



# WHAT'S NEWS?

That's what we were wondering when we reached out over the summer months to **team dealers, vendors and others involved in the team sports business across America.** Our goal: Get a handle on what has driven these executives and our industry in the past, where their Bright Ideas come from, and what's coming down the pike. **Three simple questions, multiple interesting responses.**



# WHAT BRIGHT IDEA HAS HAD THE MOST IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS IN THE PAST 5 YEARS?

New ways to purchase uniforms and spirit wear that provide fundraising dollars direct to athletic programs.

**George Kline, Jr., Sales Pro, BSN Sports**

B2B access by vendors.

**Kim Karsch, California Pro Sports, Harbor City, CA**

OrderMyGear software for online orders. The ability to collect payments up front without handling checks and credit card numbers, receive an organized total for each product ordered and to be able to generate PO's and collect customer data has taken this segment of our business to the next level.

**Mike Stewart, Regional Manager, Johnny Mac's Sporting Goods**

Tackle Wheels have been tremendous the past couple of years. It seems like a simple product, but it has taken off in the football market.

**Don Leonard, President, Crown Sports Sales**

The online school store. It's not really a new idea, as I sold them in the '90s and early 2000s. But our members seem to be impacted by school stores today more than ever.

**Chris Champ, Category Manager, Nation's Best Sports**

**Without a doubt web stores have had the largest impact on our industry and will continue to do so. They have taken the struggle of collecting the money from the parents for the coaches and the dealers from the coaches. It has also given us the opportunity to capture some of the booster business we were losing to other vendors.**

**Tate Mathews, Mathews Team Sports, Franklin, TN**

The introduction of dye sublimation to the team uniform market. It was a technological breakthrough in the team uniform market and was an amazing experience showing it to coaches for the first time. Today if you are not selling sublimation you will not stay in business very long.

**Douglas Martin, Martin Sales, Goffstown, NH**

Broadly speaking, technology. The ability to improve speed of service by way of technology has changed the game.

**Adam Blumenfeld, CE, Varsity Brands**

Our best idea was contracting with a professional to develop a five-year strategic plan. We had plans in the past but were ineffective and lacked follow-up. Our current plan is more focused and concise.

**Greg Miller, President, Universal Athletic**

One of the ideas NSGA developed to help its team dealer members was a compilation of all the official balls used by each state association in post-season competition. This gives our members the ability to plan ahead and be prepared for possible changes as they make their purchasing decisions.

**Marty Maciaszek, Dir., Team Dealer Division, NSGA**



# WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR BRIGHT IDEAS?

**Perspective from different people is a beautiful thing. We get tremendous ideas from our teammates. It helps clarify our mission and ensures geographic and cultural relevance. We also take a fair amount of inspiration from outside the industry. One has to admire the way Amazon, Google and Facebook are changing the way we work and play. There's a lot to be learned from their agile, mobile culture.**

**Adam Blumenfeld, CEO, Varsity Brands**

We listen to our athlete brand ambassadors, athletic trainers, equipment managers, social media communities and retail partners across every one of our sales channels. We are interacting with athletes and engaged with them — we get our new ideas by listening to and learning from them.

**Mary Horwath, Senior VP – Marketing, United Sports Brands**

Many new ideas come from the coaches themselves. Getting feedback from the end user helps generate ideas for new products.

**Don Leonard, Crown Sport Sales, Winston-Salem, NC**

We often get ideas from outside the industry. We also challenge our team to bring new ideas to the table.

**Greg Mille, Universal Athletic, Bozeman, MT**

I get my ideas from the top level sports like the NFL and D1 colleges, giving my teams the ultimate experience just like the big boys.

**George Kline, Sales Pro. BSN Sports**

Trade shows, the NSGA Management Conference and vendor sales reps and management. I also try to read all the trade magazines and talk to other dealers on how they run their businesses.

**Mike Stewart, Regional Manager, Johnny Mac's Sporting Goods**

We get ideas from other dealers and from the Sports Inc. shows.

**Tate Mathews, Mathews Teams Sports, Franklin, TN**

By listening to customers, from the Internet, from 'Shark Tank,' and from conversations with industry friends.

**Douglas Martin, Martin Sales, Goffstown, NH**



## WHAT'S THE NEXT BRIGHT IDEA IN

# TEAM SPORTS?

More affordable and flexible software solutions that will allow for a better customer and employee experience.

**Greg Miller, Universal Athletic, Bozeman, MT**

Amazon and others are making moves that will soon make the way we consume content and deliver product drastically different from today. 3D printing, same-day delivery, instant customization and personalization, do-it-yourself everything ... I expect the consumer will want more control over her destiny and companies that win will master the ability to respond to needs and deliver exactly what that demanding customer wants faster than ever.

**Adam Blumenfeld, CEO, Varsity Brands**

The question will be, 'Does the coach value relationships over branding/products?' The number of old-school athletic directors and coaches continues to dwindle and the up-and-coming generation of decision makers relies much more heavily on technology for its answers and solutions. The team dealer who doesn't proactively become a partner in the solution will probably be left behind. Also, competing successfully against ones' suppliers may be key to winning the battle.

**Chris Champ, NBS**

**What Amazon and other direct-to-consumer vendors, including our vendors themselves, do in terms of team sales will dictate how we approach our business. There is still a value to a road salesman calling on accounts and providing that level of service that consumers cannot receive from online purchasing, but a salesman is going to have to be tech savvy. The national team sales concept will most likely not go away, so remaining important to vendors and building those relationships and partnerships will be even more crucial for independent dealers. The ability to adapt and change will be crucial for the survival of the team dealer.**

**Mike Stewart, Johnny Mac's Sporting Goods**

Smart technology will continue to grow in its use for sports at the high school and youth levels. Products that can measure the speed of a baseball or softball swing, how well a football has been thrown, if a basketball has been shot properly or how much effort is expended by a hockey player will become more and more prevalent as parents and coaches try to get as much data as possible to increase the chances of an athlete's success.

**Marty Maciaszek, NSGA**

The digital space has seen so many advancements, which are changing how people communicate and learn. We know it is important to focus on e-commerce in a more digitally connected market. We see tremendous opportunity to better communicate to our target audiences through social media.

**Mary Horwath, United Sports Brands**

We need to learn how to get customized products out faster and faster to the end consumer.

**George Kline, BSN Sports**

Web stores for teams are a big part of the future.

**Kim Karsch, California Pro Sports**