TeamLinkt

WHITE PAPER

Scaling the Network

A Strategic Guide for Multi-Location Youth Sports Operators

A guide for the leaders of multi-location youth sports operator networks considering how to build, operate, or scale their organization. Examines the market context, operator and player retention, local market strategy, brand consistency, and the technology infrastructure that supports all of them.

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1-Executive Summary

The youth sports market has grown into a thirty-billion-dollar-plus industry, with private equity activity reaching record levels in 2025 and investment capital flowing into organizations, facilities, software, and equipment at a pace without precedent in the category. Underneath the headline growth, a structural shift is underway: youth sports delivery is moving steadily from a volunteer-run community model toward professionally-staffed organizations offering portfolios of programs - competitive teams, recreational leagues, camps, clinics, and events - with the operational consistency that families increasingly expect.

Multi-location operator networks have emerged as one of the natural organizational expressions of this shift. A central organization coordinating a network of locally-run programs, professionally delivered, and capable of offering a standardized portfolio of programs across dozens or hundreds of local markets is structurally well-suited to the moment. But scaling such a network past fifty, a hundred, or two hundred locations introduces a different class of operational challenges. Operator retention, participant retention, local market strategy, and the technology infrastructure that enables all of them behave differently at scale than they do in theory.
This paper is a guide for the leaders making those decisions. It is organized around the following topics:

- The state of youth sports and the professionalization trend behind the industry's current growth.
- Operator recruitment and retention as the core growth engine: networks scale by retaining successful operators, not by replacing existing ones.
- Participant recruitment and retention, with attention to the distinct motivational and economic profiles of the under-twelve and thirteen-plus cohorts.
- Local market strategy, including the case for program-portfolio flexibility and the event-led approach to entering new markets.
- The technology stack is a key decision: what network-ready platforms look like, how the build-buy-partner question applies, and how the current platform landscape is structured.
- Strategic implications drawn together into a view of what the networks scaling most effectively in 2025 and 2026 are doing differently.

The paper is intended for leaders of multi-location youth sports operator networks considering how to build, operate, or scale their organization.

2-The State of Youth Sports: Market Context for Multi-Location Operator Leaders

The youth sports market has changed shape meaningfully over the last decade, and the changes matter for any multi-location operator leader making decisions about where to deploy capital, how to structure programming, and which market segments to pursue. The broad direction of travel is by now well-documented: the industry has grown into a thirty-billion-dollar-plus sector, private equity activity increased sharply in 2025, and investor interest in youth sports organizations, facilities, software, and equipment has reached levels without precedent in the category. The more useful question for a leader in this space is not whether the market is growing, but which structural shifts behind that growth apply to their particular operating model.

The most consequential shift is the ongoing professionalization of how youth sports is delivered at the local level. For most of the last half century, organized youth sports in North America was run by community volunteers, with parents serving as coaches, commissioners, and administrators; recreation associations operating out of municipal facilities; governing bodies like Little League coordinating participation through a network of volunteer-led chapters. That model still exists and continues to serve millions of children, but it is no longer the only one. Over the past decade, a growing share of youth sports participation has moved to professionally-staffed organizations with paid coaches, full-time administrative staff, dedicated facilities, and diversified program portfolios that span competitive club teams, recreational leagues, camps, clinics, and tournament events. Organizations such as Perfect Game, Prep Baseball Report, 3STEP Sports, Unrivaled Sports, and dozens of regional counterparts have built substantial businesses around this professionalized delivery model, and the capital flowing into the sector - an estimated 1.8 billion dollars in youth sports facility construction from 2022 through 2024, with an additional 1.8 billion dollars projected from 2024 through 2026 - is fueling further professionalization.

01

65%

of **youth ages 6–17** played a team sport in 2024 — the highest participation rate since at least 2012.

Aspen Institute · Project Play, State of Play 2024

02

$30B+

estimated size of the **U.S. youth sports industry**, spanning leagues, clubs, travel, facilities, and equipment.

WinterGreen Research · Global Youth Sports Market

03

$1.8B

in **youth facility construction** between 2022 and 2024, with another $1.8B projected for 2024–2026.

Sports Facilities Companies · 2024 Industry Report

04

3yrs

of **consecutive core-participation growth** among ages 6–12, reversing a decade of decline.

SFIA · Topline Participation Report 2024

Two other shifts reinforce the professionalization trend. Specialization (children concentrating on a single sport earlier) has raised the expectations families bring to any program they enroll in, because specialized athletes and their parents have clear reference points for what quality coaching, facilities, and administration should look like. Diversification has simultaneously expanded the participant base. Girls' participation has grown steadily, supported by sustained media coverage of women's athletics. Non-traditional sports such as flag football, pickleball, and ultimate frisbee have attracted participants who would not have engaged with legacy team sports, and flag football in particular has emerged as one of the fastest-growing organized youth sports categories in North America, a category now served by several national multi-location operators at meaningful scale.

Participation data supports the composite picture. The Sports and Fitness Industry Association reported that sixty-five percent of youth ages six to seventeen tried sports at least once in 2024, the highest rate tracked since at least 2012, and up from fifty-nine percent in 2021. Core participation among children six to twelve has risen for three consecutive years, reaching its highest level since 2015. Teen participation, ages thirteen to seventeen, has continued a modest decline, a pattern consistent with the cohort dynamics discussed in Section 4 of this paper, where the motivational mix changes substantially as participants enter high school.

What this picture describes is an industry in which the professionally-run, multi-program youth sports organization has become the emerging standard - and in which the multi-location operator network, a professionally-coordinated system of local operators delivering a standardized portfolio of programs, is one of the natural organizational expressions of that shift. The ecosystem in which these networks compete remains fragmented. Sport-specific and region-specific governing bodies, scholastic and non-scholastic calendars, private programs of every stripe, and that fragmentation is both the opportunity and the strategic challenge. Operational coherence within the network - consistent registration, consistent brand, consistent experience across locations - becomes a competitive advantage precisely because the surrounding ecosystem offers none of those things. The sections that follow examine how that coherence is built and defended in practice.

3-Operator Recruitment and Retention: Growing the Network

Multi-location operator networks do not scale by adding locations. They scale by adding successful operators who stay. Two networks with the same location count can have radically different trajectories if one is steadily churning operators and replacing them while the other is retaining and expanding them. The math is straightforward: every operator who exits takes with them the location development, operator onboarding cost, location-level relationships, and community goodwill that the network spent years building. Every operator who stays compounds those investments into the next season and the one after that.

What prospective operators evaluate when weighing an opportunity has evolved. Territory economics and brand strength still matter, but the quality of operational support the network provides, and increasingly the technology infrastructure that support is delivered through, have become visible components of the decision. A sophisticated prospective operator, particularly one who has operated a business before, looks past the pitch deck and asks specific questions. How long does it take for a new location to go live? What does the platform experience look like on a parent's phone? How does headquarters help when something breaks mid-season? A network that cannot answer these questions concretely is selling an opportunity that is not ready to scale.

The reasons youth sports operators churn are not the same as the reasons operators churn in other industries, and the differences are worth examining. Operational overhead in the first twelve months frequently exceeds what new operators projected, often because the seasonal rhythm of youth sports - registration windows, program launches, event logistics - front-loads work in ways that are hard to appreciate from the outside. Unit economics are harder to model than in year-round retail or service businesses because revenue arrives in concentrated bursts and cost structures shift with facility availability and seasonal staffing. Technology that underperforms quickly becomes a retention risk in its own right: a platform that creates friction for operators also creates friction for the parents those operators are trying to serve, and operators notice when they are apologizing to families about issues they did not create and cannot fix.

The networks that retain operators at the highest rates appear to follow a consistent pattern. They invest disproportionately in operator onboarding. They treat the first ninety days of a new location as a support-intensive period rather than a fire-and-forget launch. They surface operational problems early through centralized visibility rather than discovering them at the end of a bad season. And they invest in the operator's ability to succeed locally rather than in headquarters-level controls designed to manage operator behavior from a distance. Operator satisfaction, handled this way, produces a flywheel: satisfied operators refer prospective operators, speak positively about the network at industry gatherings, and expand their own territories. Unsatisfied operators do the opposite, and in a market as relationship-driven as youth sports, word travels.

The role of technology in this flywheel is larger than it might first appear. A network platform is not background infrastructure to an operator running a league, it is the tool they use every day for registration, scheduling, payments, communication, team management, and parent engagement. When it works well, operators forget it is there. When it works poorly, it becomes the thing they think about most, and the lens through which they evaluate whether the network has their back. None of this argues that technology is the most important factor in operator retention. Brand strength, territory quality, and the network's cultural approach to its operators all matter at least as much. But technology is the most visible daily artifact of the HQ-operator relationship, and it sets the tone for everything else. A network that wants operators who stay should start by asking whether the platform those operators use every day is one they would have chosen for themselves.

4-Participant Recruitment and Retention

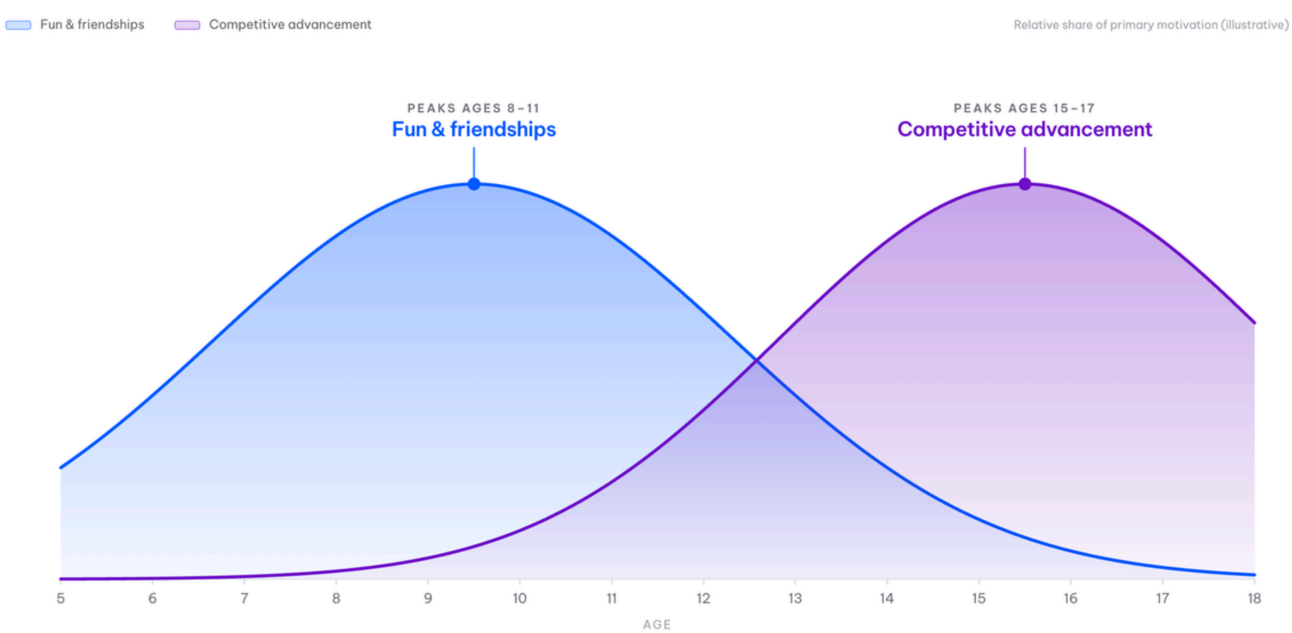
Revenue in multi-location youth sports operations is registration-driven, which means retention compounds in a way that is mathematically unforgiving. A child who plays for six seasons is worth six times a child who plays for one, without any increase in acquisition cost. Networks that move the needle on per-participant retention tend to outperform networks that spend the same dollars on new-participant marketing, because the underlying economics favor keeping families over replacing them.

The youth sports participant base, however, is not monolithic, and the most consequential segmentation is by age. Research from the Aspen Institute's Project Play consistently finds that children between the ages of roughly five and twelve are drawn to sports primarily by fun and friendships - winning, scholarships, and long-term athletic advancement are not what motivates them to sign up or to return the following season. From roughly age thirteen onward, as participants enter high school and early adolescence, the motivational mix changes. Competitive advancement, skill development, college aspirations, and team identity become meaningful factors for a meaningful segment of the participant base. Both motivational profiles exist simultaneously within the market, but they peak at different ages and respond to different kinds of programming.

SECTION 4.1 · MOTIVATION BY AGE

Two motivations, one athlete — and a handoff window at age 12.

FIGURE 4.1



The widely repeated statistic that seventy percent of children quit organized sports by age thirteen has been cited for years in conference talks and strategy documents, but the methodology behind it does not hold up under examination. Many of those children switch sports rather than leave athletics altogether, and CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey data shows high school sports participation has held above fifty percent since 2000, excepting the pandemic years. The more useful framing for a multi-location operator leader is not that most kids quit, but that most kids transitions-cand that the programs on either side of that transition are solving different problems.

This bifurcation has direct implications for network strategy. Programs optimized for competitive advancement (travel teams, rep programs, and showcase tournaments) are capacity-constrained by design. Tryouts, roster caps, and skill tiers are features, not limitations, and they are part of what parents are paying for. The economic consequence is that performance programs produce high per-participant revenue but cap total volume by design. A network operating primarily in this segment grows by adding tiers, age groups, and territories - not by dramatically expanding the roster within any single program.

Programs optimized for participation and enjoyment have the inverse economics. They are designed to include every child who wants to play, which keeps per-participant cost accessible and produces much higher total volume. Demand can still be a constraint, but because these programs are not capped by design, facilities and staffing challenges tend to be more prevalent than in their performance-oriented counterparts - field access, coaches and volunteers, equipment, and administrative capacity all become real constraints at scale. Neither model is strategically superior, and many successful networks deliberately operate both: a broad recreational base at the younger ages feeding a more selective competitive layer at the older ages, with the two reinforcing each other.

Parent expectations reinforce the importance of operational quality across both models. TeamLinkt's parent surveys consistently find that parents whose programs use integrated technology for registration, communication, and activities report materially higher satisfaction and a stronger sense that the services they receive are worth the money they pay. The same research indicates that parent satisfaction rises with tenure. Parents who are several seasons into their relationship with a program report higher satisfaction across nearly every dimension than parents in their first season. Operational quality compounds: retention begets retention once the baseline experience is established.

The cost and complexity of youth sports is a final variable worth naming directly. TeamLinkt's Cost of Sports parent survey found that a majority of respondents either agree or strongly agree that youth sports costs are expensive, and a comparable majority report feeling financially squeezed by those costs. Families making difficult decisions about which programs to continue in a given season are weighing operational quality against price in ways that do not always surface in satisfaction data. Networks that make it easy for a family to say yes - clear communication, transparent pricing, reliable scheduling, minimal administrative burden - hold onto participants whose parents might otherwise drop a sport simply because continuing felt like too much work.

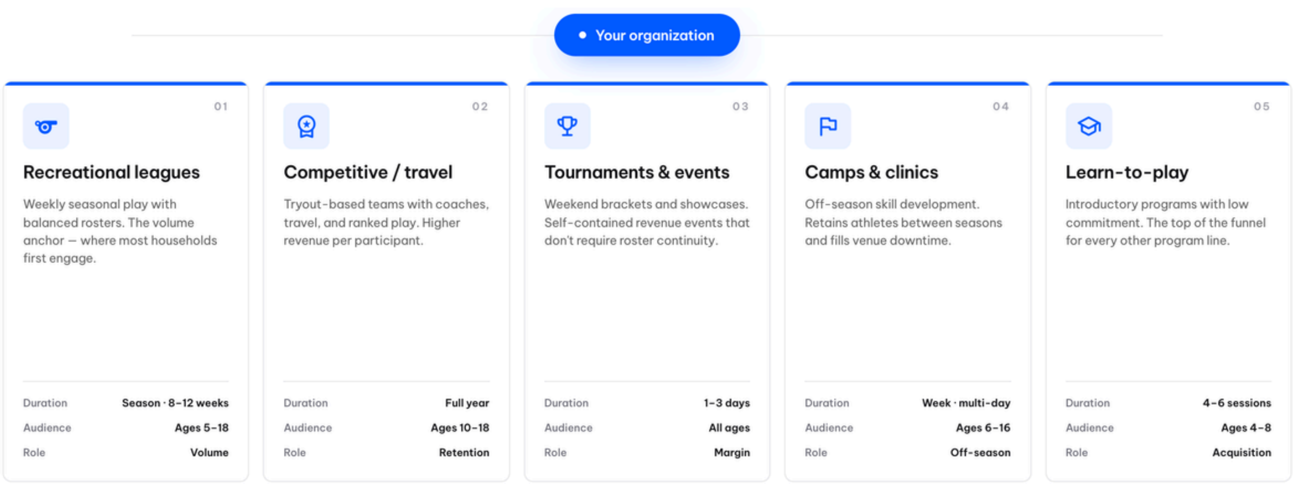
5-Local Market Strategy: Program Mix and Event-Led Expansion

5.1 The case for program flexibility

National multi-location youth sports operators often default to a single program template when entering new markets (an eight to twelve week recreational league, for example) and replicate that template across every territory the network adds. Program structures vary significantly from one network to the next, but the common pattern is the same regardless of format: one product, deployed everywhere, largely unchanged. This approach treats local markets as interchangeable, assuming that what worked in the network's origin market will work in every subsequent one. In practice, local youth sports markets are anything but interchangeable. The competitive density of existing providers, parent spending capacity, seasonal calendar conflicts with other sports, and the presence or absence of suitable facilities all vary significantly from one ZIP code to the next.

A useful way to reframe the question is through the lens of consumer brand strategy. A well-run consumer brand does not ship a single product into every market at the same price point and expect uniform results. Apple sells iPhones, iPads, and MacBooks because different customers need different products at different price points, and the brand is stronger for it rather than diluted by it. The same logic applies to youth sports. A network whose only product is a twelve week league - at one price point, for one age range, with one commitment level - is competing for a narrow slice of the demand curve in every market it enters, and competing hardest in the markets where that specific product is already well-served by incumbents.

The multi-location operator networks that grew rapidly in 2025 and 2026 increasingly gave their local operators a portfolio of program formats - recreational leagues, competitive or travel programs, single-day and weekend tournaments, multi-day camps and clinics, and introductory parent-and-me or learn-to-play sessions for the youngest ages - and a sequencing strategy for deploying them based on what each market actually needed.



Consider two hypothetical flag football operators within the same national network. One opens in a metropolitan market with several established youth football organizations already running leagues. Leading with another league would mean head-on competition for the same families, the same field space, and the same seasonal calendar slot. The other opens in a mid-sized market with virtually no organized youth flag football at all, where parents have heard of the sport but have no local option for their children to try it. The first operator is better served by entering with tournaments, skills camps, and introductory programming that differentiate on format rather than undercut incumbents on league pricing. The second operator can lead with a league because the market has unmet league-level demand. Same network, same brand standards, same operational playbook - different product mix, selected for local conditions.

Supporting multiple program formats within a single network does not require diluting brand consistency. It requires a network operating model and technology platform that can deliver several products under the same brand umbrella, in the same way a retailer can carry an entire product line without losing its identity.

5.2 The event-led land-and-expand strategy

Program flexibility matters most during market entry, where a second pattern worth examining has emerged from both multi-location operators and national sport governing bodies: the use of low-commitment events as the on-ramp to higher-commitment programs.

The commitment barrier is real. Asking a parent in a new market to commit their child to a twelve week season, plus registration fees, equipment, travel, and the unknown of a first-year program, is a significant ask. TeamLinkt's Cost of Sports parent survey found that the majority of respondents either agree or strongly agree that youth sports costs are expensive, and a comparable majority report feeling squeezed by those costs. Families in markets where the network's brand is unknown have no prior experience to anchor the decision on, and many default to “not this season” rather than risk a disappointing investment.

A single-day or weekend event asks for a fraction of the dollar and time commitment. A learn-to-play clinic, a weekend tournament, or a half-day camp typically costs a small portion of a full league registration and resolves in hours rather than months. For the family, the event functions as a low-stakes trial of the brand - a chance to sample the quality of coaching, the organization, the game-day feel, and the communication cadence before any season-long decision is on the table. For the operator, the same event generates registration revenue, captures parent contact information for future seasons, and produces direct word-of-mouth from families who enjoyed the experience.
This pattern has a long precedent. Sport governing bodies have used it for decades: hosting learn-to-play events at schools, running introductory clinics in community parks, or staging free demonstration days to seed interest before formalizing league play. Multi-location operators applying the same pattern at the local level typically run two to four well-executed events (skills camps, small tournaments, or introductory clinics) in a new market before launching a full league. The events serve three simultaneous purposes: they generate revenue during the pre-launch phase, they build a list of pre-qualified local prospects for the first league season, and they answer the question parents are implicitly asking on first contact with an unfamiliar operator: is this organization worth trusting with my child's time and my money?

The operational implication is that platforms need to support leagues, tournaments, camps, clinics, and events within a single operator account. If an operator has to stand up a different system for each program type, the sequencing strategy becomes too cumbersome to execute - and the events-first approach quietly collapses into “leagues only, because that's what the tech supports.” The networks expanding most successfully are those whose operating infrastructure makes program-mix flexibility easy rather than administratively expensive.

SUCCESS STORY

How Lower Merion Little League Grew Registration 134% in Six Years.

Lower Merion Little League, serving a community of roughly 69,000 in suburban Pennsylvania, grew registration 134% between 2018 and 2024, reversing a prior 27% decline and scaling from under 1,000 players to approximately 2,000 registered participants. The league now fields 154 teams across 18 divisions of play, with an estimated 38% of boys in the local elementary schools participating. Its softball program alone grew from 130 registered players in 2019 to 371 in the Spring 2025 season.

The operating pattern behind the growth mirrors the principles discussed in this section. League President Wally Orlov credits a “broad menu of great programs” — a mix of baseball, softball, clinics throughout the year, specialized programs for the Challenger community and Orthodox Jewish members, summer camps, winter workouts, and the Little League Sandlot Fun Days program, which grew from 296 to 314 participants in its first two summers as a free, low-pressure introduction for kids who were not yet ready to commit to full league play.

Orlov's advice to other leagues: “Focus on all of the kids, not just your best kids... A successful league should also embrace technology. Everyone in your league should know what's going on.”

Lower Merion Little League operates on TeamLinkt.

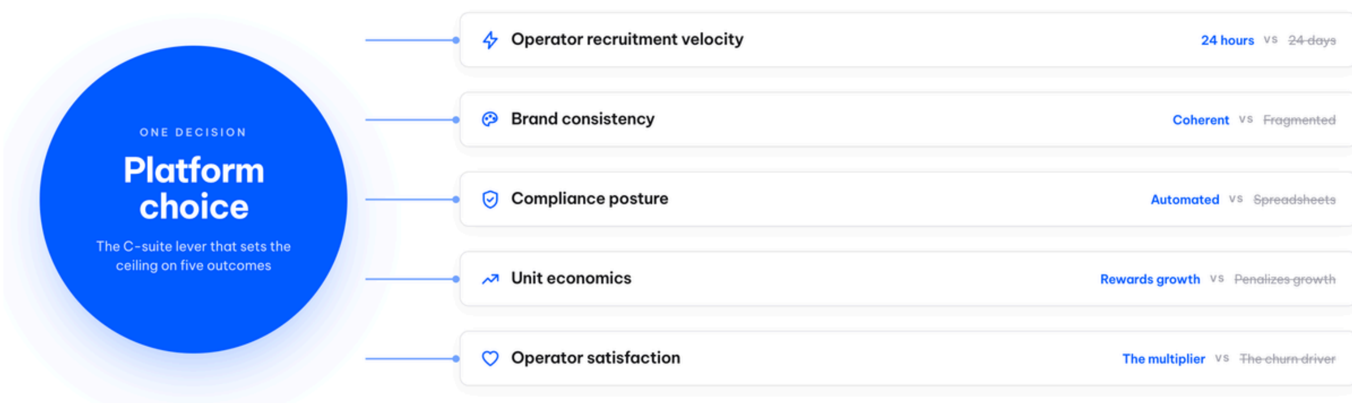
Read the full success story ›

6-The Technology Stack: The Invisible Infrastructure of a Scalable Network

6.1 Why technology is a network-scaling decision, not an IT decision

In most industries, the choice of an internal software platform is a procurement decision made by a CIO or head of operations, vetted by finance, and approved by leadership as a line item. In a multi-location youth sports operator network, the platform choice is something different. It shapes operator recruitment velocity, whether a new location can be live in twenty-four hours or twenty-four days. It shapes brand consistency, whether all locations present a coherent experience to parents, or each operator builds their own. It shapes compliance posture, whether background screening is automated or tracked in spreadsheets. It shapes unit economics, whether the commercial model rewards network growth or quietly penalizes it. And it shapes operator satisfaction, which is ultimately the multiplier on every other growth initiative the network undertakes.

The brand-consistency point deserves a moment on its own, because it is enforced at a different structural layer in youth sports than in most industries. A retail chain has HQ-owned storefronts, trained retail staff, and corporate-managed signage standing between the brand and the customer. A multi-location youth sports operator has none of these things. The first brand impression a parent forms is the location's website, the registration page they land on, the email they receive after signing up, and the sponsor logos they see displayed - every one of which is delivered through the network's technology platform by a local operator who is not a brand professional. In this industry, brand consistency is enforced through platform architecture more than through brand guidelines.



The practical implication is that technology selection in a multi-location youth sports operator network is a key leadership decision with operational consequences across every section of this paper. Treating it as an IT project and delegating it accordingly is one of the more common ways scaling networks quietly accumulate the problems that stall them years later.

6.2 Build, buy, or partner

IThe classic framework for acquiring operational technology is the Build-Buy-Partner model: build a custom system in-house, buy an off-the-shelf product from a vendor, or enter into a partnership with a specialist who brings both capability and domain expertise. Each option involves real trade-offs, and for a multi-location operator network those trade-offs cut differently than they would for a single-organization business.

Building custom software is almost never the right choice for non-differentiating capability. Enterprise software builds fail at rates between thirty and seventy percent, the per-user cost of custom development runs roughly twenty-five times the equivalent SaaS subscription, and typical development timelines extend from twelve to forty months before anything functional reaches users. For a multi-location operator whose core differentiator is the operating model and brand experience rather than the underlying technology, building is rarely a defensible use of capital or time.

Buying an off-the-shelf product solves for speed and predictable cost, but most general-purpose sports platforms were architected for a single organization rather than a network of them. They can be made to work for a multi-location operator network, but the fit is imperfect and vendor lock-in compounds year over year. Partnering - working with a specialist whose platform is built for the problem at hand, with a commercial relationship that accounts for network economics - is the pattern the youth sports industry is converging on. Well-capitalized platforms such as LeagueApps and TeamSnap have themselves chosen to acquire specialist tools rather than build them, a revealing signal about how the industry is thinking about in-house development.

6.3 What network-ready technology looks like

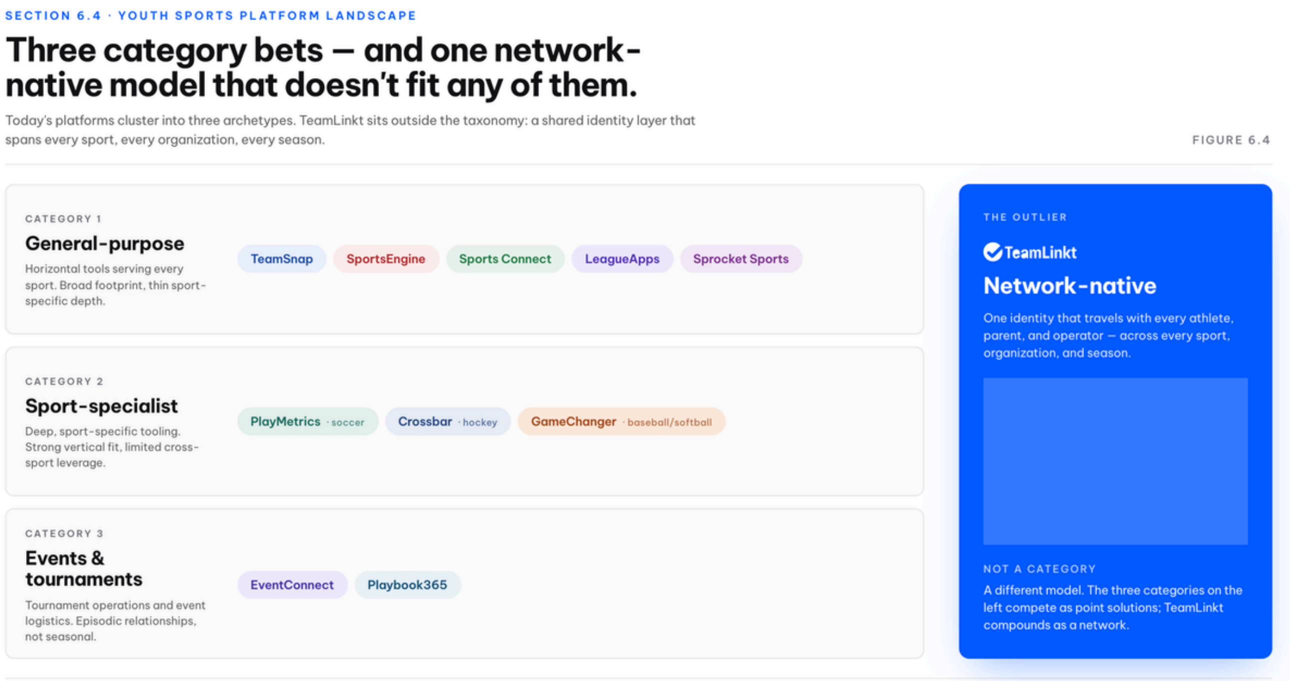
Regardless of which platform a network selects, a consistent set of capabilities separates platforms architected for multi-location operations from those that merely accommodate them. Five criteria matter most.

First, network architecture - a parent-child account model that gives Network HQ centralized visibility across every operator without stripping operators of the autonomy needed to succeed in their local market. Second, brand enforcement at the location level - HQ-controlled website and registration templates that protect the elements HQ cannot afford to let drift, while still allowing operators to personalize seasonal content within guardrails. Third, program-format flexibility within a single operator account - native support for recreational leagues, competitive team-based programs, tournaments, camps, clinics, and introductory events, reflecting the local-market strategy discussed earlier in this paper. Fourth, fast new-location deployment - template-driven setup and account cloning that turn onboarding velocity into an operator recruitment asset rather than a bottleneck. And fifth, a commercial model built for networks - network-wide master agreements with volume-tiered per-location pricing, rather than per-registration fees that scale punitively as the network grows.

Beyond these five, leaders should also confirm that any platform under evaluation treats compliance and safeguarding as a first-class feature, supports a mobile-first experience for parents and coaches, and contractually guarantees that the network owns its data and can export it in a usable format.

6.4 The youth sports platform landscape

The youth sports platform market is broad, actively consolidating, and increasingly difficult for leaders to evaluate without a framework. Platforms can usefully be grouped by the problem they were originally built to solve. General-purpose platforms such as TeamSnap, SportsEngine, Sports Connect, LeagueApps, and Sprocket Sports serve a wide range of organizations across sports and formats, competing on breadth. Sport-specialist platforms such as PlayMetrics (soccer), Crossbar (ice hockey), and GameChanger (baseball and softball) compete on depth of sport-specific workflow. Events and tournaments platforms such as EventConnect and Playbook365 focus specifically on tournament and event management.



No group is inherently superior. The right choice depends on the network's sport mix, program portfolio, organizational structure, and the particular capabilities most critical to its operating model.

One platform worth noting specifically because of its network architecture is TeamLinkt. TeamLinkt was originally built to serve local operators running leagues and events, and has over time added the functionality required to oversee a network of those operators from a central headquarters. This origin is consequential: most platforms attempting to serve multi-location operator networks arrived at that market by adapting a single-organization product to accommodate multi-location structure. TeamLinkt arrived at it from the opposite direction, building out from the local operator experience. For a network whose value proposition to its operators is operational quality at the local level, this bottom-up construction produces a different set of capabilities than a top-down network platform. TeamLinkt's largest current deployment is RISE Flag Football, a multi-location operator network of approximately two hundred local operators.

SUCCESS STORY

How RISE Flag Football scaled to 40k+ participants on a single platform.

RISE Flag Football chose TeamLinkt as the standardized platform for its multi-location operator network of approximately 70 local league operators. The decision covered the full scope of local operations - registration, scheduling, brand-consistent websites, communication, and compliance administration - under a network-wide master agreement.

Read the full success story ›

7-Strategic Implications: What the Best Networks Are Doing

The multi-location operator networks scaling most effectively in youth sports in 2025 and 2026 share a set of observable patterns. None of them are the whole story on their own, and the networks that stall often do one or two of them well while missing the rest. Taken together, they describe an operating posture more than a formula.

Networks that standardize their operating and technology stack across locations appear to recruit operators faster than those with fragmented environments. The International Franchise Association's March 2026 guidance on multi-location technology standardization is one expression of a broader pattern: prospective operators evaluating a system can tell the difference between a network with a figured-out operational model and one asking them to help figure it out. The former closes territories; the latter defends them.

Networks that invest in operator experience outperform networks that over-invest in participant acquisition alone. Network growth is bounded by operator retention, not by the size of the addressable market. Media spend and lead generation can fill a pipeline quickly, but every operator who exits costs the network years of territory development. The fastest-growing networks allocate resources accordingly - weighting the investment toward the operators they already have rather than disproportionately toward the ones they hope to recruit.

Program-portfolio flexibility and event-led market entry appear more often in fast-growing networks than in stalled ones. Networks that give their local operators multiple program formats to deploy, and a sequencing strategy for introducing them based on local market conditions, enter more markets successfully than networks that replicate a single product template everywhere. The approach is not new - sport governing bodies have used it for decades - but its systematic adoption by multi-location operator networks is.

Networks delivering a professionally-run experience to families who previously had access only to volunteer-run alternatives grow faster than networks competing primarily against established professional operators. The professionalization trend discussed in Section 2 is uneven geographically. In markets where community volunteer organizations still deliver most of the youth sports experience, a well-run network offering clear communication, reliable scheduling, quality coaching, and consistent brand delivery captures share from an underserved baseline. In markets saturated with other professional operators, competition is on the margin. Networks that consciously prioritize markets in the first category, and adapt their program mix accordingly, find less resistance to expansion than networks that prioritize density in already-professionalized metros.

None of these patterns guarantee success; networks fail for reasons that have nothing to do with any of them. But the networks executing against all four tend to show up differently in every measurable way - faster new-location onboarding, higher operator retention, stronger operator advocacy, and operational coherence that compounds year over year. The sections above have described what that coherence looks like in practice.

8-Footnotes and Citations

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16. Stack Sports, company disclosures and press materials. Source for the figure that Stack Sports processes over $1 billion annually across 50,000+ organizations.
17. Little League, "An Inside Look into Lower Merion (Pa.) Little League," littleleague.org. Source for the Lower Merion Little League case study data in Section 5, including registration growth figures, program portfolio details, and quotes from League President Wally Orlov.
18. Company filings, press releases, and industry reporting via Pitchbook, AlphaSense, and Crunchbase, as synthesized by Red Chalk Group. Source for specific company-level data on Perfect Game, Prep Baseball Report, 3STEP Sports, Unrivaled Sports, GameChanger, and other named organizations.

TeamLinkt

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Ready to scale your network?

FOR MULTI-LOCATION OPERATORS

See how TeamLinkt powers operators scaling from one location to a hundred.

teamlinkt.com/multi-location-operators

Explore the Platform ›

ABOUT TEAMLINKT

TeamLinkt is a sports management platform built for local operators running leagues, tournaments, camps, and events. Over time the platform has added functionality specifically designed to support multi-location operator networks overseeing systems of local operators — centralized visibility, HQ-controlled brand templates, account cloning for rapid location deployment, native support for multiple program formats within a single operator account, and commercial models structured for network economics rather than single-organization subscription.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This paper was prepared by **Corey Edington**. Corey holds an M.Sc. in Sport and Exercise Science and brings fifteen years of experience in the sports industry, including ten years specifically in sports technology. He currently serves as Senior Partnerships Manager at TeamLinkt.

AI DISCLOSURE

The author used Claude, Anthropic's AI assistant, to support research synthesis and drafting across the production of this paper. The strategic direction, original insights, source selection, editorial judgment, and all analytical conclusions are the author's own.

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