

The Innovators: A look at several companies developing products and services poised to become more prominent within the sports industry

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FanFeedr

This startup firm, part of the thriving Brooklyn tech scene, is an aggregator, but not of the normal sort. FanFeedr collects data on more than 55,000 athletes and 4,000 pro and college teams and creates a central affinity-based hub for fans that in real time collects tweets, blog posts, news, video, scores and statistics, photos and other content, all with geolocation ability. The company recently partnered with the Washington Redskins to create what is believed to be the first team-sponsored iPad application, and PepsiCo chose FanFeedr as one of 10 companies to participate in a new incubator program aimed at spurring new approaches in digital media and social marketing. FanFeedr is buttressing an advertising-based model with an entry into social gaming, including a series of pick 'em games. "We're particularly excited about the iPad and the immersiveness that offers," said Ty Ahmad-Taylor, FanFeedr founder and CEO. "We were right out of the gate with the iPad, so we already have six months of solid analytics on what works and what doesn't.

SeatGeek

SeatGeek is the latest online operation aimed at wading through the sea of secondary ticket market listings and collating them into an easy-to-understand grid, not unlike what FanSnap has already done in tickets and Kayak has done in travel. SeatGeek's different spin on the ticket metasearch game, however, is forecasting pricing trends for games in the NFL, MLB, NBA and NHL, and concerts and Broadway shows using its own algorithms, and advising users on the proper times to buy. Accuracy thus far has surpassed 75 percent. A diversified business model includes a free version of the site for buyers, a premium version for sellers, commissions on tickets sold through the site, and an optional insurance product that compensates users if the pricing predictions don't hold true.

Roundarch

This 10-year-old, Chicago-based digital agency has carved out a growing business aiding a range of media firms and consumer brands such as Avis, HBO, the London Underground and Hershey's. But two recent, high-profile deals are enlarging the company's profile in sports. Roundarch has partnered with the New York Jets to create an online dashboard for team executives that monitors in real time key stadium functions such as parking, ticketing, and concession and merchandise sales. The immediate, easy-to-scan, touchscreen dashboard allows team officials to make swift operational changes on game day. The Jets are the first NFL team to test the product. "A lot of our clients in finance and investments are looking into this," said Dave Vanslette, Roundarch vice president. "Sports is not only a growth area for us unto itself, but back into other areas, too." Roundarch, meanwhile, has partnered with Bloomberg Sports to help create Bloomberg's new Decision Maker iPad application for fantasy football.

TiqIQ

Another online secondary ticket firm, New York-based TiqIQ, also collates listings from several sites, including StubHub, and offers pricing trends. But TiqIQ provides that ticketing intelligence from an editorial-based model in which it embeds its functionality within locally oriented blogs and news sites it partners with, providing both content and a new commerce platform for publishers. Partner sites include River Ave. Blues, a popular New York Yankees blog, and a prominent Philadelphia Phillies blog, TheFightins.com.