

How To

Photos and Story by
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(As an
E-sports
Broadcaster)

Make It In the DFW



In an industry where they make up the rules as they go, Casters and gamers are forging their own career paths and building their own fan bases.

Justin Varghese, also known as JV hosts a weekly Smash Bros competition at FX Game Exchange in central Plano. He and his Co-host Nabil P., Aka Nebtune (not pictured) narrate the players actions and provide color commentary.

This is the story of what happened to those kids in the fourth grade who, much to their teacher's chagrin, brought in a video game controller as a prop for career day. There is a thriving industry that's expanding into other industries with its magnetic and graphically rendered gravitational pull. Video games aren't just for the participants anymore. The sharing generation is an interested audience to the virtual exploits of gamers all around the globe and once company in the DFW is basing its entire business model around them. This is a gaming story about the people who find the competition, narrate and package the results. E-sports broadcasters are growing in number around the country and a few local guys are finding their niche in the middle of it all.

Finding Passion.

When Justin Varghese left his corporate job to pursue a life in the world of video games, he wasn't chasing checks. The 25 year old business graduate found the sort of fulfillment that cubicles and sales leads couldn't give him. By turning his hobby for games into a career, he avoided choosing between personal fulfillments and paying the rent. He chose passion.

By mixing his business acumen with his love for video games, Varghese created a role for himself as Head of Strategic Partnerships at Tourney Locator (TLOC), a DFW based E-Sports company. In addition to that, he's still gaming and spending hundreds of hours learning all of the ins and outs of the games TLOC broadcasts. How does he manage? Passion.



How to build your own gamecast.

A list of essential materials the professionals use to capture and comment on the onscreen action in competition.



Laptop that can handle video editing and overlay software (Apple Macbook Air pictured): \$500- \$1200

Sound board to manage multiple audio and video feeds at the same time (ProSonus StudioLive 16.0.2 Performance and Recording Digital Mixer pictured): \$899

Current gen game system: \$299-\$350

Studio light umbrellas (LimoStudio LMS103 pictured): \$60

Webcam to capture player faces: (Microsoft LifeCam HD-3000 Webcam pictured): \$40



Industry standard headphones to pick up commentator audio (Audio-Technica BPHS1-XF4 pictured): \$199

Webcam to capture caster faces: (Microsoft LifeCam HD-3000 Webcam pictured): \$40

Two broadcasters with unlimited chemistry: priceless.





Casting Their Net Over The Net

Hoping to build off its nearly thirty-seven thousand subscribers on the streaming service Twitch, Tourney Locator is harvesting a new generation of gamers for fun and profit.

More than 100 contestants pile into the FX Game Exchange in Plano for the weekly Twitch streamed battles. Ten times that amount watch the weekly event online.

In November of 2014, Justin Varghese made a decision that would change the trajectory of his life forever. He sat down behind the counter at the Plano, TX based FX Game Exchange and watched contestants in a Super Smash Brothers tournament duke it out. He sat down next to a few guys he didn't know that well narrated the happenings onscreen while critiquing the player movements. Justin did this all on camera. And he loved every minute it.

Since then the University of Texas at Dallas graduate has traded in his keyboard and mouse for a controller and a headset. Varghese is now the Head of Strategic Partnerships at Tourney Locator LLC. (TLOC), the very company

for which he stepped onto the mic for. Varghese and his on-air partner, Nabil Pervez, operate as the main two faces of TLOC, a DFW company that organizes and stream video game tournaments. The duo broadcast weekly as JV and Nebtune. Along with a weekly series at the Exchange, TLOC sets up yearly and monthly tournaments, at times sponsoring players and traveling throughout the region. Prior to joining TLOC and signing a Major League Gaming contract, Justin had extensive video game experience but no broadcasting or recording experience. It all happened kind of fast for Justin, so I asked him to break it down for me.

**Start with a game
you know well**

This part can't be stated enough. To go from playing with your friends to breaking down each play session into a detailed critique or performance and technique, prospective Casters (as they are called) have to have a wide and deep base of knowledge. Where else would you pull that from than those hundreds of hours you poured into *Destiny* or *Tekken*? "It all stemmed from that initial love of *Smash 64*," Varghese said. After that he moved on to other versions of *Smash*, *Halo 5*, *Call of Duty Black Ops 3* and *Pokken* while studying four more games to cast in the future.

Know the difference between color commentating and play-by-play.

E-sports Casters don't all practice the craft the same way. Like other sports, commentators can lean toward the technical analyst side where jargon fills the air, or they can focus more on capturing the literal movements on screen for the folks at home. Justin tends to

learn towards the former, focusing on the play-by-play duties while his partner, Nebtune, gives the color commentary. The color caster has to be able to anticipate how the round will go and the overall strategies of the players. Some casters do a little bit of both. "Commentary, in my opinion, is evolving. It's hard to label it sometimes," Nebtune said, smiling. "In traditional sports you have your play-by-play guy and your color analyst, who is often an ex-coach or player."

Find somebody you gel with on-air.

Nebtune and JV are a static duo. Just ask either of them, they both said it without the other knowing. Even though they didn't know each other well before they started casting together, 37,000 subscribers probably can't tell the difference. TLOC has multiple commentators and casters who wear the headset, but none quite resonate like this particular duo. "That's my guy. Whenever I'm trying to grow and develop, Justin is my go to." Nebtune said.

The level of professional partnership the two share works well enough to where they are able to not work together for an extended period of time and immediately jump back online for 6 hour sessions. Which leads to the next point...

Study. Watch. Practice.

Justin and Nabil take different approaches to casting, but they agree that practice makes perfect. For most casters that starts with picking up the controller and learning first hand. It doesn't mean you have to be good, just knowledgeable. The two often go hand-in-hand, though. This also includes watching other casters' sessions.

"It's not just a one-time investment. You have to constantly be investing time into many different games," Varghese said. "I like to think that you can learn any skill in about 20 hours very quickly because that's just how the learning curve is. The first 20 hours you learn so much. There's a brilliant book of the same title that's about this. I have my own

system in conjunction with ways of thinking like that to really expedite my learning process."

There you have it. Start with what you know, learn the different styles of casting, find a good co-host and study hard. Then you can start worrying about the difference between shoutcasting and hypecasting (Depending on who you ask, there isn't one). With luck you too can travel around the continent, narrating the harmonic and precisely timed chattering of polyurethane buttons smash against metal receivers. Or as Justin calls it, storytelling. ❁



According to both men, The first key to having a successful on air partnership is off air chemistry. Nabil said he clicked with Justin from the first time they met.