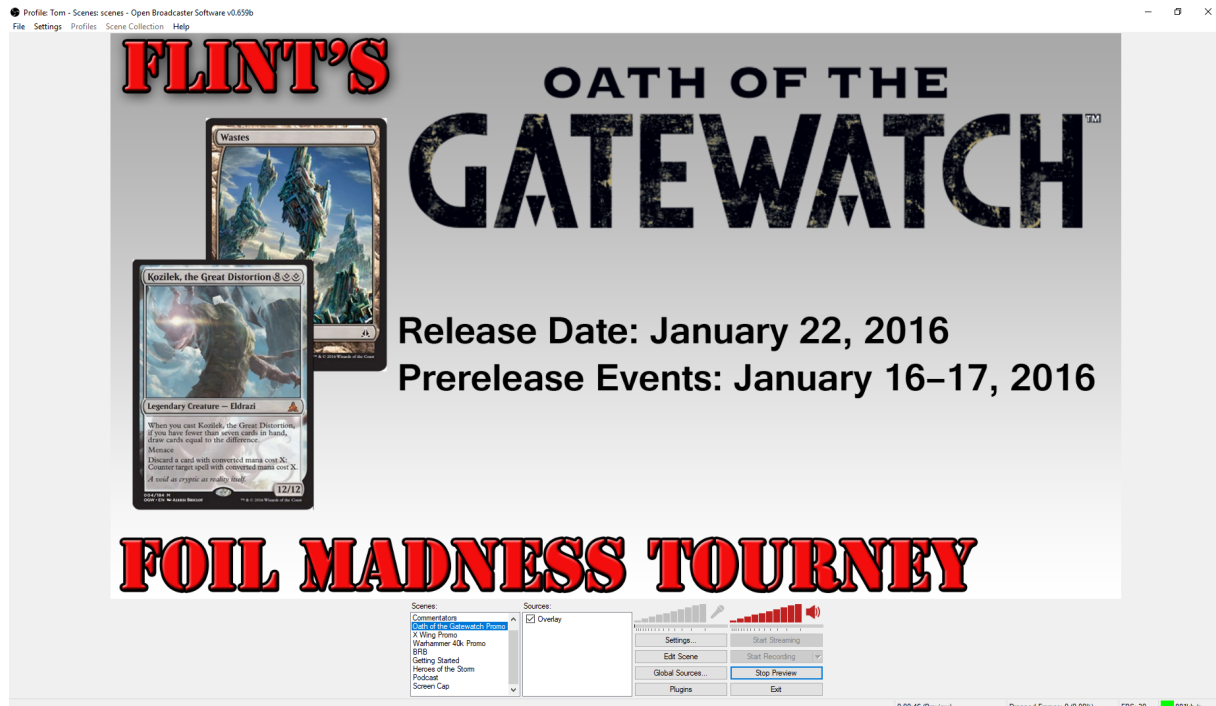
Branding

There are two parts to branding your stream, one is physical and the other digital.

When a viewer joins your channel for the first time, they should know exactly who they are watching. That means your business's name should be front and center.

The feature match table should have your logo and name on it. If you have sleeves with your logo on it, offer to give the players under the camera sleeves for free. Your commentators should be representing your store with shirts with your logo on them.

Digitally, your stream should have an overlay that has your logo on it on screen pretty much at all times. An overlay is a graphic that you add to your broadcast that stays in front of the action on camera and gives the viewer more information about what's going on.



With OBS, you can create a number of different scenes and each can have a graphical overlay that promotes different products your business offers.

Promotion

Your stream is the perfect platform to promote the products you sell. You already know the viewers are interested in what you have to offer, they wouldn't be there otherwise.

Part of your strategy should include promoting your store on a regular basis. A good example of this is the Star City Games Open Series. The SCG Twitch stream is an effective way for Star City Games to direct its viewers to their online store.

The action on screen along with engaging commentary will naturally increase the interest of the viewer. You just have to channel that into your business.

If you sell Magic cards online, refer the viewer to your online store and include the link in your channel description. you could even offer a promo code that only the viewers can access.

There are natural breaks in the action during a Magic tournament, these are perfect opportunities for the commentators to mention what your store offers customers. Good commentators should be ambassadors for your shop, they should encourage the viewers to visit your store, like your Facebook page, follow your store on Twitter. Take advantage of the fact that your viewers are interested and engaged and you will find success using streaming.

Don't be afraid to ban

Interacting with your viewers is great but the Twitch chat needs to be monitored. The conversation can very easily spiral out of control and your job as the streamer is to make sure that doesn't happen. Removing people who are spamming the channel, starting fights, or just being toxic is something you are going to have to do once in awhile.

You can empower your commentators to keep an eye on the chat room and stay on top of the conversation, which is the way you'll have to start out. But once you've built up a following, you will start to see certain names more often than others in the chat. The ones that generally add value to the conversation and show up consistently should be the first ones you give moderator duties too. Either way, don't be afraid to drop the banhammer on someone if they are just there to troll the stream and make everyone else's experience less pleasant.

Set goals

Setting goals over the course of a stream is another way of driving engagement and keeping your viewers involved. By setting goals I'm referring to public achievements like having a certain number of people viewing at once or hitting \$X in donations, but they can also be something along the lines of a 24-hour stream marathon.

Encourage your viewers and audience to help you achieve whatever goal it is you've set out to achieve. You can also offer rewards to your viewers to incentivize them to participate, there are additional tools you can use like bots that make this easier. By having a shared goal you are making it more likely that your viewers will share your stream with their friends. Building in a reason to share your stream is going to give it a viral component that will ultimately, help you build your audience faster.

Your stream presence

If you are using this guide to stream events like Magic tournaments or other card games, you need to have one or more commentators to keep the stream interesting. Analog games like Magic, on their own, are slow and don't have a lot of action going on. Commentators are how you make the content on the screen (the gameplay) more compelling for the viewers.

Not everyone can do this well.

A commentator needs to have presence. They should be someone that is comfortable in front of a camera, with a voice that people can listen to for long periods of time. They should be knowledgeable about the game being played on screen and capable of saying something interesting about it.

It's good to keep in mind the reasons your viewers are watching your stream in the first place. They want to be entertained, they want to learn something or both.

This is one of the reasons why most broadcasts have two or more people involved. It's easier to have a conversation that keeps people interested than just talking to a camera. If your stream only has one commentator on the mic, they are going to have to rely more on interacting with viewers in the chat to keep up an interesting dialogue.

Ultimately, presence comes down to being a solid public speaker, which is a skill that can and should be practiced.

Next Steps

The only way to get started is to actually begin. Get the tech and get online. When it comes to growing a local game store the internet is largely an untapped resource. Streaming is one of the most uncrowded marketing channels at the moment and it's a huge opportunity for LGS owners to grow their business.

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sales, build a player community
of avid and loyal customers,
and grow your LGS with a
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VIDEO MARKETING



The Golden Age of Video

You already know that video is the future of marketing.

It accounts for 57% of all consumer internet traffic... and that'll be 79% inside 2 years. (That's almost 4 out of every 5 buyers coming through video).

Using videos on your landing pages increases conversions by 80%.

64% of consumers say they're more likely to buy a product after watching a video about it.

You don't need any fancy equipment to take advantage of the fact that video marketing is a powerful tool for your business. The phone in your pocket and the gear you use to stream your events is more than enough for you to create compelling content.

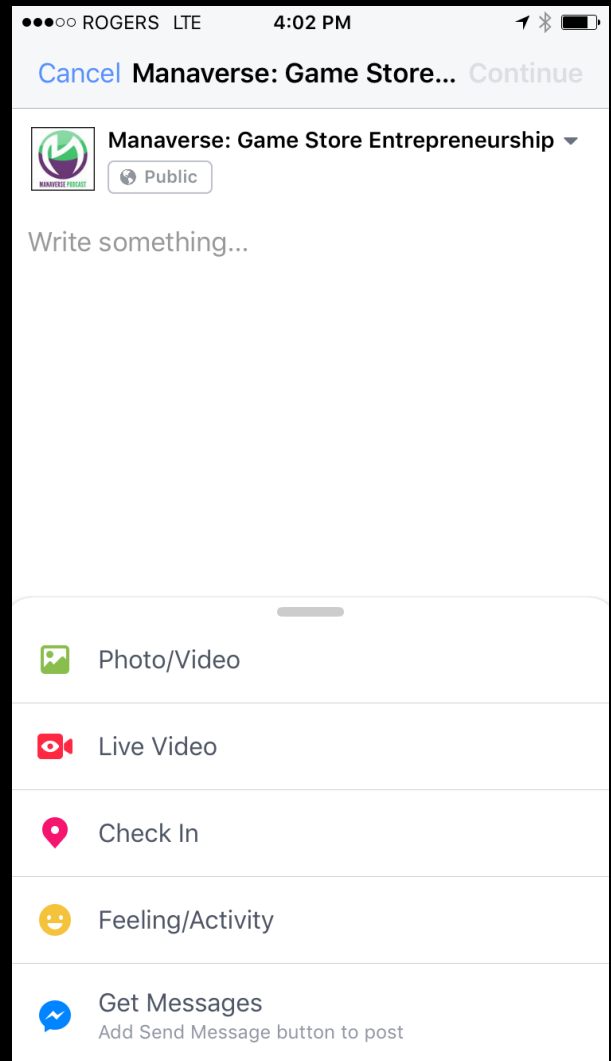
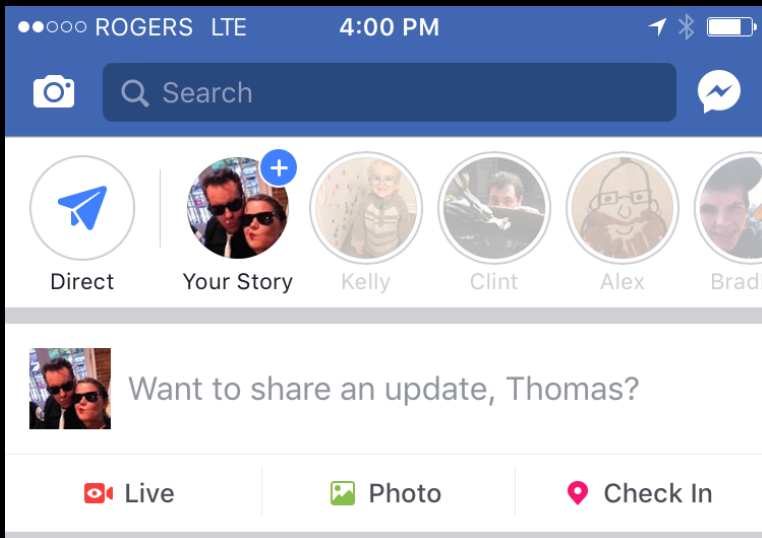
Just avoid shooting video in a dark room and the quality will be just fine. The question you may be asking is what platforms should you focus on and what kind of video content should you produce?

Facebook Live vs YouTube

We spent the first portion of this guide focusing on Twitch.tv and streaming live tournaments and events to those platforms. That's because Twitch is currently the main hub for gamers to go to watch streams of their favorite games and therefore, one of the easiest places to build an audience.

Since the subject of this section of the guide is different from streaming events, we're going to take a different approach to what we create and that means changing the platform as well.

When it comes to creating content that isn't event focused, the platforms you should be focusing on are Facebook Live or YouTube, ideally both as you'll see in a bit.



Facebook has made live streaming extremely simple as you can see in the images above and to the right. When you log in to your personal profile the Live update button is prominently on the left. The situation is similar for your game store's Facebook page. Start a new update and the Live Video option is right there.

You can also stream from a desktop computer using the same gear that you would use for events. The process is essentially the same.

The reason I recommend using Facebook Live as the starting platform is that it makes leveraging your video content easier. You get the bonus interaction and engagement of creating live content but you also can easily upload the video file to YouTube later on and generate more views that way. This way you get to take advantage of both platforms without having to spend twice the amount of time creating content.

The question is, what kind of content will you create?

Content Creation

Facebook is a place where people go to learn more about the people they are friends with and the businesses they follow. It's about shared experiences and connections. So when it comes to creating video content that grows your business and establishes your brand, you have to think about what your viewers want to know about you. What they like and what they are interested in.

Chances are they are gamers of one form or another, you run a game store and they follow you so you should be creating content that speaks to that. Game reviews, box openings, new shipments, customer interviews, deck techs. Hobby gamers want to talk about their hobby, so start a conversation with them.

Another form of content that is very effective is behind the scenes content. Game stores are about community and your players will be very interested in learning more about what makes your business tick. Talk about your goals for the store, the risks, the wins, changes. Bring them into your world and share what it's like to be behind the counter at their favorite local game store. The show "How it's made" is based on the premise that customers want to know how the world works, and part of their world, a big part, is your game store. So give them a glimpse of the behind the scenes action while putting a human face on your brand.

Authenticity

When it comes to video a lot of people have difficulty once they're in front of a camera. They tend to freeze up, feel awkward, and generally just be uncomfortable with the whole situation.

The good news is that anyone can become comfortable in front of a camera, it just takes time and practice. Which is important because being your authentic self is the best way to get people to know, like, and trust you. Which is the whole reason you should be video marketing in the first place.

Here are some helpful tips when you're just getting started:

#1 Don't be afraid to laugh at yourself.

#2 Breathe, stop and pause when you have to. People tend to talk faster when they are nervous so slow down and breathe.

#3 Pretend you are talking to a customer or a close friend instead of a camera.

#4 Smile! Our emotions go in as well as out. You're more likely to feel happy and enthusiastic if you're smiling.

#5 Don't be afraid to move, get your hands in the camera. Hold something like a pen while filming and use it to illustrate points.

#6 Don't fight the way you naturally speak. Use the same words you would use in a friendly conversation with a customer. Emote, avoid speaking in a monotone voice. Viewers want to see your personality shine through.

#7 Don't look at the screen if you're filming with your smartphone or computer. Make sure you're in the frame before filming and then avoid the screen entirely. Having someone else behind the camera helps here. You will be distracted by how you look if you focus on the screen and come off as distracted because you will be.

Pro Tip: Make eye contact with the camera lens. This can be difficult at first but the viewer will connect with you more than if you were looking away.

#8 Don't punish yourself for a slip of the tongue, just keep on moving.

#9 Try not to worry about how you look or sound, focus on the content and your excitement about it will create a natural connection with the viewer. That said, try to talk about things that naturally excite you.

#10 Don't be afraid to fail or mess up, every mistake is a learning experience on the path to improvement.

CONCLUSION

Now the rest is up to you. This guide has given you the tools and strategies you need to get started streaming your events and marketing your game store with video. We've gone over the equipment and gear you need, the software that brings the setup altogether, and strategies you can use to grow and monetize your future audience.

It's your turn to put these strategies into action, get online and get noticed.



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