

FAST 101

How local stations can leverage FAST to expand their audience and tap new revenue

Part two of a two-part series



NEWSOURCE

We're at the heart of it.

Table of contents

Local stations	3	Getting started	14
Three common questions	4	The future	19
Pros	5	Key takeaways	24
Perspectives	8		
Best practices	9		
Considerations	13		

FAST 101

Local stations

**Common questions, benefits,
best practices, and considerations.**

Three common questions

01 Does it cannibalize our business?

No. Because the FAST audience tends to skew younger than traditional TV, FAST has been found to be additive.

It allows stations to expand their content offerings to target niche audiences and explore new avenues that meet the changing needs of their community.

02 Should we build our own FAST channel or license our content to another?

Stations with the wherewithal to expand and repackage coverage or to produce live breaking news streams are well positioned to have their own FAST channel. Smaller stations may want to consider licensing portions of their news coverage to another FAST news channel that covers multiple markets.

03 What are the technical and operational requirements?

There are two key relationships required:

1. The platforms that stream content
2. The cloud service that manages content delivery and ad insertion.

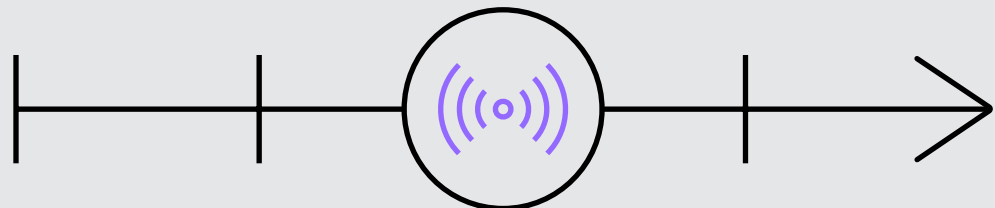
Local stations should reach out to the station group to explore what relationships already exist. Otherwise, a station would need to reach out directly to vendors.

Pros for news organizations



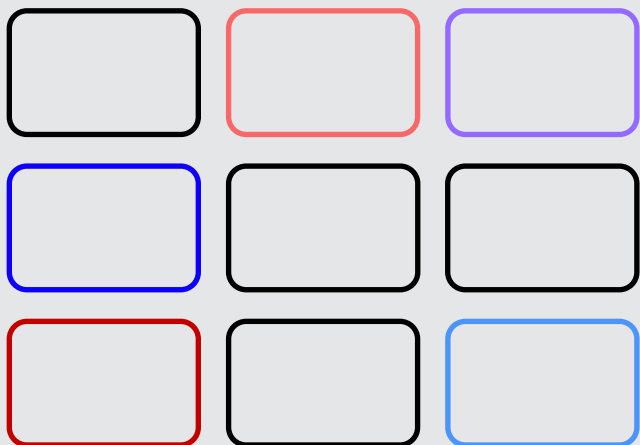
An owned space

A FAST channel is a local news organization's own 24/7 space unlike linear TV where programming blocks are shared with other shows. This additional time gives local stations the ability to experiment and to tell deeper, more complex stories.



Extended live coverage

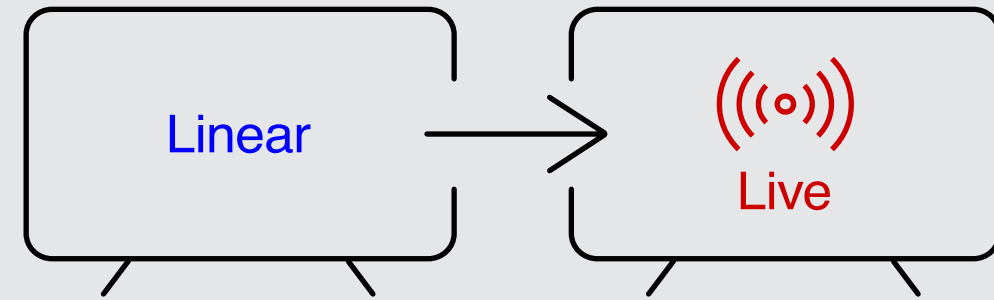
Live programming has proven to be very successful. Stations can be more liberal with live break-ins since other programming is not being interrupted.



Existing content works

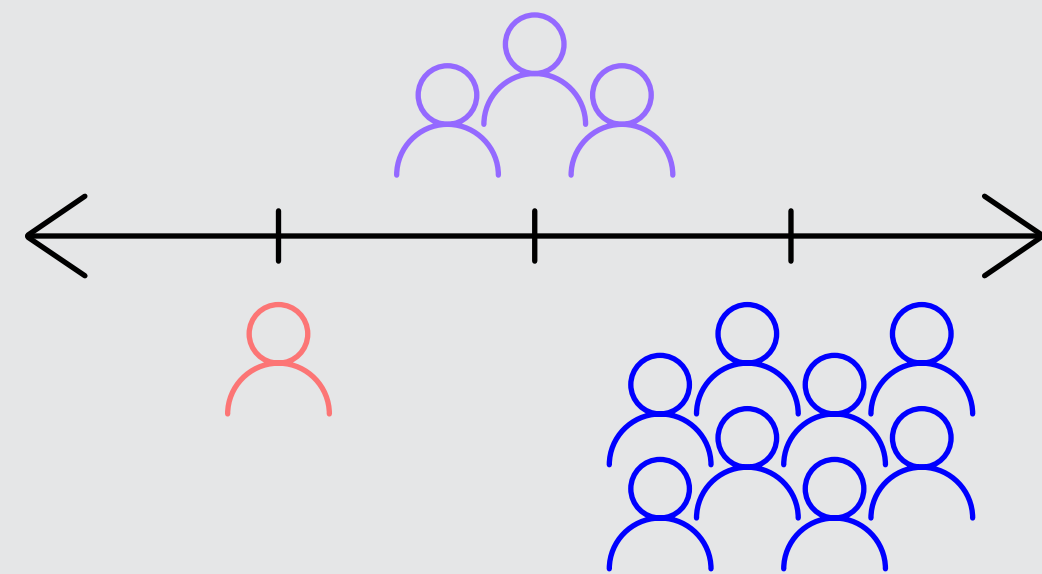
The deep library of content that was created for linear TV can easily port over to a FAST channel.

Pros for news organizations



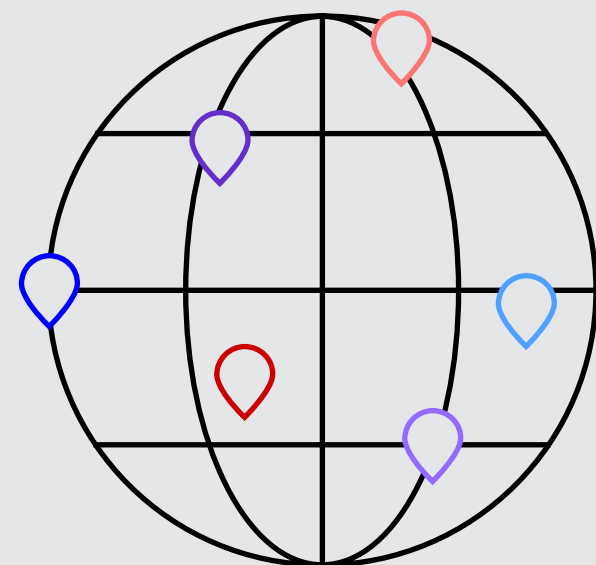
Driving from linear to FAST

Local news stations can promote programming on their FAST channel when other shows are about to take over the linear channel. For example, an anchor might say, “We’re about to resume normal programming, but we will continue live coverage on our Roku live streaming channel.”



More audience for longer

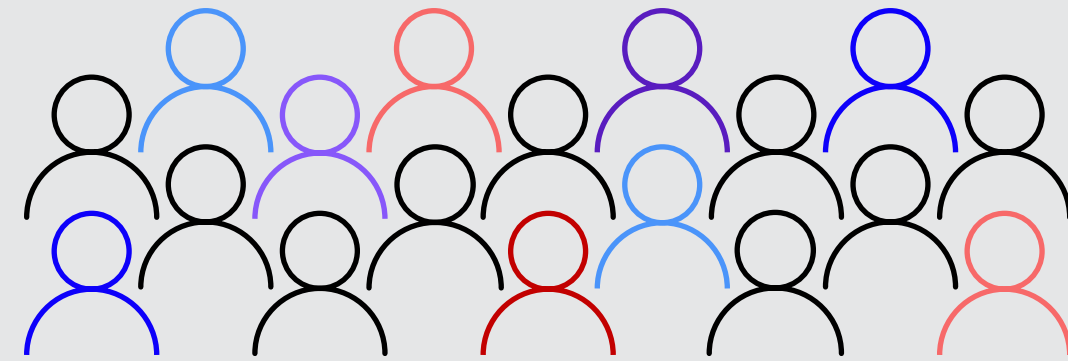
Stations are finding that viewers turn to streaming news during big events—either breaking or planned. The number of viewers tuning in increases over the length of the event.



An expanded footprint

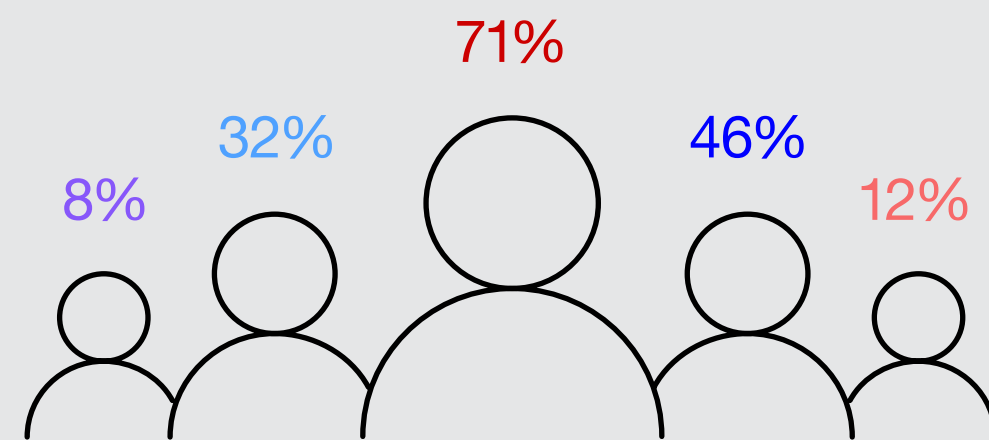
Because viewers have access to local stations around the country, they sometimes watch news from other markets—often in places they used to live or wish to live.

Pros for news organizations



New audiences

FAST viewership trends younger and more diverse than traditional linear television thereby exposing local news content to new, highly sought-after audiences.



More audience data

There is a lot of viewership data available from FAST platforms that enables stations to evaluate what's working and what's not. Stations are able to experiment to determine what kind of programming resonates best with viewers.



Additional ad revenue

As advertisers learn to take advantage of more accurate user data and more customizable ad experiences, CPMs will increase on FAST platforms.

Perspectives from CNN and Warner Bros. Discovery

“We will run our own FAST service... basically we create a flywheel of our own, where we own the full ecosystem, the subscription, the ad-lite and the ad free. And **we take advantage of all the content we have.**”

— David Zaslav, CEO of Warner Bros. Discovery

“This is a great opportunity to showcase highlights of some of the **best CNN content to a broader audience**, offering different genres of stories presented in a fast-paced, short-form style that will appeal to a younger and wider demographic.”

— Meara Erdozain, Senior Vice President of Programming, CNN International

10 Best practices & recommendations

01

Stake your ground as soon as possible before your competitors establish their market positions and capture a larger portion of ad dollars.

02

Have a direct pipeline of communication with the primary FAST platform services (likely via your station group) to highlight to them upcoming event coverage (hurricanes, marathon coverage, large festivals, etc.). These can be reasons for the services to promote a channel in a prominent position in their guide or to notify viewers in a certain ZIP code.

03

Experiment with on-air talent who can lend personality or opinion to your FAST channel coverage, giving them a platform to build a loyal audience, much like in social media.

10 Best practices & recommendations: Graphics

04

Maintain all graphic specs for each platform so tiles can be quickly produced.

05

Rather than always using a generic logo for the promo tile in the FAST channel platform guide, swap it out with a special graphic when you have event coverage or other special programming. This will help it stand out to local viewers.

06

Text or graphic updates to the FAST channel guide generally take about 48 hours. That means planned events can be promoted ahead of time but don't count on special graphics for breaking news.

10 Best practices & recommendations: Programming

07

Shows should be 15 minutes or longer. That's the minimum length required to have it labeled in the electronic programming guide. Build show lengths from there to 30 mins, an hour, etc.

08

Frequently feature weather and traffic cameras—viewers stick around to see what's happening in places that matter to them.

09

Repurpose and revisit archival content. When it comes to filling the time slots look for creative ways to tap stories that garnered high visibility in the past. Seek to create more evergreen content that can be rolled out periodically, like holiday and event backgrounders.

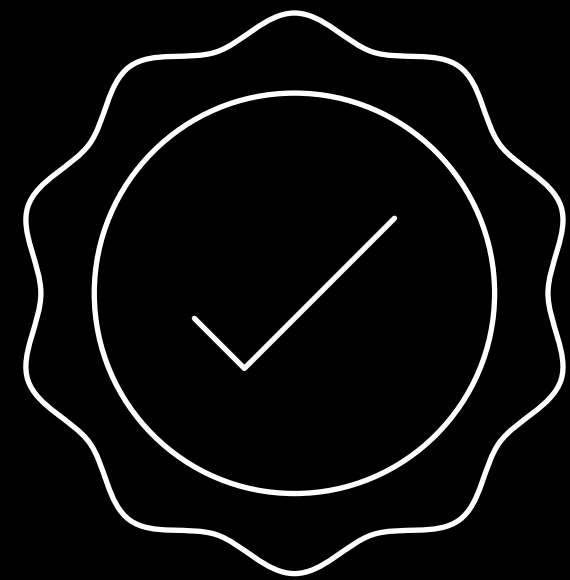
10 Best practices & recommendations: Sports

10

Feature hyper local sports coverage of high school and junior college games.

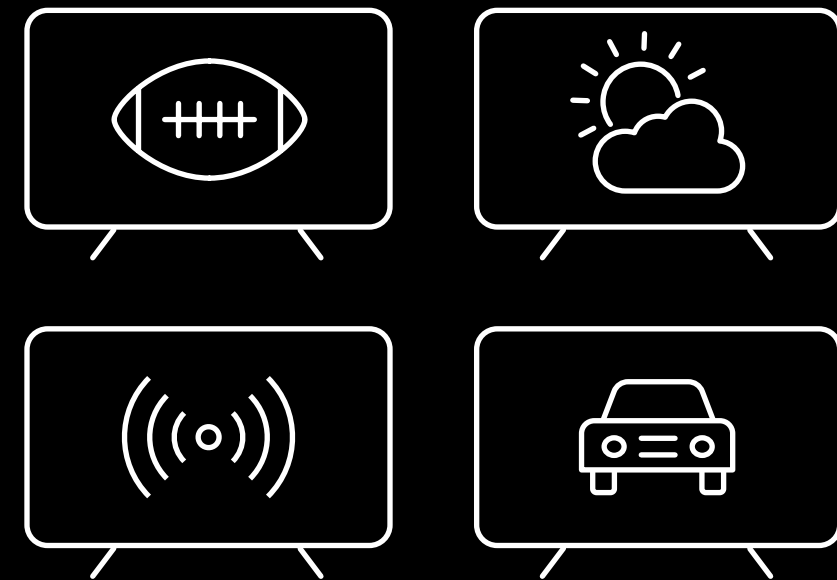
“The most successful thing we’ve seen on that front is working with the state associations on state championships, which are concentrated tournaments that take place over a period of days in sports like hockey and football,” said Greg Morrow, GM of ViewNexa by BitCentral. “These get huge amounts of traffic and there are sponsorship opportunities. We are talking live content with huge tune-in times. People tune in all day long to watch, and it draws audiences outside of the local community.”

Programming considerations



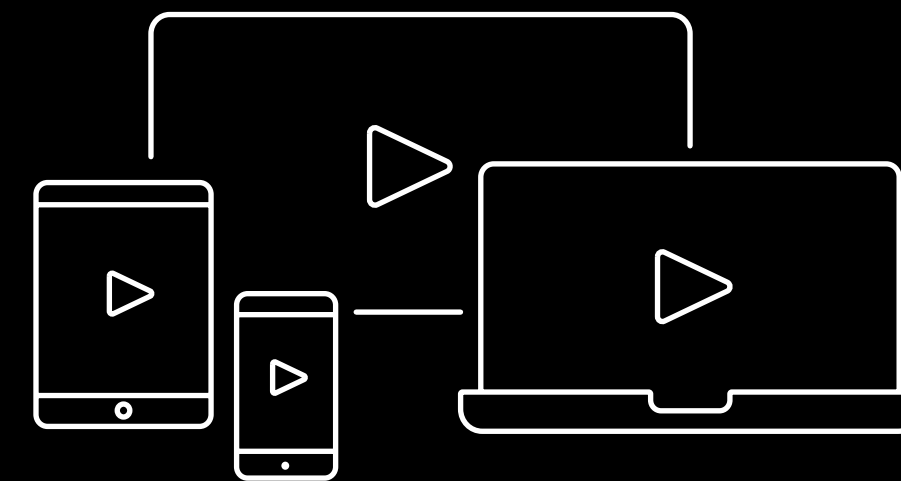
Quality

Maintain content and graphic quality. Don't fill it with junk, clip reels, or social media feeds. Editorial curation is key.



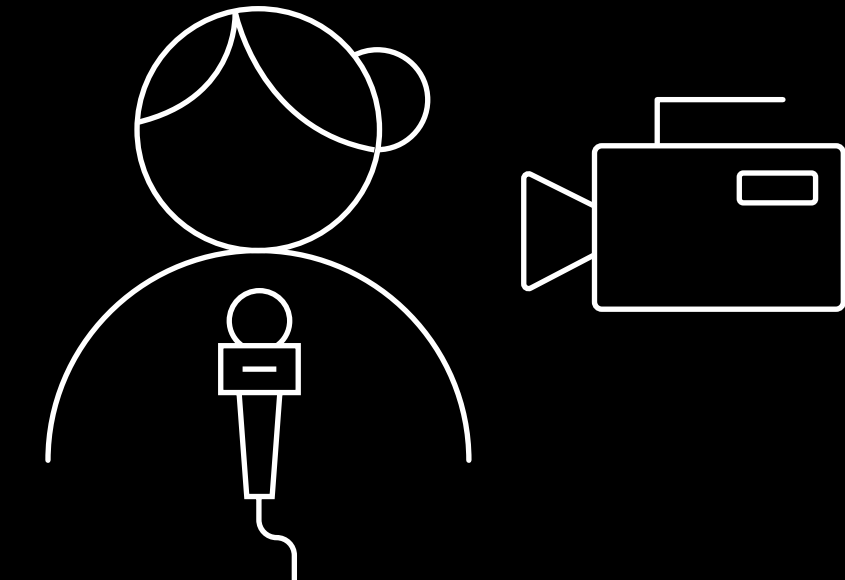
Oversaturation

Balance brand proliferation. It's easy to spin up different channels (weather, top news, sports), but cost, content requirements, and oversaturation of brand must be balanced.



Volume of content

Make sure the content is there. Can enough broadcasts, packaged content, and live streams be produced to operate a 24/7 channel?



Resources

Is there someone already on staff who can oversee FAST channel strategy and programming or does someone need to be hired? Do additional journalists or producers need to be hired to support additional content?

FAST 101

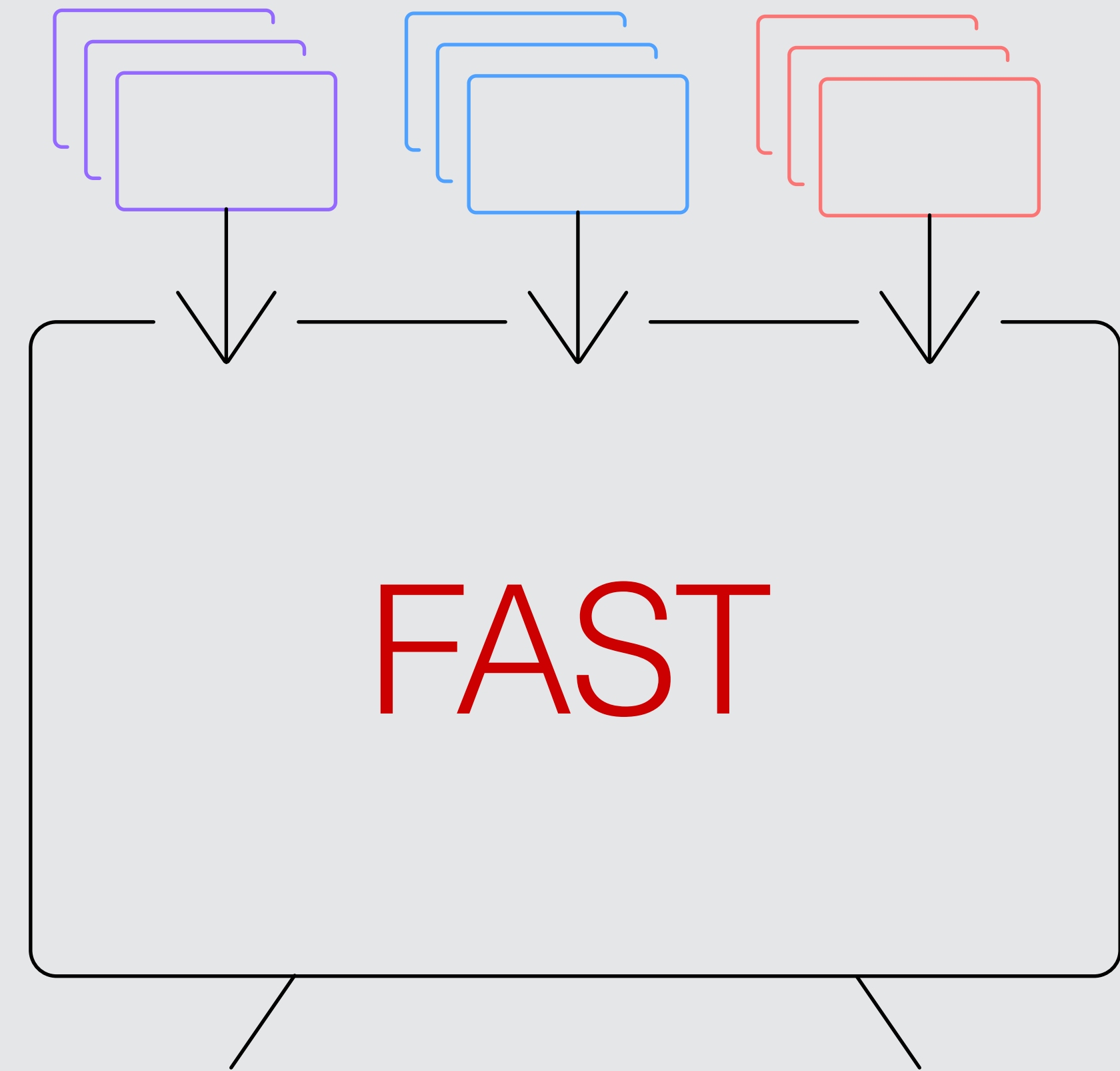
Getting started

Four steps to begin building a FAST strategy

01 Explore the technical implications

Are you already part of a station group that can support the spin up of a FAST channel?

Do you already have relationships with vendors that help deliver and manage content delivery and ad insertion for FAST channels?

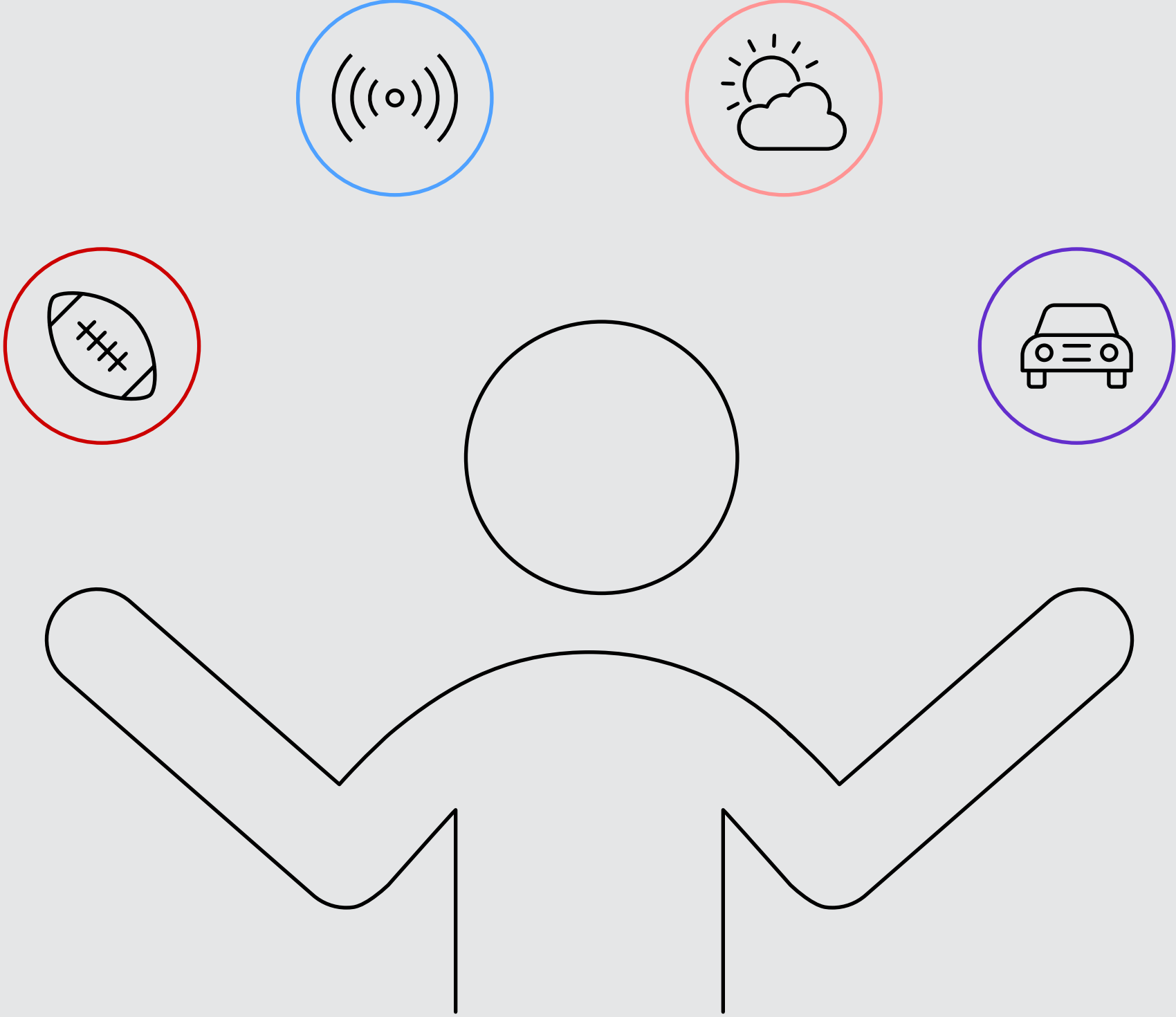


02 Determine the content strategy

Will you start out with mostly live content because it's easier to fill the hours? Or do you have the ability to run more frequent newscasts?

Do you have the resources to cover stories in more depth and build special coverage of more evergreen stories?

What role should sports, weather, and traffic play?



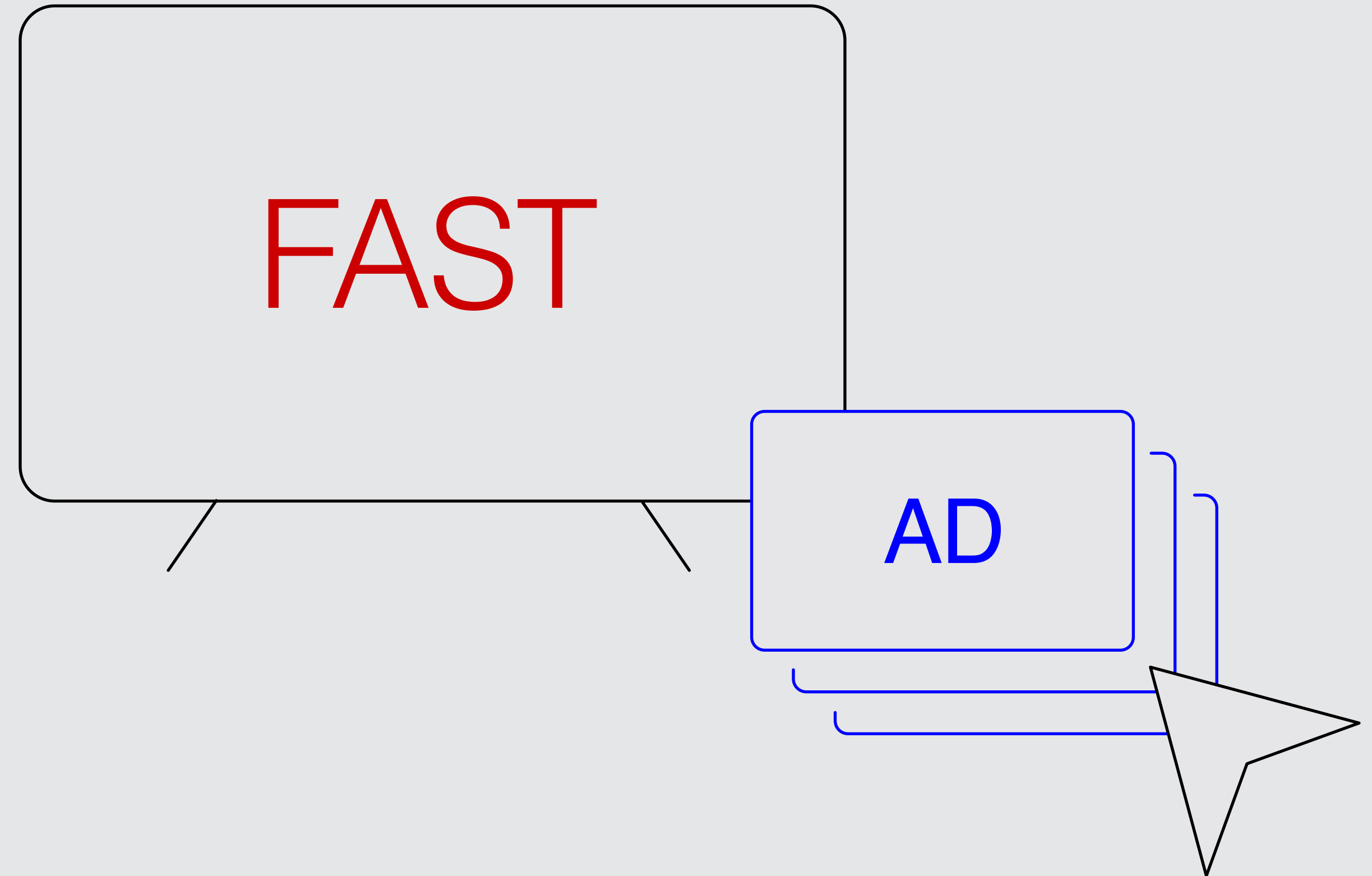
03

Identify a revenue model

How will you approach ad sales?

Will you run your own channel and support it with your own sales team or license your content to a platform and outsource the ad sales?

Do you have the support structure in place to enable the sales team to go after FAST opportunities?



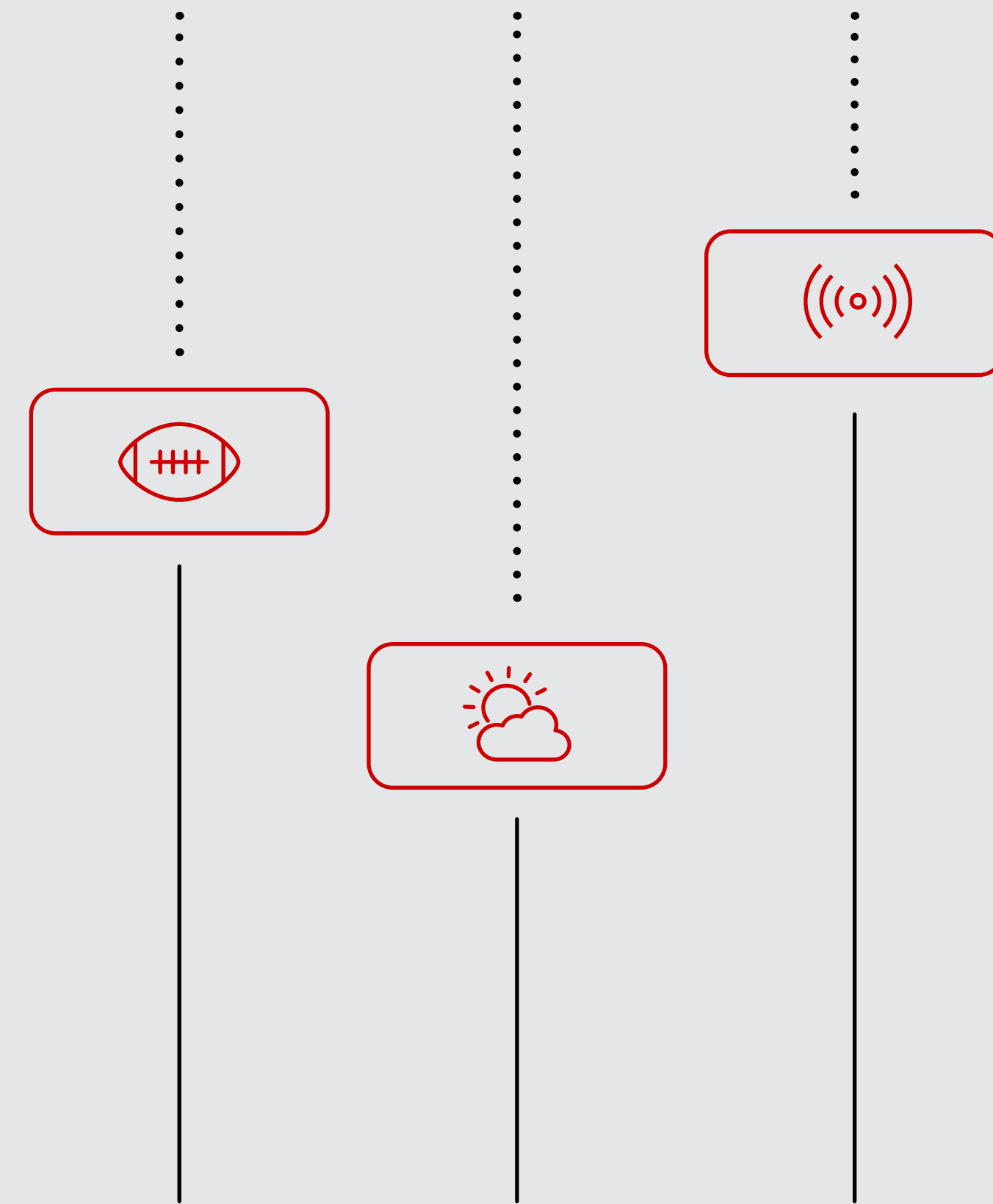
04

Be flexible and adjust

Start with a plan, but be ready to adapt to changing conditions.

As you experiment and determine what kind of content is of interest to the audience and what level of resources are required, shift your strategy to support it.

Regularly monitor analytics and make adjustments.



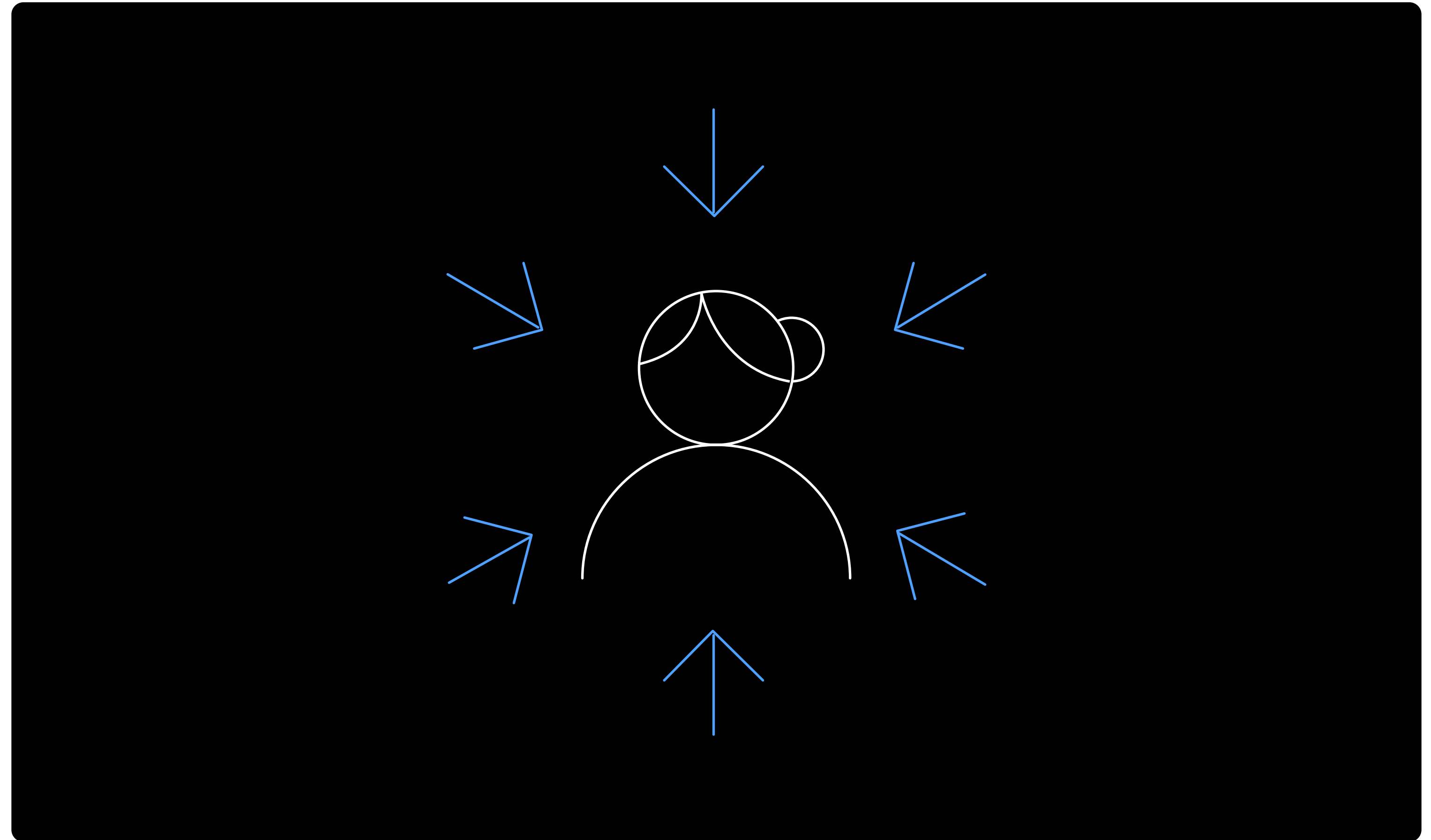
FAST 101

The future of FAST

What to expect in the near term

Better personalization to combat issues with content discovery

- By associating more detailed metadata (e.g., show mood or scenario), content recommendations could be much more highly targeted.
- The programming guide could become more personalized based on user's location, viewing habits, and key art preferences.

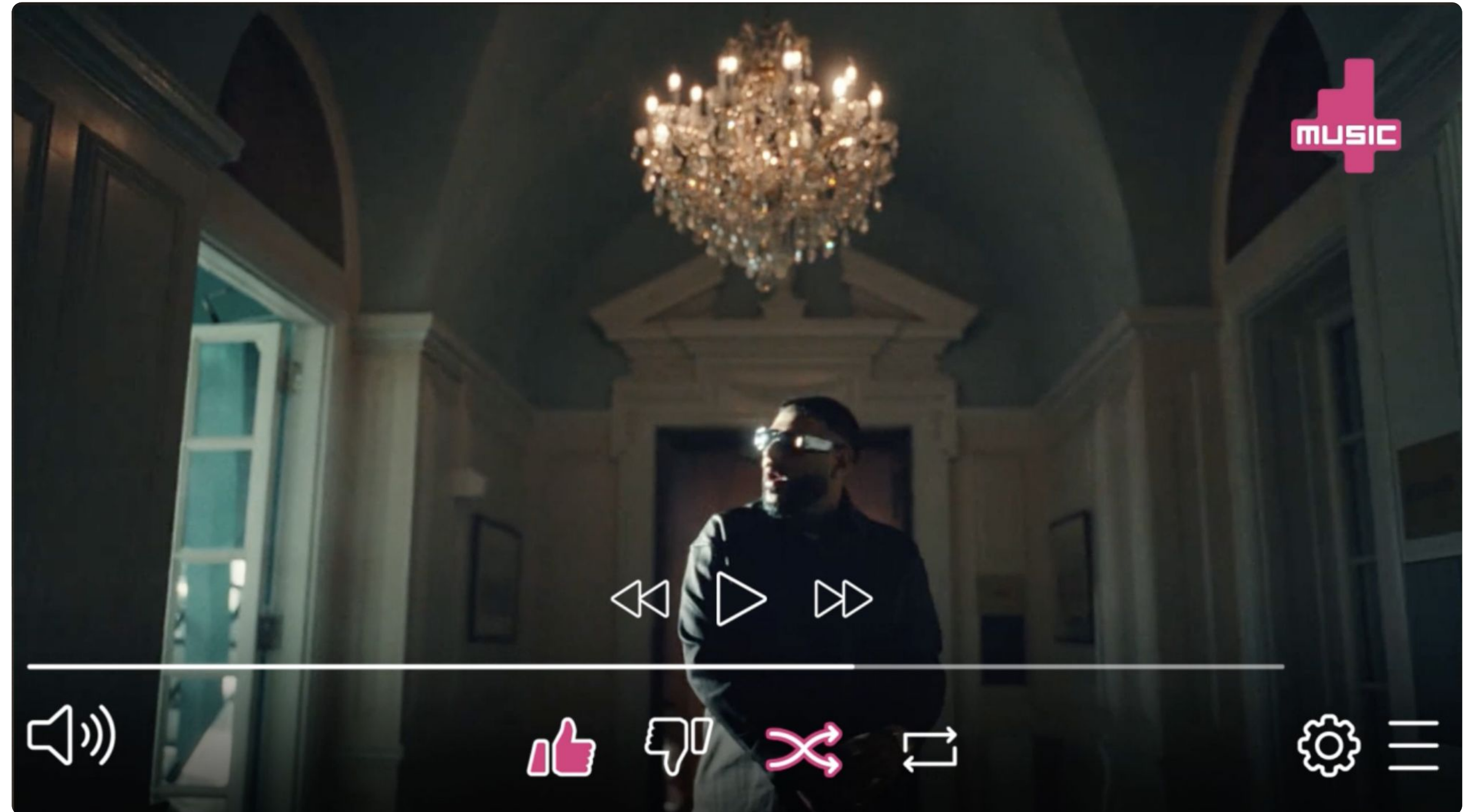


“Service through hyper-personalization, where a channel can be created on the fly based on the viewer’s interests and preferences, is where the future of FAST is headed.”

— Paul Cheesbrough, CEO, Tubi Media Group, at Amagi LA FAST 2023

The introduction of interactivity

- Enabling viewers to like, dislike, and add programs to a list of favorites or build their own play list could further invest them in a FAST platform.
- The ability to switch seamlessly between linear and VOD content that's hyper personalized could simplify the experience.
- Providing recaps and highlights for viewers joining a live program already in progress could create a stickier viewing experience.



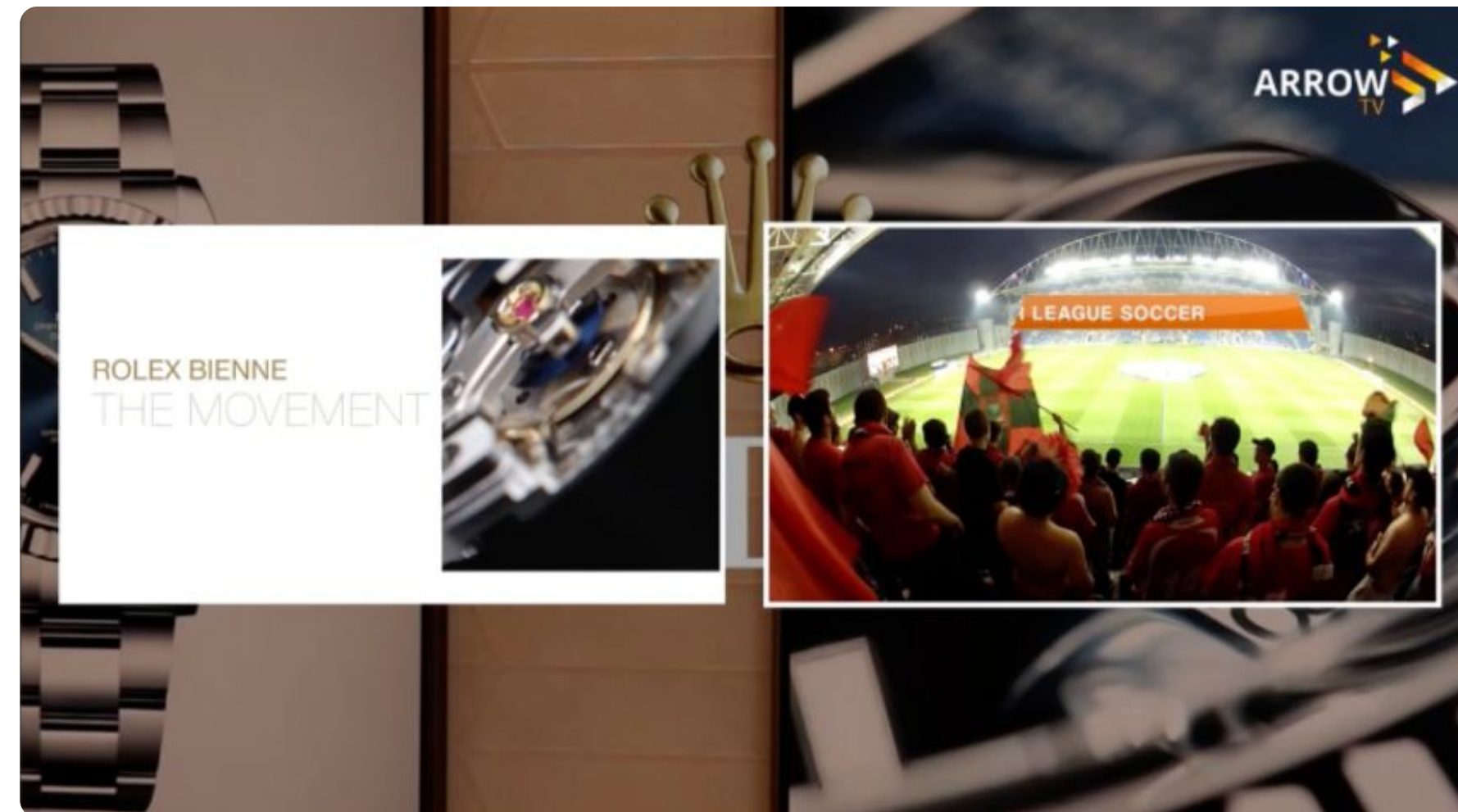
Improved advertising experiences

- Brands could be dynamically inserted into programming, e.g., a different laundry detergent might appear next to a laundry basket.
- Personalized graphical overlays, L-bands, squeeze backs, and tune-in cards could appear alongside programming. Roku and Pluto are beginning to explore these.



Improved advertising experiences

- An ad unit could play picture-in-picture next to live programming without having to cut away from the stream.
- The length of ad units could shift from the standard linear models to units of any length.
- The slates could go away, letting viewers who don't get an ad advance to programming rather than putting them "on hold."



FAST 101

Key takeaways

Four key takeaways

01

If you're not already planning for FAST, you should be.

02

Determine your content strategy and the resources to support it.

03

Work with your sales team to determine a revenue strategy.

04

Pay close attention to analytics. Experiment, monitor, adapt.



To learn how CNN Newsource can help you in your FAST journey, contact us at:

cnnnewsourc@cn.com
cnnnewsourc.com