

Phizzle Goes To The Mobile Hoop For NBA All-Star Weekend 2010

by [Tameka Kee](#) on Friday, February 12, 2010



As celebrities, basketball fans, and families converge on the new Dallas Cowboys Stadium for NBA All-Star Weekend 2010, one man has a big number on his mind: 90,000. That's roughly the capacity of the stadium ([per USA Today](#)), and maybe, the number of phones that will be sending SMS and MMS messages back and forth during the games.

And if they're responding to "text-to-win" contests and other promotions that show up on the [Cisco-powered](#) big screens and monitors throughout the stadium, then all the data from those 90,000+ handsets -- device type, carrier, geographic origin -- will need to flow in real-time across Phizzle's platform, since the startup is powering the NBA's mobile marketing and "fan engagement" initiatives for the weekend.

That's quite a bit of pressure on Phizzle CEO Ben Davis (pictured). The platform's performance over the weekend will determine whether Phizzle gets the NBA's "unofficial" endorsement as the mobile marketing partner of choice -- meaning potential deals to power mobile engagement initiatives for the league as a whole, as well as a myriad individual teams.

Strengthening fan relationships via mobile

Still, Davis isn't *that* worried, because Phizzle's platform has already been tested by one of the league's most popular teams: the Cleveland Cavaliers.

San Francisco-based Phizzle has been working with the Cavaliers since the 2008 Playoffs. The startup powered the team's opt-in mobile alerts campaign that sent fans stats, trivia questions and other game-related info, as well as promotions that featured fans' responses and messages on monitors in the Quicken Loans arena. Meanwhile, a cross-media campaign with Fox Sports Ohio led to 75,000 text entries to a Cavaliers "Fan Appreciation" contest.

The Cavaliers also used Phizzle's platform for mobile commerce, offering discounts on tickets and merchandise coupons. "Our platform has been responsible for driving **over \$45,000 in ticket revenue** over the past two seasons," Davis said. "We've delivered great results for the Cavs, so I have no question that we'll be able to do the same for the NBA this weekend."

Super-sized campaigns for All-Star Weekend

Phizzle's platform will power a number of initiatives for the weekend, including Pics 2 Screen, which will invite fans to snap pics during the games, and display selected (and moderated) shots on two 30-foot digital monitors in the stadium. There's Fan DJ, which will let the fans text in to choose one of three songs that the players will warm up to, as well as commerce-based trivia campaign that will reward winners with SMS-based coupons for 10 percent off NBA.com merchandise.

Davis' favorite is a collaboration between Phizzle, Electronic Arts and [Pro vs. GI Joe](#), a charity organization that connects U.S. soldiers with pro athletes for video game competitions. During the All-Star pre-game on Sunday, an NBA player will play EA's *NBA 2K10* against a soldier, with their progress displayed on the main screen in the stadium. Fans will be able to vote on who they think will win the match via text; correct pickers get entered into a drawing to win EA Sports merchandise that they can redeem at the stadium that day.

Davis says the Phizzle team -- just nine people, as of now -- is ready for the onslaught. "Our relationship with the Cavs, other teams like the 76ers, and more importantly, Cisco, has helped us prepare for this," he said. "But we've upped the bandwidth for the number of messages we can process."

Founded in 2005, Phizzle was backed by just \$100,000 in a seed round of funding from private investors. Davis says the company has been profitable since late 2008. And if its mobile marketing platform shines (as opposed to fizzling out) this weekend, then there could be an exponential amount of profit to come in the future.
