

# GOING TO THE SUPER BOWL? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

By *Paul Lungen, Staff Reporter*



*Road to 50 Super Bowl app*

For a company that prides itself on providing up-to-date, state-of-the-art digital solutions to sports companies' marketing efforts, [Channel 1 Media Solutions](#) owes its name to some pretty old technology.

Time was, if you wanted to watch television, you were limited to perhaps 13 channels. You could tune into each channel using a rotary dial, but the stations always started at 2.

There was no channel 1 – it was a blank spot on the dial – at least until Evan Karasick and his then-partner, Colin Stein, gave it a new meaning. Their vision was to offer a new approach to marketing and selling that you couldn't find in traditional advertising companies. Hence Channel 1, or as Karasick put it, "We wanted to be Channel 1, different and number 1."

His idea of an interactive online platform for customers to buy and renew tickets, view seating plans, buy merchandise, arrange a parking spot and learn about special events, has caught on with the majority of sports franchises in North America. He estimates that 82 per cent of the teams in the NFL, Major League Baseball, the NHL and Major League Soccer are his clients.

His game plan has proven so successful that Channel 1 was given the contract to produce this year's official Super Bowl website and app, with information on events, restaurants, parking and more.

Karasick, 47, prides himself on being first and best in providing solutions to sports organizations. One of Channel 1's products is an interactive fan survey that generates new leads. Other platforms are geared for corporate and high end clients and there's a presentation tool for team sales staff to use that takes less time to prepare than traditional slide shows.

"Sales is a numbers game," Karasick said. "If you throw more spaghetti at the wall and see what sticks, you'll sell more."

Channel 1, which Karasick owns after he and Stein went their separate ways, grosses somewhere between \$3 million and \$4 million a year. "It's a high margin business," he said, though he won't be more specific about profitability.

Interestingly, it was a convergence of circumstances that led him to the business in the first place. A native of Vancouver, Karasick was looking for something that he could sink his teeth

into. At 27, he underwent psychological evaluation to help him determine a career path.

The ones that best suited him were graphic design, architecture and industrial design.

He enrolled in a course at the B.C. Institute of Technology, studying design, art forms, sculpture and AutoCAD, a computer drafting program. Afterwards, Stein, who worked as a graphic designer for the Vancouver Canucks, opened some doors to the team's marketing department. Together they created a CD-ROM to help the Canucks sell tickets, "and it spread like wildfire," Karasick said.



*Evan Karasick*

It included seat locations, price charts, description of amenities, information about parking and payment options. "Back then, it was crazy innovative," he said.

It was so successful that in 1999, the Canucks used it to make a presentation to other NHL teams at a league-wide marketing meeting. Word spread and soon Channel 1 was fielding orders for its products. "That was the big break," Karasick said.

Within three years of Channel 1's first contract with the Canucks, it had added the Nashville Predators, Los Angeles Kings, Columbus Blue Jackets and Chicago Blackhawks to its roster of clients.

Through word of mouth, Channel 1 continued to grow. "I have never responded to an RFP [request for proposal]. People know about us, and we're the place to go when you want stuff done," he said.

And although the focus of his business is sports, it turns out, "I'm not a big sports fan," Karasick said.

In 2002, he moved the operation to Toronto, and he currently runs an office downtown, employing 14 people on site and another six who work out of the office. The job comes with some special perks, like a free trip to Sunday's Super Bowl event in San Francisco.

The trip with his staff gave Karasick a chance to meet and “talk sports, businesses and corporate marketing. The secret to my success is relationships,” which usually focus on the business of sports, not what’s happening in the game, he said.

After all, in the world of sports entertainment, if you can save a company money and enhance its sales, isn’t that just as important as wins and losses?

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*This is the first article in an ongoing series on emerging Canadian Jewish entrepreneurs.*

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