

Executing Global Events at Scale: Seven Moves That Separate the Winners from the Write-Offs

International Sporting Events Are Complex.

Here Are Seven Ways to Build Sustainable Value and Repeatable Outcomes

Global sporting events are among the most complex enterprises ever assembled. Yet most are still managed like temporary projects, creating billions in avoidable cost, risk, and lost value. These events make up a multi-billion-dollar industry, worth more than \$485 billion in 2025, and it will only continue to grow. By 2033, the market is set to reach approximately \$885 billion, driven in part by the expansion of key players into international markets.¹

Recurring events such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup, and Formula 1 mobilize tens of thousands of workers, span multiple years, involve dense public-private partnerships, and operate under unmatched public scrutiny with millions of eyes watching. Yet too often, they are managed like a collection of temporary projects rather than the large-scale enterprises they truly are.

Success in this environment is not driven by ambition, but by execution discipline. The difference between a defining global event and a write-off often comes down to how effectively leaders manage complexity across years, stakeholders, and peak demand. Cost overruns, execution failures, and value leakage almost always trace back to unclear ownership, late-stage customization, or governance structures that collapse under peak pressure.

\$885 Billion

The estimated worldwide
value of international sporting
events by 2033

Based on our experience supporting large-scale global events, there are seven moves that event backers can make to create durable value, support repeatability, and separate their events from those that struggle under their own complexity:

1. Design the event as an enterprise, not a one-time project
2. Standardize globally before customizing locally
3. Build for peak demand without embedding peak cost
4. Treat technology as critical infrastructure
5. Monetize the full ecosystem, not just event days
6. Embed cost discipline without diluting the experience
7. Plan the exit as deliberately as the build

1. Sports Event Market Size & Share | Industry Report, 2033

1: Design the Event as an Enterprise, Not a One-Time Project



The most successful global sporting events are structured as multi-year enterprises with a defined lifecycle, not a collection of disconnected projects. Treating the program as an enterprise enables leaders to thoughtfully manage trade-offs, align stakeholders around common objectives, and avoid the fragmentation that often emerges when pressure to deliver is at its highest. It also allows backers to dedicate a team solely to preparing, executing, and winding down the event, ensuring the appropriate attention and manpower is available when and where it's needed.

Develop an Enterprise Mindset

- Avoid fragmentation
- Build a dedicated team
- Standardize processes
- Establish clear ownership
- Create a durable framework to package the event before, during, and after

While these events take place over a short period of time, they often happen year after year. This means that standardized, documented processes are critical. Agreement on a single enterprise operating model that spans planning, execution, and wind-down with clear ownership and decision rights throughout the lifecycle not only supports the current event, but any events held going forward. Additionally, early alignment around operating model design, roles, decision rights, and escalation paths creates a durable framework that can support the organization from planning through execution and wind-down every year.

The world stage is highly complex with shifting political events, tariffs, and even wars changing the landscape of the event with little time to react. As such, an enterprise approach must include flexibility and contingency planning.

2: Standardize Globally Before Customizing Locally



Scale is both the key challenge and the core advantage of global sporting events, and it is easily undermined by excess localization. While some localization is important, especially for international events with a diverse audience, putting too much focus on it can increase complexity and create inconsistent fan experiences. Key functions such as ticketing, accreditation, workforce management, security, and technology platforms should be standardized to drive efficiency and consistency.

To realize the greatest execution advantages from scale, sporting event backers need to establish global standards, and localization governance, early. This allows localization to be handled thoughtfully, as a deliberate exception, and limited to areas where regulation, culture, or fan expectations require it. When global standards are established from the outset, teams on the ground can focus on delivering distinctive, quality experiences rather than rebuilding infrastructure or localized issue resolution.

Global First, Customize Second

- Prevent overfocus on localization
- Drive efficiency and consistency
- Realize the perks of scale
- Establish global standards early
- Create governance around localization

This is also true for hiring, especially outside of the US, where employment law is not as lenient when it comes to temporary staffing. Misinterpreting local regulations can create unintended long-term employment obligations, with costly separation requirements that erode profitability.

3: Build for Peak Demand Without Embedding Peak Cost



Global sporting events face extreme demand spikes that last weeks, not years. As a result, many backers experience value erosion when their organizations embed temporary requirements into permanent cost structures. These can range from employment-related costs, such as hiring full-time employees for short-term events, to licensing and sponsorship deals.

The challenge is not just absorbing peak demand but doing so without hard-wiring temporary needs into permanent cost structures. This can be especially difficult for international events, where organizers must consider various local laws and requirements. High-performing events design operating models that flex, using tiered labor structures, surge capacity, and pre-negotiated vendor arrangements to adapt to short- and long-term needs. This approach preserves agility while preventing peak-driven decisions from becoming long-term financial liabilities.

Keep Temporary Costs Temporary

- Determine which costs should be temporary
- Understand local laws that could lead to embedded costs
- Build flexible operating models
- Focus on agility

4: Treat Technology as Critical Infrastructure



Technology is now the operating backbone of global events, powering seamless fan access, immersive in-venue experiences, the broadcast operations that scale the audience, the security systems that keep it safe, and the workforce coordination that holds it all together. It's not a bolt-on; it is core infrastructure.

The most resilient events treat technology decisions as foundational infrastructure choices rather than discretionary enhancements layered on late in the process. Winners don't chase novelty, they buy reliability. Proven platforms, tight technical integration, clear data management, and early load-testing can de-risk execution and protect cash flows under peak pressure. Equally important is ensuring a consistent, intuitive interface across all platforms so fans and staff navigate systems effortlessly, reducing friction, support burden, and operational risk.

As technology advances and the ways fans experience sporting events changes, event backers and organizers also need to consider live coverage and digital streaming as part of their operating models. There are different ways of approaching packaging before, during, and after the event.

Technology Is the Backbone

- Treat technology as core infrastructure
- Integrate reliable technology
- Create consistency across platforms



5: Monetize the Full Ecosystem, Not Just Event Days



The economic footprint of a global event extends far beyond opening and closing ceremonies. Sponsors, media partners, fans, and host cities engage across a much longer arc.

The economic opportunity of a global event unfolds over years, not weeks, and leaders who recognize this will design revenue models accordingly. Leading programs design revenue strategies that capture pre- and post-event opportunities in the form of content, data, sponsorship extensions, hospitality platforms, and reusable intellectual property. Additionally, treating sponsors as long-term partners, rather than short-term advertisers, unlocks incremental, and more durable, value through extended collaboration.

Create Value Across Event Lifecycles

- Capture pre- and post-event opportunities
- Take advantage of intellectual property
- Build long-term collaboration

6: Embed Cost Discipline Without Diluting the Experience



On event day, operational rigor should be invisible to fans, with disciplined execution happening quietly behind the scenes. Likewise, cost discipline is most effective when it is built into everyday activities rather than imposed over the top through one-off controls.

When grounded in financial rigor and informed by fan and brand impact, continuous cost-to-serve visibility and thoughtful business-case evaluation allow leaders to protect the moments that matter most. The goal is to remove inefficiencies that add cost but don't enhance the fan experience.

Don't Let Cost Discipline Ruin Experience

- Embed cost discipline into day-to-day activities
- Remove inefficiencies
- Maintain the experience

7: Plan the Exit as Deliberately as the Build

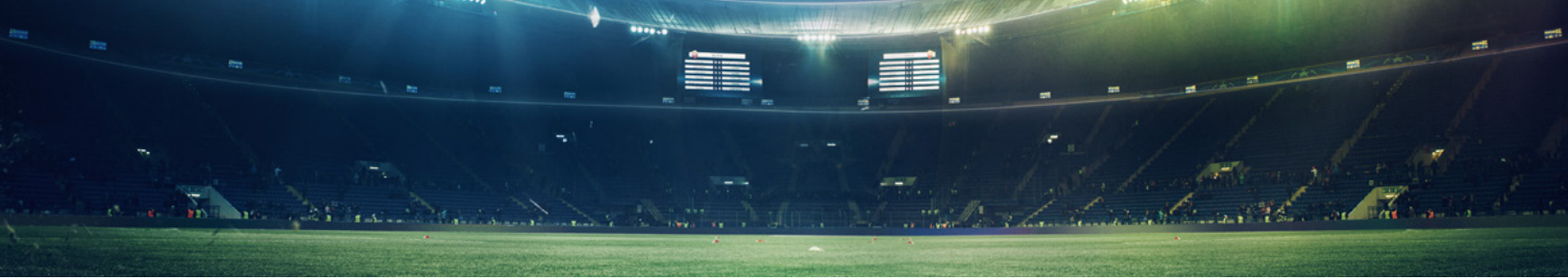


Wind-down is often the least planned phase of global events, but it is one of the most detrimental when mishandled. Short-term decisions can drag out the exit, increasing costs and administrative burden. Too often, though, wind-down planning is deferred until after peak execution despite being one of the largest sources of avoidable value leakage.

Sporting events don't end at the podium. Asset disposition, contract termination, knowledge transfer, and post-event obligations should be defined well before execution peaks. Otherwise, they can take months or even years to complete. A disciplined exit strategy protects investors, organizers, and host cities from stranded costs and tail risk while preserving institutional learning to enhance future events.

Prepare for Wind-Down

- Keep post-event obligations in mind
- Create an exit strategy before peak execution
- Avoid drawn out wind-downs



Create Long-Term Value by Planning for Complexity and Mitigating Risk

Global sporting events succeed when temporary programs are designed with the discipline of enduring enterprises. For private equity investors, corporate backers, and event operators, the opportunity lies not only in delivering the event itself, but in institutionalizing the capabilities, governance, and platforms that enable it.

These seven moves outlined above provide a practical playbook for navigating complexity, protecting downside risk, and unlocking long-term value in one of the most demanding arenas in entertainment.

How Can A&M Help?

At Alvarez & Marsal, we bring a global network of professionals with experience in mergers and acquisitions, performance improvement, valuation, and tax. We combine these capabilities with deep industry expertise to help investors navigate the unique dynamics of global sporting events.

Our teams partner with investors and management to:

- Design and execute capital structures that align with rights cycles and seasonality
- Drive operational improvement programs that safeguard brand integrity and fan engagement
- Unlock value through commercial excellence, sponsorship monetization, and ecosystem expansion
- Support complex, long-term event planning to minimize embedded costs and facilitate wind-downs

With a track record of delivering results across high-profile sports and entertainment assets, A&M is uniquely positioned to help investors and organizers capitalize on opportunities while managing risk.

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