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This Week's News

Turnkey unveils sponsorship management tool

By ERIC FISHER & DAVID BROUGHTON

Staff writers

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Turnkey Sports & Entertainment has developed its second sports business software program in less than six months, a new sponsorship management system called Activator that utilizes data and content from nearly a dozen prominent providers.

Activator seeks to create a real-time marketing management tool, distilling data from outfits such as Nielsen, Arbitron, TNS/ESPN Sports Poll and others into one, central computerized dashboard. There, sponsorship data can be analyzed, shared between brand and property, and used to alter activations and spending levels. Like Turnkey's Prospector ticketing software, which was unveiled last fall, Activator was in development for several years.

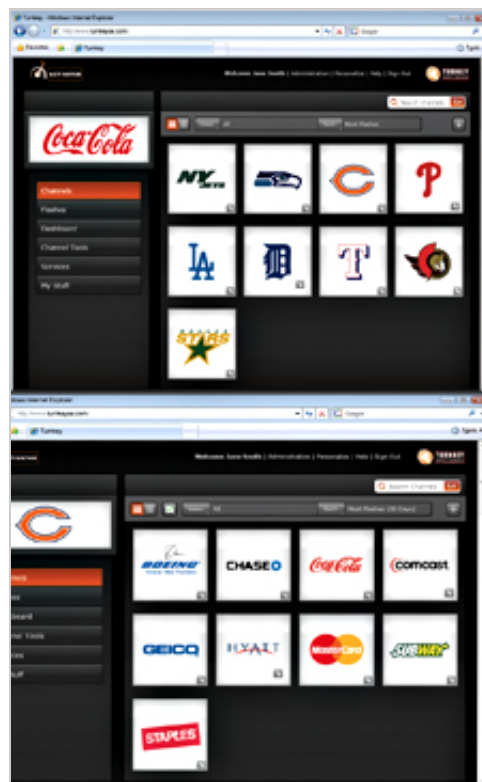
"We think this gets at a lot of the frustration existing out there in the marketplace regarding sponsorship and provides a tool to be a lot more responsive and efficient," said Len Perna, Turnkey chief executive. "It has been daunting to measure sponsorship because there are so many different pieces between print, TV, signage, radio, etc. This makes it easier to look at all the pieces in one place."

Other partners in the project include brand exposure measurement outfit Repucom, Scarborough Research, media clipping company Critical Media, RazorGator's TicketOS unit, and SlideRocket, a Bay Area developer of advanced online presentation software. Turnkey has signed a half-dozen beta clients to use Activator to manage their sponsorships, including the Chicago Bears, Boston Red Sox, Seattle Sounders, Phoenix Suns, the NBA, and Kroenke Sports and the Colorado Avalanche. A more fully fledged release is being readied for this summer.

The product seeks to get at two prevailing trends in sports marketing: an unprecedented need to document true return on investment, and a desire to move beyond static, annual sponsorship recapping. Previously, at the end of each year or season, teams and leagues would send their corporate sponsors a PowerPoint or similar document outlining achievements for the year. Such a document was typically not interactive, and, in many cases, was just a visual regurgitation of the original sponsorship contract. Activator clients will have the ability to customize data, then grant read-only online access to predetermined partners. Activator additionally seeks to incorporate cloud computing and content sharing, concepts that are now encompassing much of the digital media and technology industries.

"We think this is a way to bring marketing partnerships to life," said Rick Welts, Suns chief executive. "We can now make our deals as factually based as possible and living, breathing things. It also really brings together so many pieces of the pie we had to manage individually. We've never seen anything as comprehensive."

To that end, many teams for years have subscribed to individual data feeds from many of the companies involved in Activator, and will still need to, as the Activator software does not come pre-loaded with many of the feeds. Additionally, Turnkey has signed exclusive partnerships with Critical Media, ESPN Sports Poll, Repucom and TicketOS, meaning clients of their various competitors will not be able to have live data



automatically fed into Activator. But several teams said the new program will create significant efficiencies by pooling the data into one place and then creating mechanisms for back-and-forth sharing between team and sponsorship partner.

Activator distills data from a variety of providers and presents it in a single dashboard.

“At a glance, we have something that applies logic and science to what had been evasive,” said Samira Zebian, brand manager for MillerCoors. The global brewer was brought into Activator by the Bears. “This allows us to be more sophisticated and provide substance to what we’re doing. It’s not a magic bullet, but does definitely allow us to be much more strategic and gives us a better mechanism to share information and keep up to date [with sponsorship partners].”

Several people involved in the Activator project said the system also will allow for more commonality in negotiations between executives with sponsors and properties, and reduce miscommunication and misaligned goals. Similarly, most teams and brands also said they are not using Activator with an immediate aim of boosting revenue, but, for now, are focusing on increasing partner value and heightening efficiency.

“Teams and brands should be using a common currency,” said Robert Fox, senior vice president for TNS Sports, Events & Sponsorships. “Say I want to sell you my house, and you want to buy my house. I tell you it’s 100,000. There is a big difference if I’m talking dollars and you’re thinking drachma.”

Pricing for the system begins at \$6,000 a year and varies significantly from there depending on the levels of additional functionality desired and the amount of data disclosed to third parties.

Turnkey is a research partner of SportsBusiness Journal and SportsBusiness Daily.