

 **effie**Awards
United Kingdom

2025 Effie Winner



McCANN



Hello

We've pulled together some of the most interesting and inspiring 2025 cases to bring to life what an Effie award-winning entry looks like. We hope that they provide some helpful pointers for those of you tasked with writing submissions for this year's awards.

The Everyday Tactician: How getting a football club promoted helped Xbox take a step closer to the future of gaming - Xbox by McCann (entered in the Entertainment & Sports category) shows how to explain complex sector dynamics in a way that anyone can understand them, and demonstrates how a deep understanding of your audience can unlock a transformative new marketing approach. It helped to make Xbox Effie UK's Brand of the Year 2025.

For more information and advice to help you write your best entry and maximise your chances of winning visit [our Awards website](#).

If you have any questions at any stage of the entry process, please ask and we'll be happy to help. Just email effieuk@effie.org

We wish you all the best in this year's Effie Awards UK!

Effie UK



Executive Summary

The Challenge

To win over a new audience where previous campaigns have failed, despite having nothing new to say about the product.

The Insight

Football Manager gamers dream of recognition and respect amongst the wider footballing fandom. And in truth, they deserve it.

The Strategic Idea/build

We offered a real job at a real football club to Football Manager gamers playing via Xbox Game Pass subscriptions

Bringing the Strategy to Life

Eschewing a superficial rent-a-soccer-celeb approach, we started with recruitment and tracked what happened as the story unfolded, maximizing earned media.

The Results

Unit sales of Football Manager increased +62% and Gamers playing Football Manager via a Game Pass subscription increased +56%.

Why is this entry an outstanding example of effective marketing in this Effie entry category?

Having nothing new to say is a comms challenge most readers will be familiar with.

As is talking to an audience who've already shown they're not interested.

Football Manager's one of the most successful PC games ever. As part of Xbox's development of third-party revenue-streams, they wanted to tempt its 6Mn PC gamers behind their Game Pass subscription paywall.

It hadn't worked.

Time to go again.

This is a story about dreams becoming reality. For Xbox, a football enthusiast and a lower-league football club.

And how deep audience understanding enabled us to win over PC gamers, generating huge sales impacts.

1A. Before your effort began, what was the state of the brand’s business and the overall category in which it competes? What was the strategic challenge that stemmed from this business situation?

“It’s more than a dream come true, it’s a fair few multiple dreams.” – Nathan Owolabi, Everyday Tactician.

This is a story where everyone wins.

But before we get into that, let's take a step back.

For decades, gaming was a battle of consoles. Xbox against PlayStation against Wii ...

Then in 2017 Xbox took the revolutionary decision to shift from selling gaming hardware to selling gaming subscriptions:



For a monthly fee, Xbox Game Pass gives gamers access to a massive library of Xbox and third-party games. It’s the gaming equivalent of a streaming platform like Netflix that offers subscribers original programming in ‘Stranger Things’ and ‘Bridgerton’ as well as classics such as ‘Friends’ or ‘The Office’ made by third-parties.

Game Pass allows you to play anywhere, with any controller, on any screen: TVs, PCs, laptops, phones, tablets. And whilst Xbox will continue to make consoles for now, its future is Game Pass.

As Phil Spencer, CEO Microsoft Gaming, put it:

“Xbox is not in the business of out-consoling Sony or out-consoling Nintendo. Xbox isn’t just trying to sell you a console, they’re selling you an ecosystem. This is about getting gamers to subscribe for life. It’s about the long game.”

The commercial logic's simple: more gameplay drives more revenue. This increase in revenue flows from increasing the number of subscribers, maximising each subscriber's subscription fee (by trading them up to Ultimate) and driving their in-game spending (through in-game add-ons).

It's a sound theory - according to Phil Spencer, a game's engagement increases eightfold when added to Game Pass. And this heightened engagement translates into revenue generating behaviour - the more players play a game, the more likely they are to trade-up to the premium subscription or buy in-game add-ons.

Moreover, including games made by third-party developers opens-up significant additional revenue opportunities for Xbox.

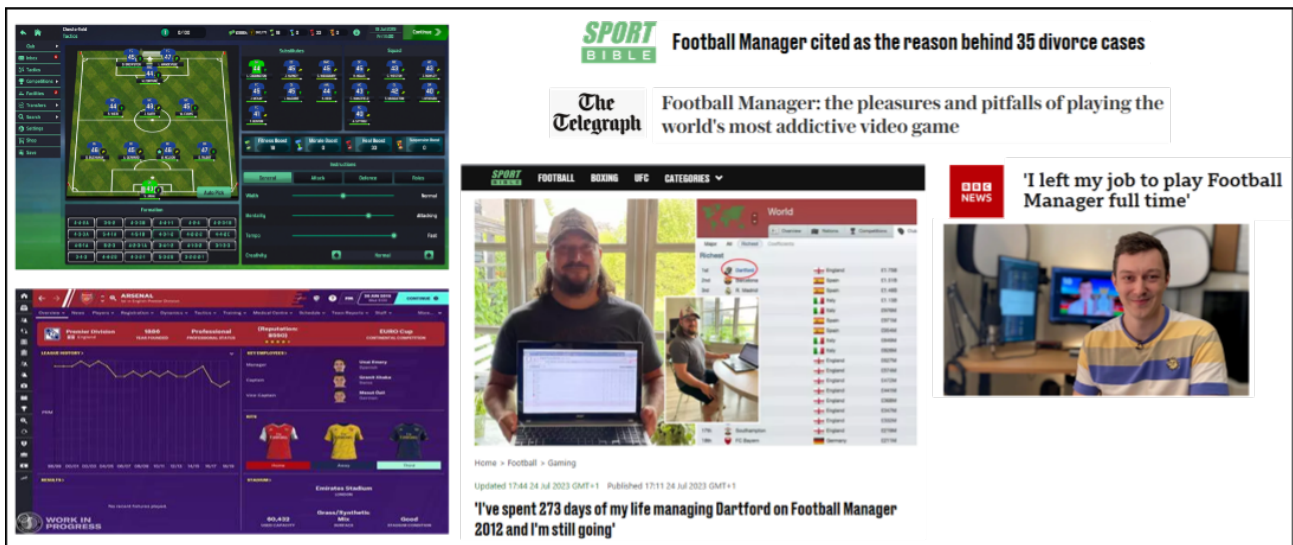
A win-win.

Well, not necessarily. Like any fundamental business transformation, it was a big gamble. One that would only pay-off if Xbox could persuade enough gamers to subscribe and, once on the platform, to play as much as possible.

So where does football fit in?

Football Manager is a competitive match simulation game that tasks its players with managing a football club.

Launched in 1992 on PCs, Football Manager is one of the biggest-selling PC games ever, and its complexity can often drive long hours of gameplay, making it a potentially valuable asset for Game Pass:

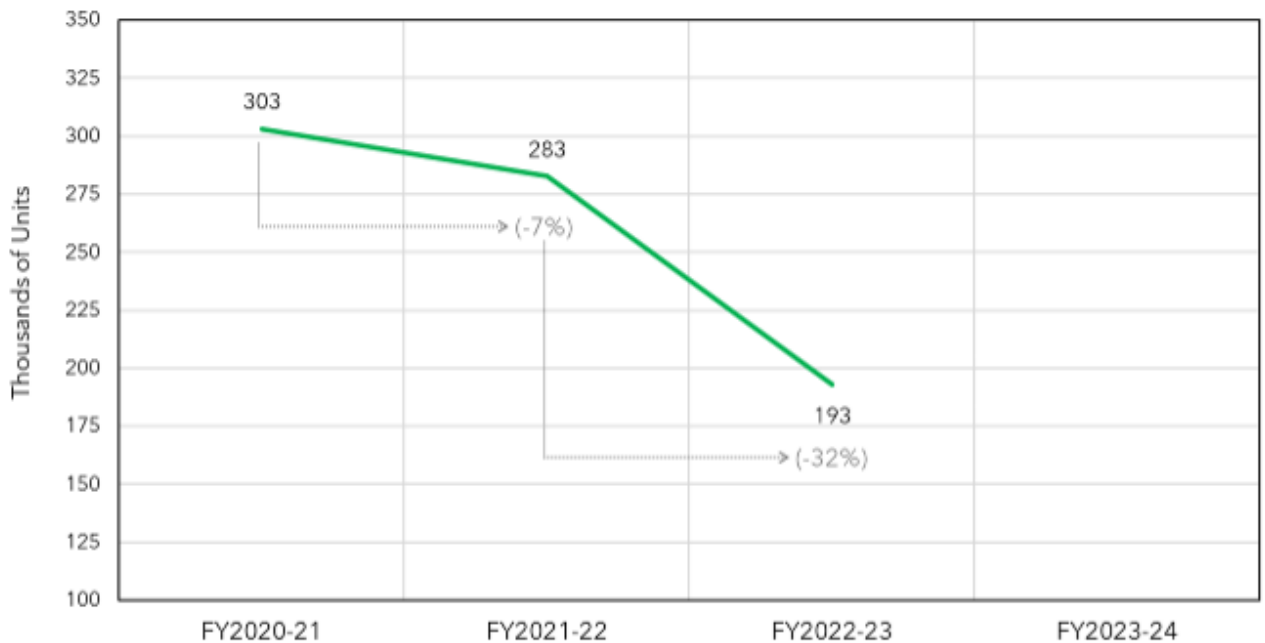


So in 2022, as part of its strategy to build third-party game revenues and drive subscriptions and gameplay, Xbox moved Football Manager onto Game Pass, hoping its 6Mn PC gamers would follow and sign-up to spend many happy hours playing Football Manager behind Game Pass's paywall.

They didn't.

Not only did Game Pass subscriptions not increase, but unit sales of Football Manager went into an ever-steeper decline:

Annual unit sales of Football Manager
(total for both PC and Console)



Source: Xbox internal data

In fact, despite significant marketing support, neither Football Manager's 2022 nor 2023 editions succeeded in growing subscriptions. It seemed PC gamers just weren't interested. Football Manager might be a hugely popular game, but not on Xbox. It was too embedded in the gaming world of PCs. Why subscribe to Game Pass? There was no reason to.

But Xbox weren't ready to admit defeat.

So when it was time to launch the 2024 edition, the brief was straightforward and brutal: go again, but this time win!

Which meant driving more gamers to play Football Manager, getting them to play as much as possible, and harnessing that engagement so they'd happily sign-up to a Game Pass subscription.

But there was one major problem. Unfortunately, there was nothing new to say about the new 2024 Football Manager that hadn't been said before about previous editions. Besides, to the eagle-eyed hardcore, the Xbox version of the game was a slightly dialed down version.

There were still no concrete, specific, rational reasons to give PC gamers that could persuade them to choose to play Football Manager behind the Game Pass paywall. They weren't interested before. Why should they be now?

1B. What were the Business, Marketing and Campaign/Activity objectives that you set to address your challenge? What were the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set against each objective? Provide specific numbers/percentages for each and benchmarks wherever possible.

Business Objective

To increase Game Pass subscriptions by increasing sales of Football Manager's 2024 Edition, in particular amongst PC gamers.

Rationale

The Xbox business strategy depended on getting more players behind the Game Pass paywall and driving more game-play once they were there.

The primary Game Pass audience is PC gamers, but previous Football Manager campaigns had failed to recruit them.

Benchmarks:

- Game Pass subscriptions +2%
- Football Manager 2024 Edition sales +25% above 2023 Edition
- Total Football Manager sales +40%
- % Football Manager 2024 Edition sales from PC gamers 60%+

Measurement

Game Pass subscriptions.

Unit sales of Football Manager 2024 Edition.

Total unit sales of Football Manager.

Proportion of unit sales of Football Manager 2024 Edition bought by PC gamers.

Marketing Objectives

Marketing Objective #1

To increase the number of Football Manager players, in particular the number who are doing so through Game Pass subscriptions.

Rationale

In order to meet the business objective, the new 2024 Edition of Football Manager must attract as many new gamers as possible, and most of these players be persuaded to pay for the game through a Game Pass subscription. Simply selling more Football Manager games wouldn't deliver Xbox's business strategy of using it to drive Game Pass subscriptions.

Benchmarks:

- Football Manager players +15%
- Football Manager players paying for the game via Game Pass +30%

Measurement

Total number of Football Manager players.

Number of Football Manager players paying for the game via a Game Pass subscription.

Marketing Objective #2

Grow the total number of hours Football Manager gamers play the game on Xbox.

Rationale

As well as increasing the number of Football Manager players, players also had to be encouraged to play the game for as long as is reasonably possible. This matters because the evidence shows clearly that the more players play a game, the more likely they are to trade-up to the premium subscription or buy in-game add-ons.

Benchmark: +20% total hours played on Football Manager.

Measurement

Number of hours Football Manager gamers play the game.

Campaign Objectives**Activity Objective #1**

Drive significant engagement and excitement with Football Manager so fans want to get involved - they will be sufficiently excited to seek out the game and subscribe to Game Pass.

Rationale

It was clear there were no rational arguments to persuade Football Manager gamers to sign-up to Game Pass. So we therefore had to develop a campaign that was so incredibly engaging they'd become emotionally predisposed.

Due to a lack of tracking data with which to measure KPIs, no quantified benchmarks were set. That said, the campaign's effectiveness was to be evaluated on the basis of evidence about its marketing and business impacts (as per above).

Measurement

Xbox don't conduct marcomms tracking studies so there is little data available. Therefore, measurement depended on audience reactions and engagement (eg. in social-media), and campaign interactions

Activity Objective #2

Build brand affinity amongst PC gamers who don't have an Xbox console, to increase their willingness to subscribe to Game Pass.

Rationale

Whilst brand perception shifts weren't an explicit objective, the assumption was that if the campaign is engaging enough to drive emotional predisposition this would be reflected in more positive feelings about Xbox amongst the audience.

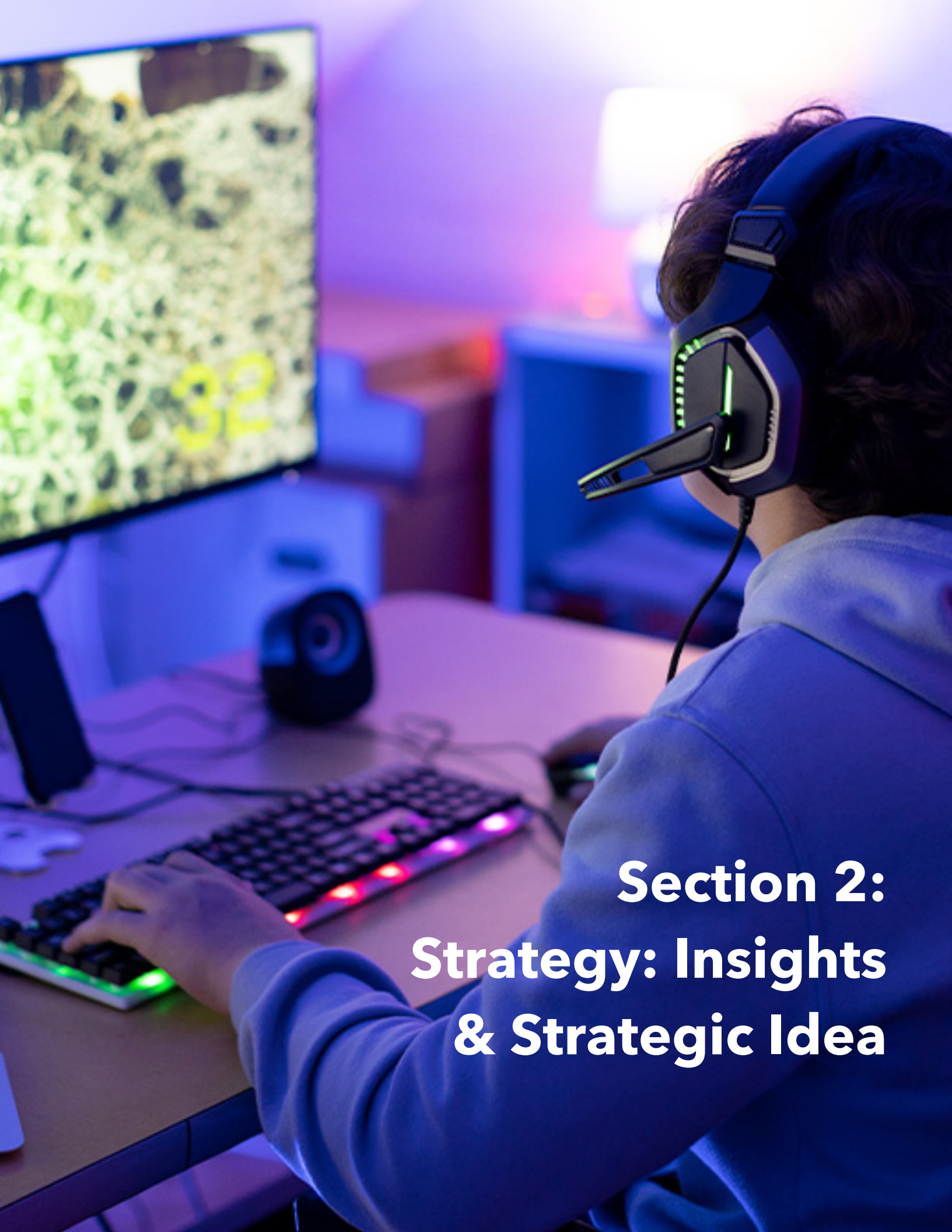
Due to a lack of tracking data with which to measure KPIs, no quantified benchmarks were set. That said, the campaign's effectiveness was to be evaluated on the basis of evidence about its marketing and business impacts (as per above).

Measurement

Xbox don't conduct game-specific brand tracking, so we had to rely on brand level metrics. However, certain key statements enabled us to assess whether the campaign was working as intended.

Data sources Section 1

- Xbox internal sales data (units sold)
- Xbox internal data (Game Pass user engagement)



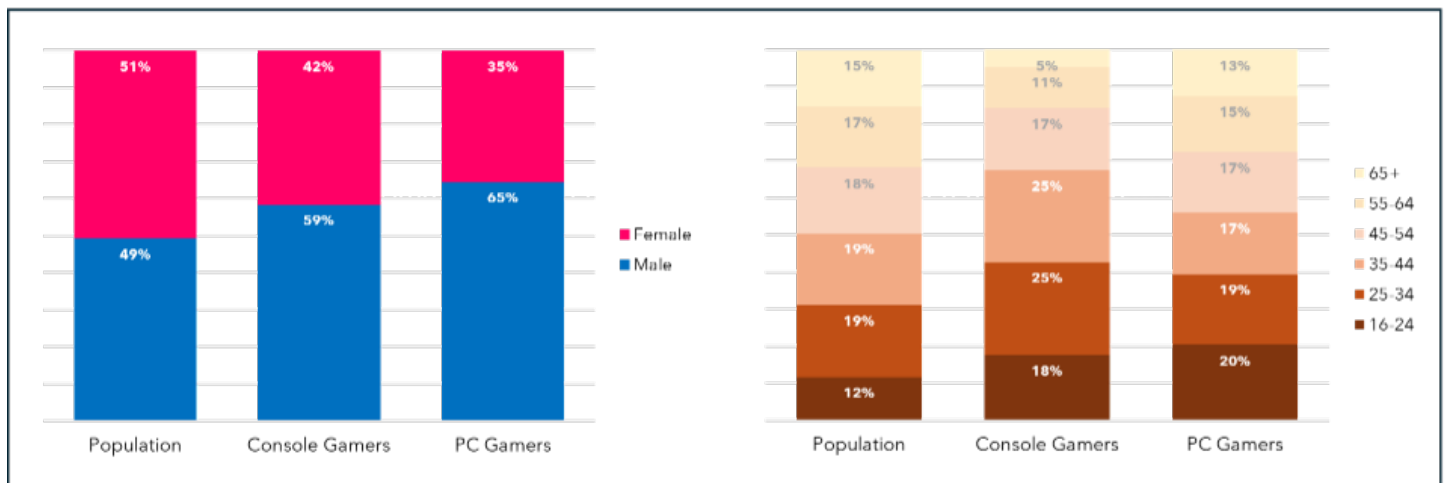
Section 2: Strategy: Insights & Strategic Idea

2A. Define the target audience(s) you were trying to reach and explain why it was/they were relevant to the brand and the challenge.

The campaign objectives were to drive more gamers to play Football Manager, getting them to play as much as possible, and harnessing that engagement so they'd happily sign-up to a Game Pass subscription. Given which, the broad target was obviously gamers, with a core primary audience of PC gamers.

In the UK there are roughly 16.7Mn console and 8.4Mn PC gamers. Compared to the population, both segments skew male and younger (under 45), PC gamers more likely to be slightly older and male (partly because 'proper' gaming PCs are expensive, so adults with decent disposable income are better able to afford them):

Demographic Profiles of Console Gamers and PC Gamers vs Population Profile
(% columns)



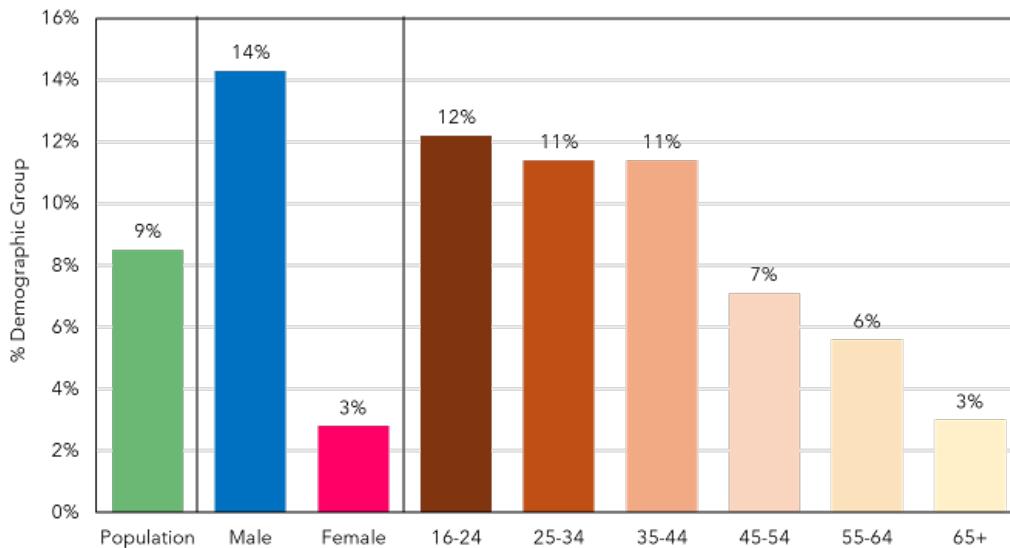
Source: GWI

PC gamers are a particularly tough crowd. Research shows they tend to be quite set in their ways. They enjoy a lot of games they've known and loved for many years and stick to the platforms and ways of accessing games they trust. Moreover, they see themselves as the 'cognoscenti of gamers' - they've been willing and able to invest 'properly' in their pastime, and value rich, immersive experiences that offer complexity and challenge:



Within this overall audience, we'd obviously be targeting people sufficiently interested in football to not only want to spend time playing a game like Football Manager, but also to be willing to pay a subscription to do so. The types of gamer most likely to buy into Football Manager have remained largely unchanged since launch, with young males over-indexing (14% males being Football Manager players vs just 3% females):

Penetration of Football Manager By Demographics



Source: GWI

More specifically, the challenge of recruiting more Game Pass subscribers was significant. Consumers feel overwhelmed by the pervasiveness of subscription models across all manner of sectors - entertainment, gaming, software, food & drink, etc. Indeed, YouGov data shows 60% of UK consumers report 'subscription fatigue' due to the never-ending list of so-called 'no-brainer' subscriptions. 31% have cancelled or removed at least one streaming service in the last 12 months, and an even greater portion (39%) say they're likely to cancel at least one service in the next 12 months.

So to sum up, we were talking to an audience who were entirely happy with what they were already doing, who felt they knew best, and who were so fed-up paying subscriptions that they were more likely to cancel existing subscriptions than take out a new one.

It is fair to say we were going to need a strong game plan!

2B. Describe your insight(s) here. Explain the thinking that led you to your insight(s).

And yet we had nothing new to say about Football Manager ...

Time to think. Hard.

Every video game has a devoted community behind it, with players who live and breath it, and who will do anything and everything they can to experience it in as many ways as they can. No two gamer communities are precisely the same - the 'Rocket League' community isn't the same as 'Call of Duty'. Community cultures are highly distinctive. Their rules are bespoke, their traditions different. They've built-up around iconic game characters, gaming tropes and gamers. These communities get tattoos, married and build lifelong friendships, leading to trips across the world to meet in real-life. Frankly, if you're not part of one of these communities, the degree of their passion will likely blow your mind.

As a brand, Xbox promises to 'Power Your Dreams'. So what are the unique dreams of the Football Manager community?

The game's fuelled by an immense database of insights into players, coaches and physios, collected by 1,300 scouts in 51 countries. Even professionals use it:



So whilst games like 'Rocket League' are brilliant but mad, Football Manager gamers need real-world skills. They spend thousands of hours poring over data, studying tactics. It's almost like a full-time job. They weigh-up the best virtual physio to hire for their virtual reserve team. They implement individual training plans for players returning from injury. Build in-game tactics from scratch. Choreograph set-piece routines. We could keep going but we'd run out of wordcount.

And because the best proof of these finely honed skills is to win against all odds, they obsess about lower-league clubs. Anyone can help Barcelona win the Champions League, but Accrington Stanley! Kudos is in direct proportion to club obscurity. Even Jay from 'Inbetweeners' took immense pride in allegedly taking Woking FC into the Champions League.

And crucially, they crave recognition for their achievements - they'll even wear suits for simulated cup finals!



Sadly, though, the football community didn't see it that way. They derided gamers as naive bedroom pretenders living a fantasy:



Which is actually rather ironic.

The average football fan is an 'armchair manager' who comments freely on manager decisions, proclaiming to all and sundry how they could do a better job, despite having done nothing to prove themselves or earn that right.

Unlike Football Manager gamers who demonstrably have...

2C. What was the strategic idea or build followed from your insights that enabled you to pivot from challenge to solution for your brand and customer?

If we could earn them the respect they dream of, perhaps we could motivate more football loving PC gamers to join the Football Manager community.

We could've just wristed-off some nice ads featuring football celebs praising Football Manager and its gamers.

But we couldn't see how that would cut it.

From Pele advertising Viagra and George Best sausages, to Jamie Redknapp advertising Thomas Cook and Gary Lineker Walkers crisps, it seemed to us rent-a-footballer ads were too 'been-there-done-that' and lacked credibility or substance:



To earn respect we had to convince the football world that Football Manager gamers were genuinely skilled. Put simply, that a Football Manager gamer is worthy of a real job in a real football club.

Ok. Great ambition. But would any football team actually give a job to a gamer?!

Well, obviously not the worldclass clubs with 50+ backroom staff and powerful data-science departments. But on the other hand, those lower-league sides much beloved by the Football Manager community are precisely the clubs that can't afford tacticians and yet arguably need the most help.

So we decided to take a punt and pitched the idea to twenty National League teams. To our surprise, all twenty were interested!

One stood out: Bromley FC. 'The Ravens' were a team with limited backroom staff, but tonnes of ambition, despite never making it into the professional leagues. They were prepared to give a gamer a shot, for real.

And thus we built on our insight to create a way of helping the Football Manager community to fulfil its dream ...

We'll give any UK Football Manager gamer the chance to apply for a salaried job as a Support Performance Analyst at Bromley FC if they're signed-up to a Game Pass subscription and are playing Football Manager on it.

Data sources Section 2

- GWI consumer panel data (demographics)
- YouGov data (subscription fatigue)

**Section 3:
Bringing the Strategy
& Idea to Life**

**THE
EVERYDAY
TACTICIAN**



3A. Describe the key elements of your plan that activated your strategy. Outline any components that were active in the effort e.g. CRM programme, SEM, display advertising, native advertising, affiliate marketing, new technologies (e.g. AI), customer experience, pricing changes as well as promotions and communications.

We launched the ‘Everyday Tactician’ campaign on social platforms on 14th November 2023 with a recruitment film fronted by Bromley’s manager, Andy Woodman.

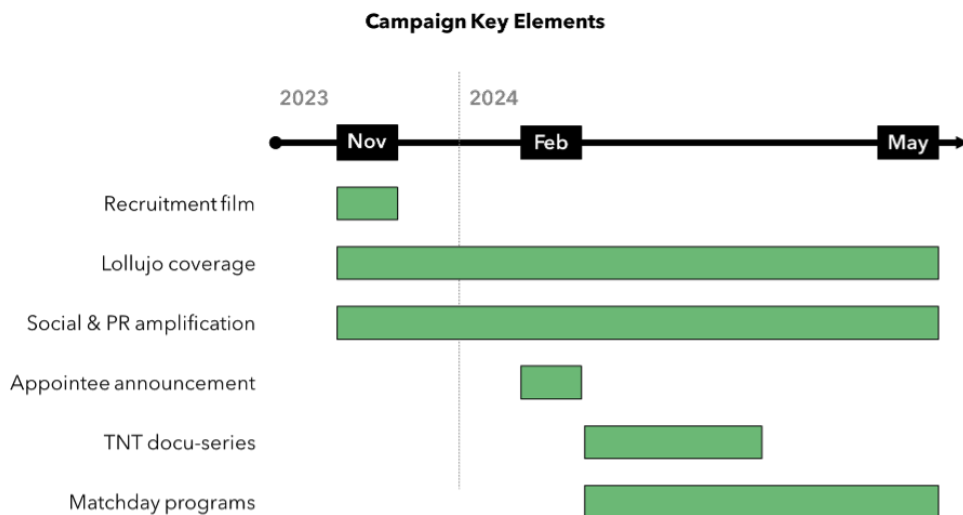
To apply for the newly created job gamers had to win a league title on Football Manager 2024 Edition and submit a video explaining how their gaming background could benefit Bromley.

Once we’d found a successful applicant, we worked with Lollujo – a prominent Football Manager creator – who covered the job opportunity and the appointment in his show.

Partnering with TNT Sports, the official National League broadcaster, we created a 3-part docu-series following the new recruit’s journey. We showed his confidence growing as he won over sceptical coaches, gaining the players' respect. Each episode showcased the gameplans and tactics he developed virtually in Football Manager on Xbox as he prepared his team for matches on the real-life pitch.

Surfing this groundswell of excitement, we pushed Xbox and Football Manager front-and-centre in the conversation by challenging Football Manager gamers in matchday programs to prove their real-world tactical nous against that day’s opposition.

Throughout the campaign we were amplifying all activity, from the application process through to the appointment and the results Bromley achieved across the season, through social-media and both mainstream and football channel PR. Indeed, in this sense, much of the campaign impact was designed to be driven through earned, rather than paid-for, media.



3B. Outline the key building blocks of the creative executions for your main marketing vehicles e.g. endline, call-to-actions and format choices etc.

Creatively, approaching this campaign like any other glossy ads blitz would quite simply have failed. Joining the suite of superficial celeb-for-hire campaigns that plague the world of football advertising would have trivialised our message. And more importantly, would have lacked the authenticity our audience craved.

What we were offering was deadly serious: a real team, a real manager, real staff, real fans, real money, and above all, real-world outcomes with all that that implies. In short, we had to respect that what we were talking about was real and had real-world impacts on real people.

So each element of the campaign was managed in the same way as any other communication would be from a football club’s news cycle: important, factual, and reflective and respectful of the real emotions football invokes. And we allowed the earned-media elements to follow the usual trajectory of commentary that surrounds football - with all the hysteria and excitement, the insight and the hyperbole, hope and heartbreak that implies.

With this in mind, given the Football Manager audience care passionately about the world of football that extends beyond globally recognisable teams and corporate sponsors, who better to announce the job opportunity on our behalf than Bromley’s manager, Andy Woodman? This set the tone for the rest of the campaign by putting a relatively unknown manager front-and-centre of an exciting new partnership between two global brands in Xbox and Football Manager.

<p>Andy Woodman recruiting for the Football Manager Tactician role</p> 	<p>Lollujo discussing the Football Manager Tactician role</p>  <p>How To Get A REAL LIFE JOB In Football By Playing FM! #ad</p>
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This approach continued throughout the campaign:



3C. How did you bring your strategy to your target market? What was the rationale behind your channel strategy/approach? Explain how the elements worked together to drive results.

The strategy was thus brought to life both creatively and in appropriate channels and/or platforms. The full list of activities are provided in the following table. For each campaign asset, we have provided information on its spec (eg. film length), where it was hosted (channel and/or platform), where people who engaged with the asset were then driven to (eg. the microsite we set-up and/or a relevant page on Xbox.com), any additional activity that ran in support of the asset, and the coverage and/or engagement the asset generated:

EFFIE AWARDS UK 2025 GOLD WINNER: XBOX BY MCCANN

	Asset	Spec	Channel / Platform	Drives To ...	Supporting Activity	Coverage & Engagement
PHASE ONE	Recruitment Film	30s Film	Bromley FC & Xbox UK joint Instagram	Gaming Tactician Microsite www.xbox.com/The-Everyday-Tactician	FM X & Instagram Bromley FC X	4m impressions & engagements
	Competition Master Social asset	Motion Asset for feed and stories	Bromley FC & Xbox UK joint Instagram Xbox UK X Bromley FC UK X	Gaming Tactician Microsite www.xbox.com/The-Everyday-Tactician	FM X & Instagram	na
	Lollujo Streamer Content	10-15 min episode	1x YouTube 1x Instagram story frame 1x Tweet	Gaming Tactician Microsite www.xbox.com/The-Everyday-Tactician	FM X & Instagram	100k impressions + engagement
	TNT Sports Live Broadcast	5 min segment	TNT Sports TV Channel	na		na
PHASE TWO	Documentary Film: Episode One	15-20 min Film	TNT Sports YouTube	Game Pass Download Link	Xbox UK Instagram & Twitter FM Instagram & Twitter Bromley FC Instagram & Twitter TNT Sports Instagram & Twitter	100k + views over doc episodes
	Social Cutdown: Episode One	15-30s Clip	TNT Sports Instagram TNT Sports Facebook	Documentary Watch link	Xbox UK Instagram FM Instagram	1m + over cutdowns
	Documentary Film: Episode Two	15-20 min Film	TNT Sports YouTube	Game Pass Download Link	Xbox UK Instagram & Twitter FM Instagram & Twitter Bromley FC Instagram & Twitter TNT Sports Instagram & Twitter	100k + views over doc episodes
	Social Cutdown: Episode Two	15-30s Clip	TNT Sports Instagram TNT Sports Facebook	Documentary Watch link	Xbox UK Instagram FM Instagram	1m + over cutdowns
	Documentary Film: Episode Three	15-20 min Film	TNT Sports YouTube	Game Pass Download Link	Xbox UK Instagram & Twitter FM Instagram & Twitter Bromley FC Instagram & Twitter TNT Sports Instagram & Twitter	100k + views over doc episodes
	Social Cutdown: Episode Three	15-30s Clip	TNT Sports Instagram TNT Sports Facebook	Documentary Watch link	Xbox UK Instagram FM Instagram	1m + over cutdowns
	Matchday Programmes	Two-Page Insert	Bromley FC Matchday Programme	Xbox Game Pass lock-up		na
	Xbox On Streamer Content	3 Hour Livestream	Xbox On Twitch	Gaming Tactician Microsite www.xbox.com/The-Everyday-Tactician	Xbox On TikTok	38k streams
	Lollujo Streamer Content	10-15 min episode	1x YouTube 1x Instagram story frame 1x Tweet	Gaming Tactician Microsite www.xbox.com/The-Everyday-Tactician	FM X & Instagram	35k views

For each asset, the channel and/or platform was more-or-less self-selecting - eg. by definition a matchday advertorial talking to fans at a game would appear in that game's match program, Lollujo's streaming content would appear on his YouTube channel, the TNT Sports documentary would appear on the TNT Sports YouTube channel, etc.

The only real debate was whether the launch Recruitment Film should appear on any more mainstream, mass media channels (eg. TV). However, the budget implications of doing so would have been very significant, dramatically changing the likely ROI the campaign would generate. Moreover, it was far from clear that such an additional large investment was necessary to reach our audience. Indeed, a channel like TV would have been very inefficient given the inevitable wastage - after-all, the campaign messaging was only relevant to a relatively small proportion of such a broad, mass-market audience. The fact that the film went on to generate just over 4 million impressions & engagements, which in turn fuelled high levels of engagement that continued to build throughout the remainder of the campaign, clearly vindicated this decision.

Data sources Section 3

Various (eg. Instagram, YouTube, etc) digital engagement data



Section 4: Results

4A. How do you know it worked? Explain why these results are significant for the brand's business.

We will show how the 'Everyday Tactician' campaign leveraged a compelling target audience insight, that Football Manager gamers dream of real-world recognition, to drive huge levels of engagement and excitement that translated into more players and longer game-playing, which in turn fuelled additional Game Pass subscriptions:



Excitement at the launch recruitment film was instant. As one gamer put it, "this is exactly what I've spent ten years playing Football Manager for!"

Across the following months, in both social- and mainstream media, Bromley became the most talked-about club in their division of the English Football League *and* the three divisions above.

Then Nathan Owolabi, a former Wembley Stadium tour-guide, won the job and was duly appointed. Fans were beside themselves: the seemingly impossible had happened - a gamer had proven themselves worthy of a real job in a real football club.

They followed his story and use of Football Manager, and accepted our matchday challenges in increasing numbers.

So far good so far. But you're probably also wondering, "yes, but what actually happened with Bromley"? Well, it reads like a hackneyed zero-to-hero Hollywood plot.

Because our campaign ended in literal fireworks when in May 2024, for the first time in their 132-year history, Bromley made it to the league playoffs at Wembley. 'Big deal' isn't close.

It gets better.

In dramatic edge-of-your-seat fashion, in the last minutes of the game, Bromley won on penalties and were promoted!

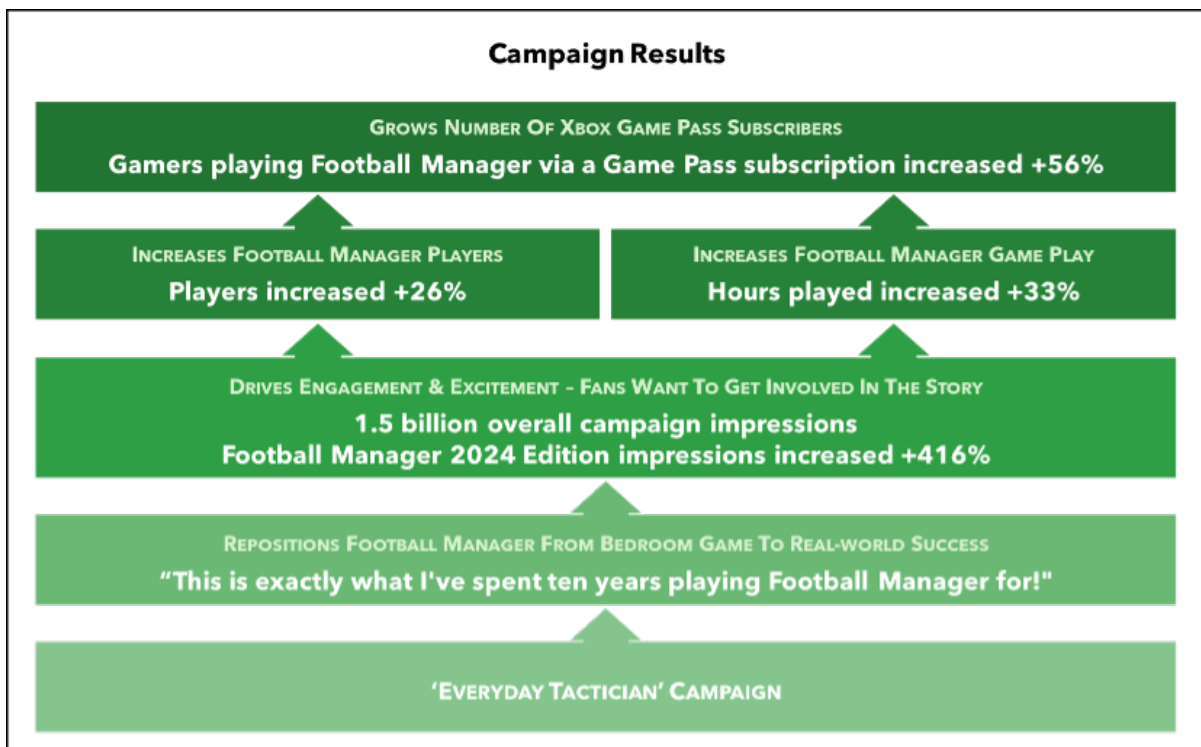
The Football Manager community went nuts.

The cumulative impact was extraordinary: overall campaign impressions totalled a staggering 1.5 billion! Mentions of Football Manager and Xbox increased by over +40% year-on-year.

#EverydayTactician increased social impressions for the Football Manager 2024 Edition by +416%. And this engagement drove behaviour change:

1. Total Football Manager players increased dramatically, reversing the 2023/22 decline to a +26% increase.
2. Total Football Manager hours played on Xbox increased +33%, and average hours played by each player by +28% compared to previous year.
3. Whilst the total increase in gamers playing Football Manager was +26% 2024 vs 2023, the increase in gamers playing Football Manager via a Game Pass subscription was +56%.

In summary:



Business Objective Results

Business Objective

To increase Game Pass subscriptions by increasing sales of Football Manager's 2024 Edition, in particular amongst PC gamers.

Rationale

The Xbox business strategy depended on getting more players behind the Game Pass paywall and driving more game-play once they were there.

The primary Game Pass audience is PC gamers, but previous Football Manager campaigns had failed to recruit them.

Benchmarks:

- Game Pass subscriptions +2%
- Football Manager 2024 Edition sales +25% above 2023 Edition
- Total Football Manager sales +40%
- % Football Manager 2024 Edition sales from PC gamers 60%+

Measurement

Game Pass subscriptions.

Unit sales of Football Manager 2024 Edition.

Total unit sales of Football Manager.

Proportion of unit sales of Football Manager 2024 Edition bought by PC gamers.

List Result

Total Game Pass subscriptions increased +4.4%.

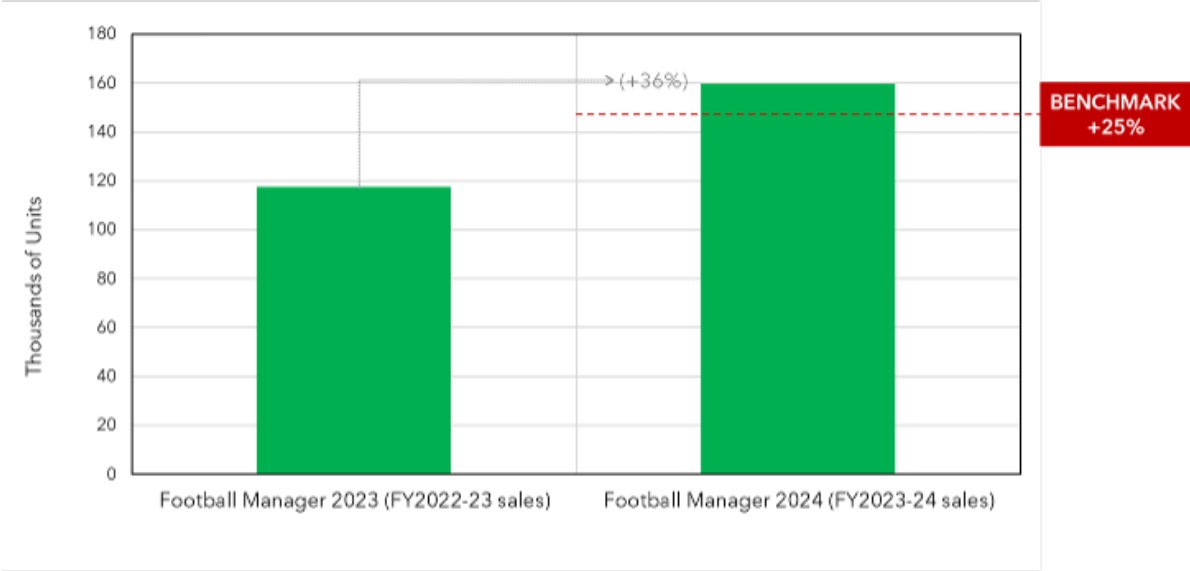
Sales of Football Manager's 2024 Edition increased +32% vs 2023 Edition, and +62% in total.

PC gamers accounted for roughly 80% 2024 Edition sales.

Context

Football Manager 2024 Edition sales were +32% higher than the 2023 Edition:

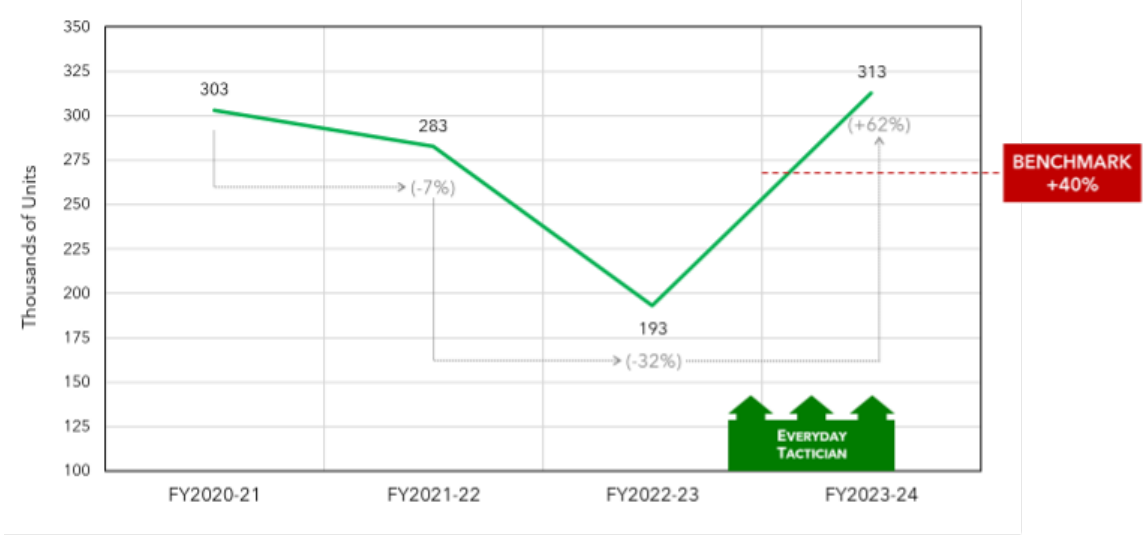
Annual unit sales of Football Manager (total for both PC and Console)



Source: Xbox internal data

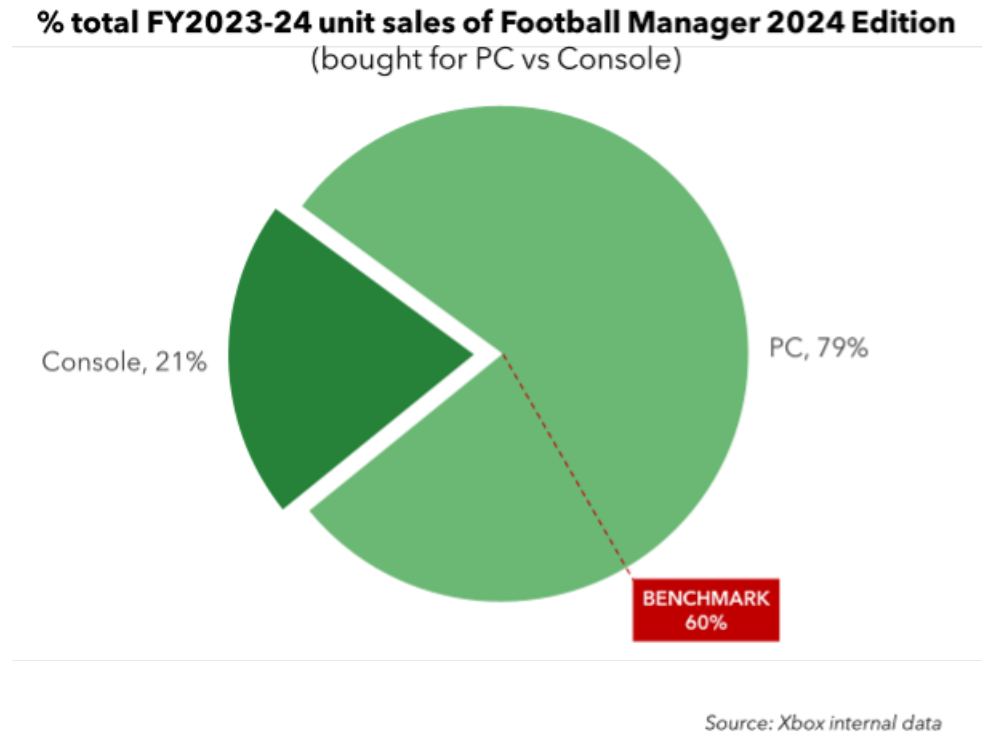
Total sales increased by +62%, dramatically reversing the decline:

Annual unit sales of Football Manager (total for both PC and Console)



Source: Xbox internal data

80% of the 2024 Edition games were bought for use on PCs - our primary audience:



This drove a +4.4% year-on-year increase in Game Pass subscribers in November 2023 (two-and-half times the +2% benchmark). Average monthly growth rate across the previous 12 months was +2.6%, so November grew one-and-a-half times faster.

Marketing Objectives

Marketing Objective #1

To increase the number of Football Manager players, in particular the number who are doing so through Game Pass subscriptions.

Rationale

In order to meet the business objective, the new 2024 Edition of Football Manager must attract as many new gamers as possible, and most of these players be persuaded to pay for the game through a Game Pass subscription. Simply selling more Football Manager games wouldn't deliver Xbox's business strategy of using it to drive Game Pass subscriptions.

Benchmarks:

- Football Manager players +15%
- Football Manager players paying for the game via Game Pass +30%

Measurement

Total number of Football Manager players.

Number of Football Manager players paying for the game via a Game Pass subscription.

List Result

Total number of Football Manager players increased +26%.
Number of Football Manager players paying for game through Game Pass increased +56%.

Context

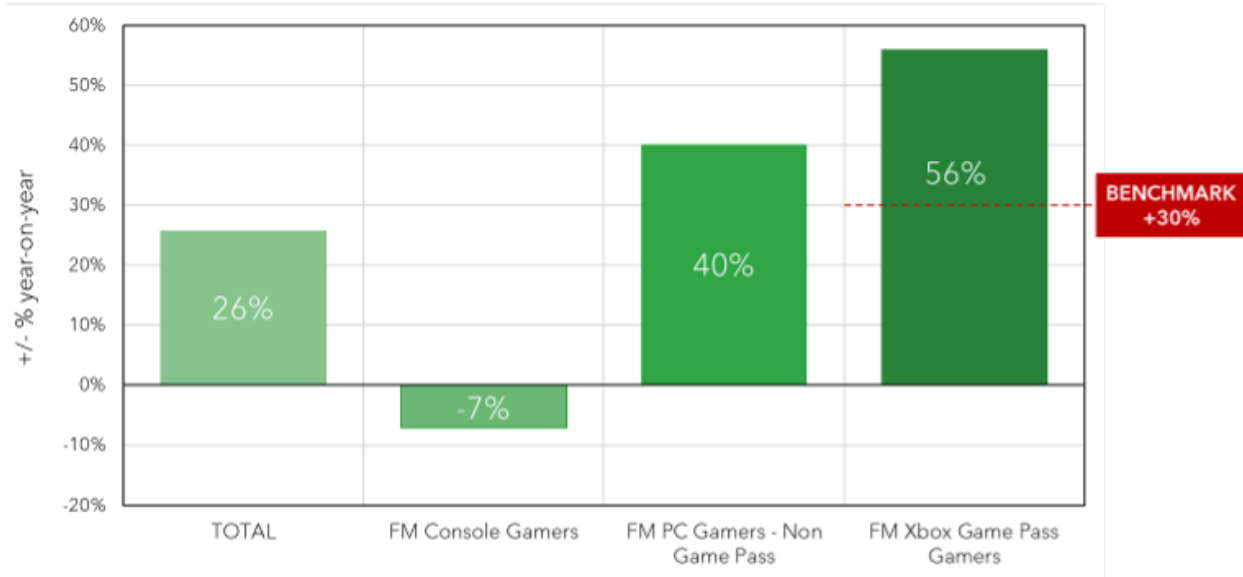
The total number of gamers playing Football Manager increased dramatically, reversing the -20% decline 2023 vs 2022 to a +26% increase 2024 vs 2023:



Source: GWI

Moreover, far-and-away the largest increase in player numbers came from gamers paying for a Game Pass subscription. Whilst the total increase in gamers playing Football Manager was +26% 2024 vs 2023, the increase in gamers playing via Game Pass was +56%:

Growth In Football Manager Players
(Summer 2024/2023)



Source: GWI

Marketing Objective #2

Grow the total number of hours Football Manager gamers play the game on Xbox.

Rationale

As well as increasing the number of Football Manager players, players also had to be encouraged to play the game for as long as is reasonably possible. This matters because the evidence shows clearly that the more players play a game, the more likely they are to trade-up to the premium subscription or buy in-game add-ons.

Benchmark: +20% total hours played on Football Manager.

Measurement

Total hours played on Football Manager increased +33%.

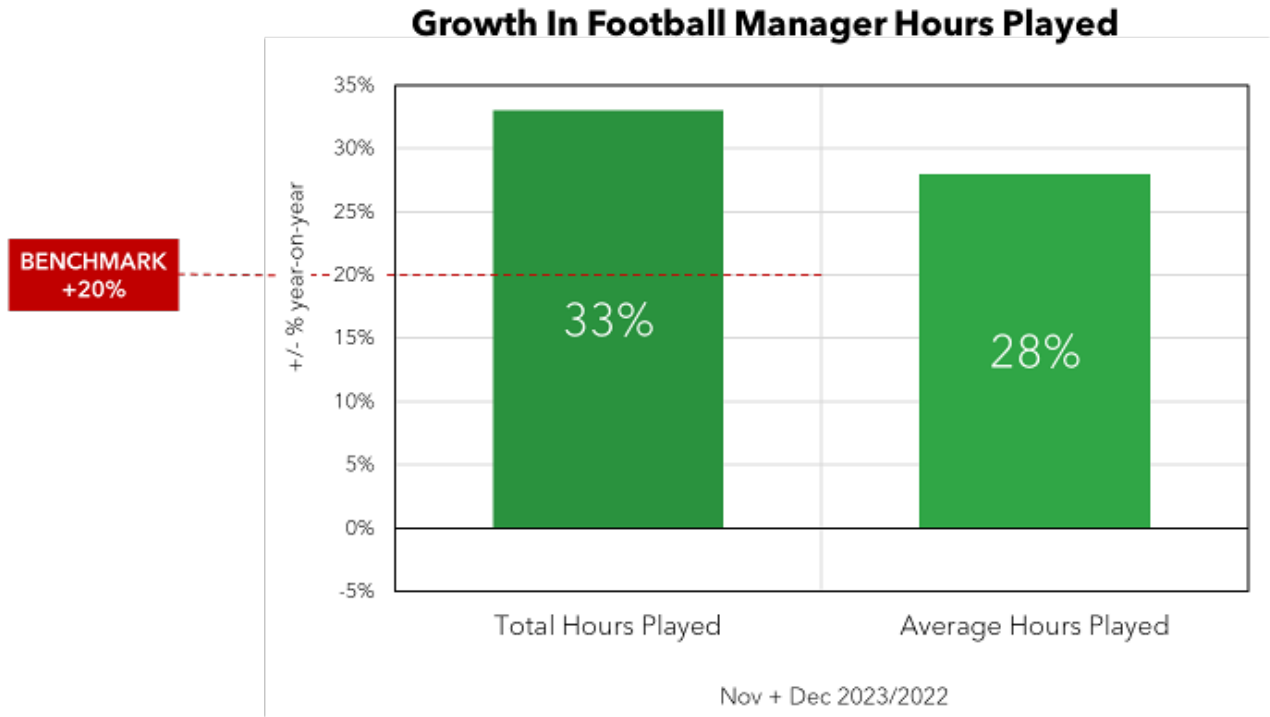
List Result

Total number of Football Manager players increased +26%.

Number of Football Manager players paying for game through Game Pass increased +56%.

Context

Total hours (the primary KPI) played on Football Manager via Xbox increased +33%, and average hours played by each player by +28% compared to previous year:



Source: GWI

Campaign Objectives

Activity Objective #1

Drive significant engagement and excitement with Football Manager so fans want to get involved - they will be sufficiently excited to seek out the game and subscribe to Game Pass.

Rationale

It was clear there were no rational arguments to persuade Football Manager gamers to sign-up to Game Pass. So we therefore had to develop a campaign that was so incredibly engaging they'd become emotionally predisposed.

Due to a lack of tracking data with which to measure KPIs, no quantified benchmarks were set. That said, the campaign's effectiveness was to be evaluated on the basis of evidence about its marketing and business impacts (as per above).

Measurement

Xbox don't conduct marcomms tracking studies so there is little data available. Therefore, measurement depended on audience reactions and engagement (eg. in social-media), and campaign interactions

List Result

Overall campaign impressions totalled an incredible 1.5 billion.
Mentions of Football Manager and Xbox in November increased +40% year-on-year, and #EverydayTactician increased Football Manager social impressions by +416%.

Context

The recruitment film made Bromley the most talked-about club in November, on both social- and mainstream media, in their division and the three divisions above. And Nathan's appointment drove the buzz further:

Online and social-media commentary and discussion of Nathan Owolabi's appointment

Max @ninolacu · 21h
Ah, what a ride! The Everyday Tactician's last episode is just around the corner. I've loved watching these guys break down the beautiful game. Can't wait to see how they wrap up their journey. Bring

Max @ninolacu · Jul 15
Ah, what a ride! The Everyday Tactician's last episode is just around the corner. I've loved watching these guys break down the beautiful game. Can't wait to see how they wrap up their journey. Bring

@EscaAE 1 day ago
This series goes down as one of the best on Youtube ngl

@elizabethbiobaku5188 3 days ago
This is really amazing! Can't wait for episode 3 😊. Well done Nathan and Bromley FC!

@acw4251 1 year ago
FM community rooting for ya Nathan, no pressure 😊

@brendellambe8483 1 year ago
Nathan, I am so very proud of your accomplishment. Keep your head up and be relentless.

@phatbi971 10 months ago
This are the moments we live for as a football manager players, big up man keep inspiring 🍷❤️

@Sansface. 1 year ago
Congrats!!! So happy people from FM community got their chances

And it kept building:

Coverage of Bromley FC in social-media and mainstream media

Men in Blazers @MenInBlazers
Non-League side Bromley FC have announced they will hire a Club Tactician via partnership with Football Manager. Applicants must unlock an achievement within FM24 to be considered. The Will Still Effect Is Real. 🇬🇧🇮🇪

Match of the Day @BBCMOTD
From the armchair to the dugout... 🇬🇧
Are you searching for a new dream job?

NOVA @Pac_NOV4 · 6m
For the first time in my life I regret not having an Xbox I literally broke fm24 on ps5

The 44 @TheFortyFour
Our time has come

Out of Context Football Manager @nocontextfml
LADS, YOUR TIME HAS COME

James @FMScrapbook · 4m
Replying to @FPL_Liger @bromleyfc and @FootballManager you never know, they might find the next tactical genius! would way of promoting talent. you can imagine it must be hard to get professional football unless you've been a pro player

Steve D @PhotogSmd · 18m
Come match day all 2000 of us Bromley fans suddenly become tactician experts don't we? 🤔 @bromleyfc

Jack Kenmare @jackkenmare
Such a big opportunity, this. Football Manager have partnered with Bromley to give one person the chance to become a 'Junior Tactician' at the National League club.

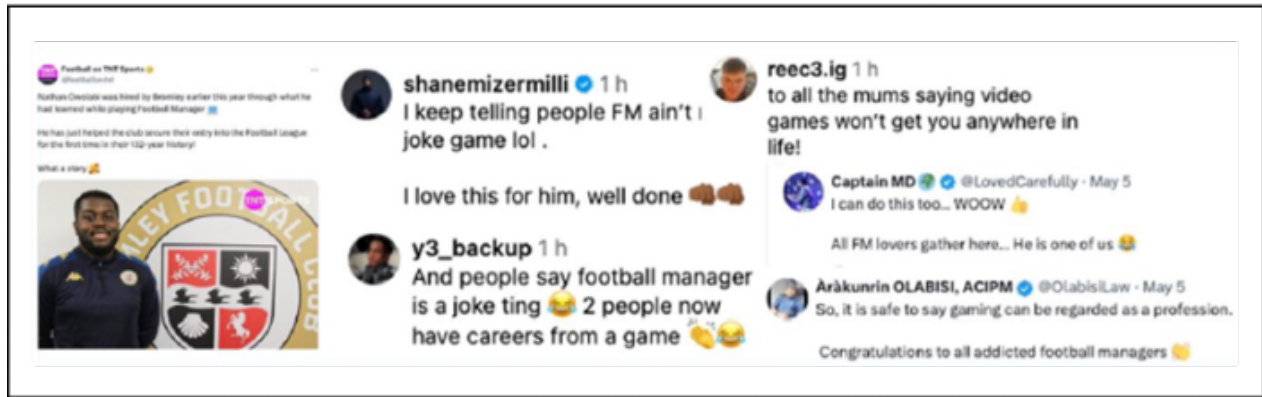
tomhwilliams23 @tomhwillia... · 2h
What a brilliant opportunity this is for #FM24 players
I can personally vouch for Andy Woodman and his team at Bromley - they've been very generous with their time in the past
If you're interested in working in football and you play FM, this is an absolute MUST 🙌🙌

THE UK TONIGHT **COULD YOU GO FROM DESKTOP TO DUGOUT?**
sky news 20:53 **BREAKING NEWS** Five-year-old girl and women in 30s suffer serious injuries

GOAL! **NBC** **QJGO** **Daily Mail** **JOE** **sky news** **THE Sun** **EUROSPORT** **ENTV** **ShortList**
METRO **BBC** **FourFourTwo** **CNN** **Le Parisien** **kicker** **EveningStandard.** **SPORT BIBLE** **L'EQUIPE** **talkSPORT**
NME **The Athletic** **ESPN** **HYPEBEAST** **DAILY STAR**

Then Bromley won the playoff: the community went nuts!

Football Manager community reactions to Bromley FC winning the playoff



Campaign impressions totalled 1.5 billion.

Mentions of Football Manager and Xbox in November increased +40% year-on-year, and #EverydayTactician increased Football Manager social impressions by +416%.

Activity Objective #2

Build brand affinity amongst PC gamers who don't have an Xbox console, to increase their willingness to subscribe to Game Pass.

Rationale

Whilst brand perception shifts weren't an explicit objective, the assumption was that if the campaign is engaging enough to drive emotional predisposition this would be reflected in more positive feelings about Xbox amongst the audience.

Due to a lack of tracking data with which to measure KPIs, no quantified benchmarks were set. That said, the campaign's effectiveness was to be evaluated on the basis of evidence about its marketing and business impacts (as per above).

Measurement

Xbox don't conduct game-specific brand tracking, so we had to rely on brand level metrics. However, certain key statements enabled us to assess whether the campaign was working as intended.

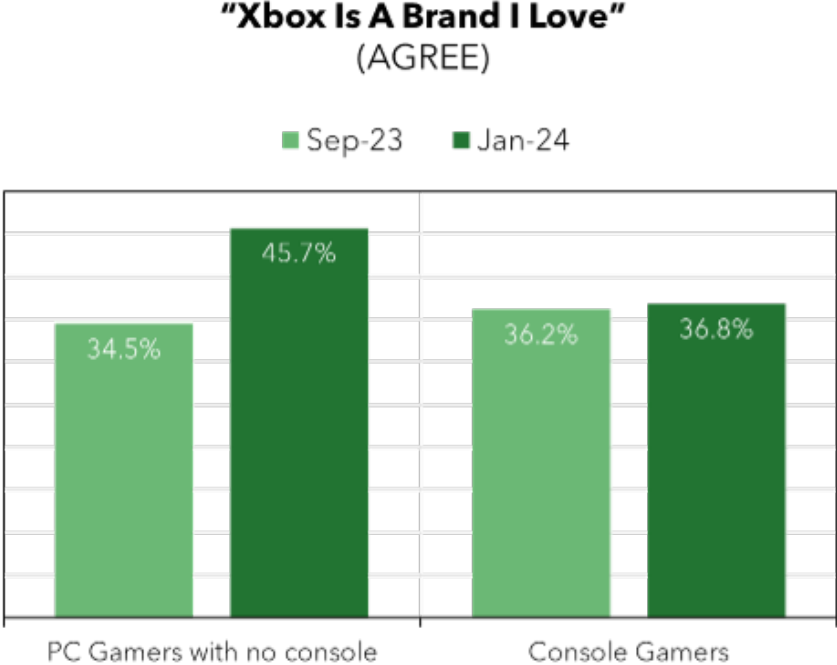
List Result

Amongst the target:

- Agreement with 'Xbox Is A Brand I Love' increased +32.5% and 'Xbox Is For People Like Me' increased +12.9%
- Game Pass subscription grew twice as fast

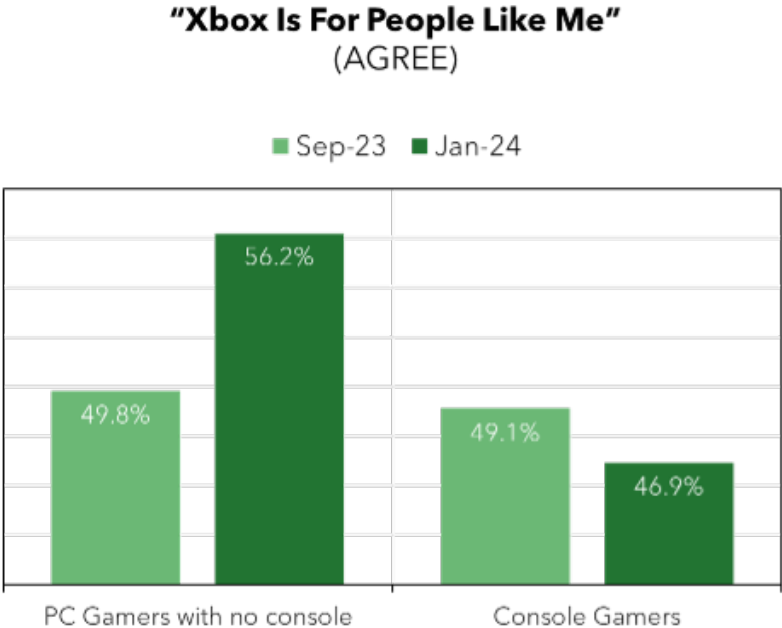
Context

Agreement with 'Xbox Is A Brand I Love' increased by almost a third amongst PC gamers who don't have an Xbox console, whereas it remained static amongst console gamers:



Source: ABTS

A similar pattern emerges in agreement with 'Xbox Is For People Like Me':



Source: ABTS

The net result is that between September 2023 and January 2024 'Intention To Subscribe' to Game Pass increased twice as much amongst PC gamers (+4%) as it did amongst console gamers (+2%).

4B. Marketing rarely works in isolation. Outside of your effort, what else in the marketplace could have affected the results of this case - positive or negative?

No other factors

Explain the influence (or lack of influence) of the factors you selected.

- The Football Manager marketing budget didn't increase
- Share-of-voice remained steady
- Any seasonal impacts (in particular, Xmas) are accounted for by looking at year-on-year trends
- Xbox always run various campaigns supporting different products and propositions - this time-period is no different
- Intense competitive pressures in the sector are as strong as always - no competitors had a 'dud year'
- Price promoting is a regular feature of the sector, and Football Manager wasn't more heavily discounted than other games; moreover, the focus of this case is the impact uptake of the game by PC gamers had on Game Pass subscriptions, which did not change in price
- The PC games sector is in slow but steady growth (penetration having increased from 20% adults in 2022 to 23% in 2024) - we didn't benefit from any slowdown in PC gaming
- Audience engagement was demonstrably driven by the campaign - the media and online excitement around the job application, Nathan's appointment, and Bromley's success was solely in response to the Everyday Tactician campaign; it was a story entirely of our own making
- Moreover, the only difference compared to previous attempts to get PC gamers to switch to Game Pass was the Everyday Tactician campaign itself

Data sources Section 4

- Xbox internal sales data (units sold)
- GWI consumer panel data (behaviour)
- ABTS tracking data (brand perceptions)