

Minneapolis data start-up Sport Ngin is acquired by NBC Sports

Minneapolis sports data start-up has grown quickly in 8 years

By Jackie Crosby (<http://www.startribune.com/jackie-crosby/10644706/>) Star Tribune |

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Minneapolis start-up Sport Ngin has been sold to NBC Sports Group, capping years of rapid growth and plentiful financing for the software company.

Sport Ngin is the nation's largest provider of web software and mobile applications to manage youth, amateur and professional sports. More than 500,000 sports teams, leagues, clubs and associations use the platform.

CEO and co-founder Justin Kaufenberg said NBC Sports is "the most visible company" within the multibillion-dollar market for youth sports. The sale gives Sport Ngin access to more capital as well as exposure that comes from being part of an organization with international reach and built-in name recognition.

According to the industry association SFIA.org, 62 million people participate in team sports.

"We've got a mission and vision to help athletes and families and youth sports organizations," Kaufenberg said. "This made so much sense for us because now we can continue to do that, but we can do it even faster."

Terms of the deal, which closed July 1, were not disclosed.

Discussions began over the past year about ways to work with NBC Sports Group, "and it continued to evolve," Kaufenberg said. Employees were told about the sale on Monday.

Founded in 2008, Sport Ngin experienced some early growing pains but in recent years landed deep-pocketed investors, including a \$25 million infusion from Piper Jaffray Merchant Banking and Causeway Media Partners in 2014. In all, the company has reeled in about \$39 million to help fund its growth.

Its clients include USA Hockey, USA Wrestling and Hockey Canada, as well as the Star Tribune, which uses the platform to produce its network of high school sports websites.

Last fall, Sport Ngin and its workforce of about 250 software engineers, marketers and salespeople moved into expansive new headquarters in the rehabbed former Minneapolis Public Schools building on Broadway Avenue in northeast Minneapolis.

Kaufenberg said the company will remain in place and expects no changes to its staff or leadership team, which includes three of the four co-founders.

The company's roots can be traced back to 2002, when Kaufenberg and classmate Carson Kipfer launched a web-design company from a dorm room at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. The idea and technology changed, but Kipfer remains with the company, as the principal designer. Another co-founder, Greg Blasko, is chief technology officer.

Sport Ngin is known for its special perks, including free doughnuts on Thursdays and in-house happy hour with free beer and spirits on Fridays. Have no fear, Kaufenberg said, the sale will have no impact.

"It's business as usual at Sport Ngin," he said.



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Sport Ngin is among a number of companies that celebrate Fridays with in-house happy hours. Workers at the Minneapolis sports data...