

TECH STARTUP

BY ERIC PETERSON

ALPINE MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

WHERE: CENTENNIAL
 WEB: WWW.ALPINEMEDIATECHNOLOGY.COM
 FOUNDED: 2013

INITIAL LIGHT BULB:

With respective backgrounds in management consulting, insurance and mechanical engineering, co-founders Freddie Peyerl, Gerrit VandeKemp and Jeff Connors came up with the idea for Alpine Media Technology on the way to Winter Park.

"We were talking about different forms of advertising," Peyerl says. "Business models tend to be successful when you have a captive audience. I said, 'You have a captive audience when you're on a chairlift.'"

VandeKemp says the nascent brainchild soon took on a life of its own. "None of us were in advertising or technology. We're either crazy or stupid or passionate."

Engineer Connors "thought about it for a while and came up with a solution," Peyerl adds.

The result: an innovative display mounted on the restraint bar that offers relevant content with unintrusive advertising. "We've got patents pending around the globe," Peyerl says.

Pending regulatory approval from the U.S. Forest Service, the Tramway Safety Board and other organizations, the company is planning to launch a beta test of 30 displays on five chairs on the Super Gauge Express chairlift at Winter Park Resort's Mary Jane Mountain this ski season.

IN A NUTSHELL:

Peyerl, VandeKemp and Connors are skiers and snowboarders; they based their display design on what they'd like to see. There's no audio to interrupt peace and quiet, and the high-definition screens offer crystal-clear images.

Then there are the logistics: Real-time information is delivered wirelessly, the displays recharge their capacitors in the bullwheel at the base and all of the technology is rugged enough to withstand the cold and snow. "It's pretty harsh conditions," Peyerl says. "We're rated for 40 below zero. These things have to stay out all night and boot up in the morning."



Alpine Media Technology's business model is ad-supported, so resorts won't have to spend on installations. Content will include dynamic maps showing which lifts and runs are open, weather forecasts, traffic updates, and lift line information, with "highly curated" ads from the resort's existing sponsors and other relevant organizations.

Compared with a printed ski map, Alpine Media Technology's displays "can provide a lot more content because our content's not static," Peyerl says.

"The focus is clearly going to be on rider content," VandeKemp adds. The advertisements "will be subtle. It will be background."

"We've really enjoyed working with the team at Alpine Media Technology, who have brought some incredibly innovative ideas to the table," says Steve Hurlbert, spokesperson for Winter Park Resort. He cautions that it's "premature to say that any of our chairs will definitely be outfitted with the technology this winter," but says he's "optimistic."

After the planned single-long pilot, the company is going to roll the concept out at other resorts across Colorado and beyond, with a focus on busiest chairlifts. "It's not going to be on every chairlift," Peyerl says. "People will have the opportunity to get away."

THE MARKET:

In the U.S., advertising sales totaled nearly \$200 billion in 2016, so even the smallest sliver of the market can be big business. "I think we're open to a pretty big spread of resorts," Peyerl says, noting that there are about 500 ski areas in the U.S. and 2,500 worldwide.

FINANCING:

The company has raised about \$500,000 in seed funding from angel investors. "We have a goal of \$1 million," Peyerl says. "We have some pretty good momentum now."

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