



Source: IAB

MEDIA IMPACT REPORT

2026 NewFronts Recap

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Advertising Opportunities Around the NFL Draft



YouTube NewFronts. Source: IAB.

/BRIEFING ROOM

2026 NewFronts Recap

By **Pranav Pandit**, EVP, Digital Marketing

The 2026 IAB NewFronts were held much earlier than previous years (March 23-26), and the shift wasn't cosmetic, it reflected a market that's always on, always optimizing, and increasingly accountable to real business outcomes, not just simple metrics.

And it had an unofficial headline: "Digital Video Has Officially Entered Its Performance Era."

Key themes:

- Across the week, partners consistently emphasized measurement, positioning CTV as a full-funnel, outcomes-driven channel which aligns with Rain's "Transactional Brand Building" promise. The message was uniform: streaming is no longer exempt from ROI scrutiny, and buyers now expect proof of incrementality, attribution, and real world impact.
- AI was everywhere but notably quieter. Rather than jazzy demos, AI showed up as infrastructure: embedded into planning, creative versioning, optimization, and measurement; a signal of help versus hype.
- Creators took center stage as core media, not add ons or one-offs. With the introduction of CreatorFronts, the IAB signaled that creator inventory now belongs in the same planning conversation as premium video, gaming, and podcasts.

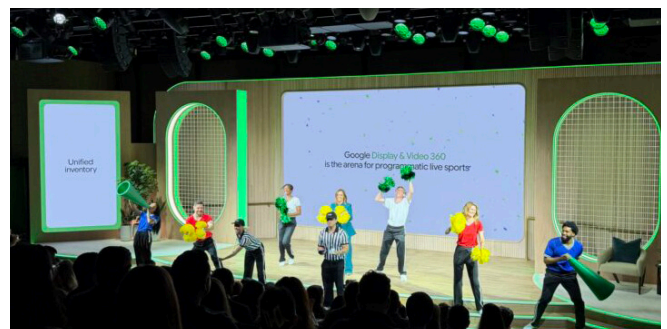
- Finally, commerce and media continued their rapid convergence. From shoppable CTV to closed-loop retail data integrations, conversations reinforced that the distance between exposure and transaction is shrinking fast and brands should plan accordingly.

Together, these themes point to the months ahead: faster planning cycles, higher accountability, and a media ecosystem built for outcomes, not just scale.

Partner Recaps:

YouTube/Google

- **AI as an operating system:** Gemini and Veo were positioned as embedded infrastructure for planning, creator discovery, creative remixing, and optimization—not standalone tools.

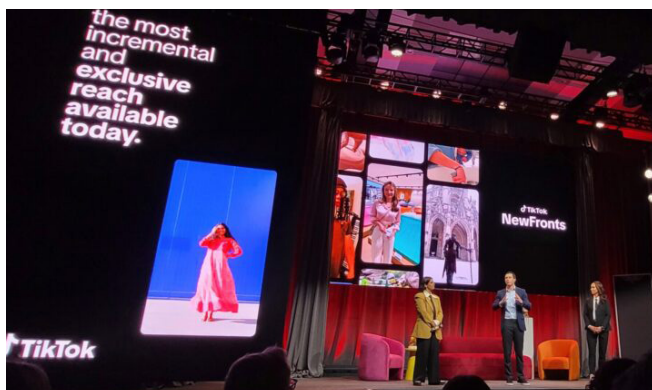


Google NewFronts. Source: IAB.

- **Creators as performance drivers:** YouTube leaned into creators as scalable, outcomes-oriented inventory across Shorts, long form, and CTV.
- **Full funnel accountability:** Measurement and attribution were framed as table stakes for YouTube's TV-scale reach.

Meta

- **AI-generated creative at scale:** Meta highlighted automated creative diversification for Reels and immersive video, reducing production friction.
- **Context over cohorts:** Emphasis shifted toward placing ads adjacent to trending content and cultural moments, not broad demos.
- **Performance as a baseline:** Upper-funnel video is now expected to prove downstream impact.



TikTok NewFronts. Source: IAB.

TikTok

- **Creators as the main stage:** Creator-led storytelling anchored the presentation, reinforcing TikTok as a culture engine first.
- **High impact takeovers:** New logo and tab-level takeover formats underscored demand for dominance and immediacy.
- **Always-on planning:** TikTok positioned itself as a continuous performance channel, not a burst buy.

Tubi

- **Premium, fandom-driven content:** Originals and alt-casts were positioned as contextual, brand-safe scaled environments.
- **Free streaming, real outcomes:** Tubi reinforced that AVOD can now meet performance expectations.

- **Tubi's Tubitopia was an "advertisers paradise:"** Tiffany Haddish hosted the event where fan passion was center stage. They touted that Tubi is the second largest free AVOD platform and growing home for Gen Z and will continue to invest in Gen Z-focused content with originals like "Game On" and "Remember Me."
- **Tubi is adding exclusive sports culture programming:**
 - Alt-casts in partnership with Apple TV and Formula 1 for multiple races.
 - Jesser's ultimate kickoff—original programming with creator Jesser taking on soccer challenges.
 - Deestroying—original content from creator. Deestroying that blends sports, competition, and creator-driven storytelling.
- **Tubi announced new ad formats:**
 - **Scene Sense:** enhances the pause moment with an interactive overlay that surfaces relevant details about what the viewer is watching.
 - **Interactive Pause Ads:** including carousels, trivia and polls.
 - **Connected conversions:** connects CTV to mobile through push notifications, email and QR codes.
- **Tubi also announced strategic partnerships:**
 - Expanding its partnership with Amazon DSP to help advertisers extend reach across streaming TV.
 - Advertisers can now access an exclusive package, offering first look access to Tubi's audience through the Amazon DSP.
- **Outcome Measurement:** Partnering with Kochava and InMarket to measure real-world outcomes.

Snapchat

- **First impression dominance:** Snapchat spotlighted full app takeover formats designed for instant impact.
- **Cultural adjacency:** Messaging focused on relevance within moments and conversations, not passive reach.

Walmart Connect / VIZIO

- **Content-to-commerce convergence:** The joint presentation showcased shoppable CTV and closed-loop measurement tied to retail sales.

- **Identity and scale:** Unified logins and first-party data were positioned as the backbone of future CTV commerce.
- **CTV as transaction layer:** Media was framed not just as influence, but as a direct driver of purchase.

Samsung

- **Performance TV announcement:** Samsung is repositioning TV Plus as a live, shoppable, performance-capable FAST platform—blending scale, commerce integrations, and outcome-focused buying to unlock both brand and lower-funnel investment.
- **Focus on shoppable ad innovation:** Partnership with Amazon Ads brings Amazon’s Interactive Video Ad technology into the Samsung TV Plus ecosystem to fuel a more seamless shopping experience.
 - Amazon’s interactive ad formats will be available starting in July.
 - Additional new products include product carousels, vertical video and click to email functionality.
 - Contextual targeting that will be able to get down to the tone of messaging.
- **Live content as a growth driver:** Continued emphasis on live programming (news, sports, cultural moments) across FAST channels to drive higher engagement, appointment viewing, and premium ad adjacency.



IAB NewFronts. Source: IAB.

Across the most attended stages, the 2026 NewFronts reinforced that creators, performance measurement, and commerce integration are no longer emerging trends, they are the foundation the industry will be working from in the coming planning cycles.



IAB NewFronts Keynote. Source: IAB.





Source: NFL

/NOTEPAD

How Advertisers Can Win Around the 2026 NFL Draft

By [Tom Wetzel](#), Group Media Director, Rainstorm Direct

The 2026 NFL Draft is shaping up to be one of the most commercially valuable sports moments of the year. The event will be held in Pittsburgh April 23–25, and will span three days:

- Round 1 on Thursday, April 23 at 8 p.m. ET
- Rounds 2–3 on Friday, April 24 at 7 p.m. ET
- Rounds 4–7 on Saturday, April 25 at 12 p.m. ET

With fan interest at peak levels after a dramatic 2025 season, the 2026 combine, and free-agency storylines, the draft is more than a sports moment—it's a cultural tentpole that advertisers should strategically plan around.

What Makes this Cultural Moment Unique

The 2026 draft presents a unique advertising window with a week of non-stop coverage in major markets, creating significant momentum. This year, several big-market franchises are expected to pick inside the top 10 including the New York Jets, Washington Commanders, Kansas City Chiefs, and Tom Brady's Las Vegas Raiders. High-profile team involvement fuels national attention, drives conversation, and elevates the value of draft-adjacent media.

Live programming is expected across major sports networks such as ESPN, FS1, and NFL Network throughout draft week.

Strategic Targeting Opportunities

The NFL draft overlapping with NBA and NHL playoffs as well as the MLB regular season amplifies male-targeted opportunities. This convergence creates a uniquely rich window for male-targeting brands to maximize impressions or for female-targeting brands to strategically shift placements based on competition and demand. Additionally, with no clear consensus on premium positions beyond quarterback, the 2026 class is driving speculation that boosts tune-in intent. Uncertainty = interest, and interest = attention advertisers can capitalize on.



Source: NFL

The NFL draft is a smart buy for both new and established NFL advertisers. For brands looking to associate with the NFL—without paying live-game pricing—the draft offers high reach, strong engagement, positive brand adjacency at a lower

cost vs. in-season NFL broadcasts, making it ideal for both legacy advertisers maintaining year-round presence and new entrants testing into NFL environments for the first time.

Now that we've scouted the opportunity, here are the top ways advertisers can maximize draft week impact leveraging a surround strategy:

1. Activate around daily shoulder programming.

Think about shows featuring heavy draft conversations the week leading up to the draft such as "SportsCenter", "NFL Live", "ESPNNews" blocks, "Wake Up Barstool" and "The Herd with Colin Cowherd." These are high-frequency, lower-cost environments perfect for tapping into pre-draft anticipation.

2. Extend presence through podcasts.

Audiences increasingly consume draft analysis through long-form audio. Shows like "Pardon My Take" and "The Bill Simmons Podcast" offer strong contextual relevance and allow advertisers to capture sports fans in deeper-engagement environments.

3. Lean into programmatic CTV and digital sports video.

Digital and CTV inventory across sports publishers spikes during draft week. High-value opportunities include: highlight clips, draft recaps, analyst breakdowns, mock drafts and prediction shows. These formats reach fans before, during, and after the live broadcast.



Source: NFL

The Bottom Line: Draft Week Is a High-Value, High-Attention Moment Advertisers Shouldn't Miss



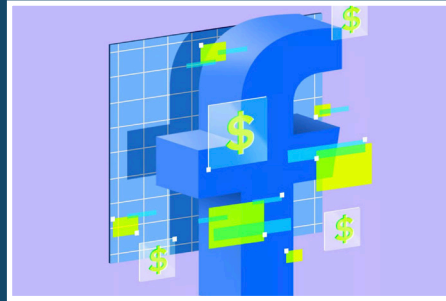
Source: NFL

The 2026 NFL Draft represents one of the most powerful cross-screen opportunities of Q2. With unparalleled fan engagement, a crowded sports calendar, and a massive demand surge across media platforms, draft week provides brands with the perfect storm of visibility, efficiency, and cultural relevance.

By leveraging a smart surround strategy, advertisers can turn this three-day event into a weeklong (and even month-long) performance engine.



/QUICK HITS



How Meta's AI Push Is Changing Ad Creation
[\[Marketing Brew\]](#)



Paramount's Upfront Pitch Is About Three Things
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Consumers Demand Proof Of Authenticity Across Every Touchpoint, Survey Finds
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