

# The Essence of Innovation

## Shining a light on the creative thinkers whose ideas drive innovation in sports

Published November 21, 2011, Page 15



We'll tell you right up front, these aren't the typical people you see in SportsBusiness Journal every week, even if some of the companies they work for are familiar. That's the idea behind "Idea Innovators" — it's a focus on innovation, the ideas behind it and the people who make it all possible.

Let's shine a spotlight on them, we thought. The people who are changing sports, or at least how we view and enjoy sports, consume and sell them.

We figured it could be interesting.

Innovation, of course, is a tricky thing. By definition, it's the introduction of something new, a new idea, method or device, even simply a novelty. The people who drive such things are something of a novelty, too.

Put simply, they think differently. And that way of thinking transforms itself into all kinds of interesting, intellectual and ... well, sometimes oddball types of ways.

That's the beauty of innovation, and innovative thinking.

Rick Cavallaro is a scientist who touches all of Sportvision's unique TV products. In his spare time, he designs, builds and pilots world-record-setting downwind carts — think of a sailboat on land, powered only by the wind, yet going faster than the wind. We're not sure how it works, either.

Sporting Kansas City's Asim Pasha built microchips before most people even knew what they were. Fox Sports' Gary Hartley saw a kid's drawing and turned it into Cleatus, the network's NFL robot. And Burton Snowboards' Greg Dacyshyn liked his beat-up old blue jeans so much, he figured out a way to transpose them onto the uniforms of the U.S. Olympic snowboard team.



Maybe you've heard of some of them, maybe you haven't. Maybe you're aware of their work, maybe you're not. They're people who are just a little outside the box, or they're building a new box, and they make the sports business industry more productive, profitable and enjoyable because of it.

We're not saying these are the only people being innovative, or ahead of the curve, in sports. Innovation is too fluid a concept to say that. Somewhere somebody is doing something that no one can predict, something that will change everything in their world ... and possibly yours.

## **The Idea Innovators**

**Alex Blum**, KIT Digital  
**James Carnes**, Adidas  
**Rick Cavallaro**, Sportvision  
**Greg Dacyshyn**, Burton Snowboards  
**Bruce Goldfeder**, CBS Sports  
**Kevin Haley**, Under Armour  
**Gary Hartley**, Fox Sports  
**Michael Her**, NeuLion  
**Priya Narasimhan**, YinzCam  
**John Pacino**, ESPN  
**Asim Pasha**, Sporting Kansas City  
**Adam Ritter**, MLB Advanced Media  
**Alex Turnbull**, PGA Tour  
**Nan Zi Wang**, Comcast Sports Group  
**Cam Weber**, EA Sports

# Michael Her, NeuLion

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idea innovators



**Define innovation:** *To me innovation means taking a complicated problem and finding a simple and elegant solution.*

**What's the innovation you're most proud of?** *Our video delivery platform that is built on top of service-oriented architecture. We can route the video through different components to deliver new functionality, creating a live broadcasting system on the fly.*

**What's the future of your industry?** *We are all inventing the future of Internet television and online video together. It's the best time to be in this industry, and the future is great.*

**What inspires you?** *Seeing beautiful things in life inspires me.*

## Michael Her

### Executive Vice President, Research and Development

With very little fanfare, NeuLion has become one of the leading online video service providers, helping power the digital content strategies for the NFL, NHL, UFC, NBA, MLS, PBR and dozens of other pro and college properties.

Michael Her, NeuLion's executive vice president of research and development, has been a key figure in that run-up of clients, leading the creation of a wide array of streaming media and mobile products now helping redefine how digital content is consumed. Among the specific online video products developed and powered by Her and NeuLion are the NFL's Game Pass and Game Rewind, NHL GameCenter and MLS's MatchDay Live.

"What we've done in each of these league and team relationships is take a long time to understand their business needs, and put those goals together with our newest products," Her said.

In addition to streaming to computers, smartphones and tablets, Her and NeuLion also are aggressively exploring TV Everywhere concepts by streaming through connected TVs and over-the-top boxes such as Roku, Boxee and through video game consoles.

"Every new year, every new season with each of our league and team partners, we essentially have to start from scratch and completely revamp," Her said. "The development cycles are so fast, you absolutely cannot stand still."

— Eric Fisher