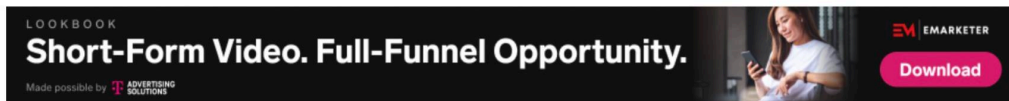


What Netflix's live pivot means for entertainment, and how marketers should react

Article by Emmy Liederman | Feb 13, 2026



On Jan. 25, Netflix livestreamed climber Alex Honnold scaling Taipei 101, one of the world's tallest buildings, without ropes or safety gear. The event brought in over 6 million viewers, and continued the streaming giant's investment into live, tentpole events that could change how marketers approach streaming campaigns.

"Netflix helped train audiences to watch shows on their own time, so it's a big deal to see the platform lean back into live experiences," said Adam Cohen, CEO and founder of out-of-home ad network Stic.

As streaming services compete for rights to major sporting events, capturing live audiences through new event types is another way to garner audience attention and loyalty. While organized sports dominate TV, considering other formats can widen existing content offerings and open up opportunities for both creators and advertisers.

"Live gives [Netflix] a way to become the place where cultural moments start, not just where they're archived later," said Adam Singer, VP of marketing at AdQuick.

Why real-time attention matters

Brands and platforms recognize that live formats help them stand out, especially at a time when content is increasingly siloed.

- To differentiate from X and Threads, Bluesky is investing in live events.
- Ahead of CES, [NBCUniversal rolled out its LIVE Total Impact ad product](#), allowing advertisers to retarget viewers exposed to ads during live broadcasts.
- While streaming TV is overtaking live TV in watch time, 44% of US adults still watch at least an hour of live per day, according to an April 2025 Attest survey.

"Live streaming taps into the same psychology that made social video and creator culture explode," said Vikrant Mathur, cofounder of video distribution and technology company Future Today. "People want to feel like they're there as it happens, not just consuming a finished product."

Streaming Hannold's climb isn't Netflix's first investment in live events. One of its highest profile live moments was a boxing fight between Anthony Joshua and Jake Paul in late 2025, and its regular live content includes the original talent competition "Star Search" and weekly episodes of "The Bill Simmons Podcast."

Expanding reach beyond live moments

Just as Netflix's "Skyscraper Live" connected back to Hannold's 2018 climbing documentary "Free Solo," live programming also gives streamers the opportunity to connect tentpole moments back to their existing inventory. While the shared moment is what intrigues audiences about live content, it doesn't have to be a static one.

An added benefit of these live events is they can "act as discovery engines," said Kenneth Suh, chief strategy officer at Nexsen. This also widens the opportunities for marketers, who can participate in shoulder content, like advertising on smart TV homescreens or promoting the event on social platforms.

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"The more frequent and more varied live events streamers produce, the wider the door opens to advertisers looking to reach viewers on adjacent, relevant content," he said.

The creator component

Every streaming service is embracing creators, offering them roles in both reality TV and scripted content. Honnold has become a creator himself, maintaining a following across social platforms and through his podcast, "Climbing Gold."

"There's finally a pipeline that can bring a creator to a studio or to a platform like Tubi, and that didn't really exist a couple years ago," said Kyle Hjelmseth, CEO and founder of G&B Digital Management. "Now entertainment is taking creators very seriously and there's a path that wasn't there before, but it's one of the many paths."

That momentum doesn't always translate into content for live formats, said Hjelmseth. For creators to succeed in these mass live formats, they would have to move away from the everyday, relatable content that can be the root of their appeal.

"There is a very specific type of creator that crosses over into entertainment," he said. "Most of the creator economy is really not those types of people. They're a plumber or a person who likes to share their Get Ready with Me."

Live events are a memorable opportunity for marketers, but the stakes are higher for the content to be the right match for the brand, said Cohen.

"Live moments magnify impact, for better or worse," he said. "These moments quickly reveal whether a brand actually understands the audience, and the ones that do are rewarded with engagement."

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