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Wichita Business Journal

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Mel Hambelton Ford purchases partial ownership of local sports magazine

Wichita Business Journal - by [Pat Sangimino](#)

Mel Hambelton Ford has purchased half ownership of **Vype**, the high school sports magazine that Mike Cooper brought to Wichita two years ago.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but it allows Cooper the necessary capital to expand Vype's local footprint, while bringing to a close a four-month experiment where the magazine operated under the umbrella of **Inspired Concepts** — the publishing company that produces Splurge! and two other magazines.

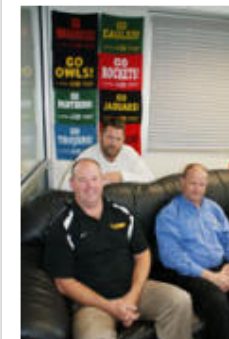
“The revenue model didn't work as well as we thought it would,” Cooper says. “There was too much difference in the products. ... It just wasn't a great fit.”

Since no formal agreement was ever signed, Cooper amicably walked away from Inspired Concepts. In doing so, he moves Vype's operation to Mel Hambelton Ford's west Wichita location.

“I hated to see it happen — I still think the world of Vype,” says Wendell Funk, president for Inspired Concepts. “We really worked hard at trying to make the merge work. It came down to the best fit for Vype and the best fit for us.”

The Vype cover flag will be changed next month to include the Mel Hambelton Ford name and logo. In the dealership, Cooper takes on a business partner that shares an interest in attracting the high school athletics audience.

“Vype is a very good fit for us,” says Phil Nightingale, the dealership's general manager. “We're getting in all these households and we're getting involved with people we've never dealt with before. That's a big advantage for us.”



PAT SANGIMINO/WBJ

Mike Cooper, left, Phil Nightingale, right, and Doug Downs have formed a partnership with Vype magazine.

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Radio and Print

The appeal of the high school market had been identified long before it began negotiating with Cooper. Big Corner Creative, the marketing agency that operates out of Mel Hambelton Ford, put together a package of events and broadcasts of high school football and basketball games.

When Cooper was approached for advertising in the summer, it became apparent that a partnership would create opportunities in a variety of media platforms, including radio, print and the Internet.

“He was looking for a partner and so were we,” says Doug Downs, who runs Big Corner Creative, and will have a role in selling advertising for Vype.

Downs also handles the play-by-play radio calls of a weekly high school football game aired on **KNSS-1330 AM**.

Downs will be in Conway Springs Friday to call the Cardinals game with Garden Plain. In addition, a shiny new Ford will be parked in front of the stadium and Vype will be on hand to throw a tailgate party.

But with the exception of last week’s rivalry battle between Kapaun-Mt. Carmel and Bishop Carroll, the Vype partnership will focus its attention away from the Wichita City League — instead focusing on the suburban school districts and smaller markets in the area.

“High school football is big around here and always has been,” says Todd Johnson, general manager of KGSO-1410 AM, which broadcasts a Thursday night City League game and an update show on Fridays. “I’m not surprised that they decided to jump in and start doing games on Fridays.”

The move has given local high school football fans another option, says Downs, a teammate of Barry Sanders at **Wichita North High School**.

“It didn’t make sense for us to come in and go head-to-head with (KGSO),” he says. “They do such a great job of covering the City League. We go to the outskirts and give listeners the best of both worlds.”

Vype

Publisher: Mike Cooper

Founded: August 2007

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