

# N.J. entrepreneur teams with NBA All-Star Paul Pierce to motivate kids into a healthy lifestyle

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## ***Switch2Health incentive-based program rewards participants for being active***

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Marlboro resident Seth Tropper is a 5-7 serial entrepreneur who has helped grow a host of businesses with his expertise in operations, finance and strategy. Paul Pierce is an All-Star forward for the Boston Celtics who has made a career out of torturing both Knicks and Nets fans with his long-range shooting. So how does this Odd Couple find a common ground in the business world? Through kids.

This week, Tropper's latest endeavor, Switch2Health, announced that it would form a business partnership with the Celtics' star to encourage young people in New England to exercise and be rewarded for their hard work.

It's the latest move Tropper has made to take his visionary brand to a national level.

But what is the principal behind Switch2Health? And what makes it so compelling that hallmark brands like the Harlem Globetrotters, the NFL, State Farm Insurance and now Paul Pierce would be drawn to it and put their brands side-by-side with the product?

In a nutshell, Switch2Health came up with an incentive-based rewards program, tied to a simple Activity Reward Band that records aerobic activity and rewards the wearer with points for a given period of aerobic exercise.

The more time spent exercising, the more points accumulated and the incentives are attractive. Now the rewards may not include fast food, but they could be items ranging from an iTunes gift card to discounts on insurance to discounts or free points toward tickets for arts and entertainment events.

The points are accumulated and then the progression is tied online to a website where the points can be validated and turned in, making the Switch2Health program one of the first rewards program based solely on the healthy lifestyle of the individual.

"My business partner, Amado Batour and I spent approximately 1.5 years researching the issues surrounding obesity and we are appalled by the statistics, especially as they relate to youth," Tropper said recently. "While there are several contributing factors, lack of physical activity is a large contributing factor. Why exercise? We believe it comes down to personal motivation, and Switch2Health aims to motivate individuals to be physically active by rewarding them for such activity."

Prior to Switch2Health, Tropper was a founding partner of high-tech startup, PlasmaSol Corp., acquired by Fortune 100 medical device maker Stryker Corp. for \$20 million. He was also an entrepreneur in residence at Stevens Institute of Technology and was a technology commercialization consultant to Rutgers University, along with former employment at AT&T Business Services and IBM Global Services. His career includes government and commercial business development; strategic planning, intellectual property management, technology transfer, finance and capitalization, as well as the design and optimization of information technology architecture, applications and infrastructure.



However more than anything, the Brooklyn, N.Y., native had a passion for assisting those around him, and found a natural tie between his entrepreneurial skills and addressing the needs of young people to find ways to live healthier lifestyles.

That combination formed the nucleus of this latest endeavor, which was launched just last year. During 2009, S2H engaged in product testing and trials which resulted in individuals expending over 12,000 hours of physical activity. In 2010, S2H estimates that it will be responsible for motivating youth around the country to accumulate more than 100,000 total hours of physical activity. The rewards program and its partners are now just taking form as well, with many brands clearly interested in the rewards-for-health model tied to a digital incentive based program.

"Switch2Health is currently working to populate our rewards platform with exciting rewards for everyone," he added. "Rewards may range from music downloads, ring tones, movie tickets, to retail gift certificates to benefits in virtual play and more. In support of the 50 Million Pound Challenge, State Farm Insurance distributed several thousand Activity Reward Bands to participants during an Annual Walk-Off event to jump-start towards good health and well being. This program took place in the fall of 2009 and effectively rewarded individuals for physical activity."

So with that as a background and 2009 as a launch spot, Switch2Health set out looking for athletes and celebrities interested in the program and help take it from a regional to a more national scope. Through a colleague, he was tipped off to Pierce's interest in the space through his foundation, reached out to his representatives, and the discussion began.

"Paul Pierce has a personal passion and mission to motivate youth to lead a healthy lifestyle," Tropper added. "The mission of Paul Pierce's Truth on Health Initiative and FitClub34 from Harvard Pilgrim is incredibly synergistic with the mission of Switch2Health, and together we aim to positively impact the lives of many children around the country and hopefully around the globe.

"The initial thrust of the program for Pierce with Switch2Health will be based in New England, with the Activity Reward Bands being introduced through his program to local school children. The goal is to take the program to other areas where Pierce is building a legacy, including his native Southern California and the Midwest (he went to school at the University of Kansas).

The feeling is that with the Pierce model in place, other elite athletes will see the benefits and sign on through their own programs, giving Switch2Health a grassroots push that can extend the brand globally in a very short time.

Tropper indicated that a number of athletes and celebrities have already shown interest, and the prognosis for growth is very strong once the component with Pierce, who now has an equity stake in the brand, is up and running.

In addition to the celebrity portion, Switch2Health is partnering with a number of educational institutions, including Bergen Technical High School, to test the product as an incentive with their students, using various reward programs as part of the curriculum.

Tropper feels the tie to academics is another natural activation arm for the product, and an easy way, with or without celebrities, to get young people, and even their parents, motivated for a healthy lifestyle. The program, if successful, could add additional New Jersey schools later in 2010.

"Our goal with any program we use for Switch2Health is the same - find unique ways to motivate people to change their lifestyle," he added. "The bands look good and are an easy way to track progress and build a competitive training system that you get rewarded for, it makes exercise interesting and fun and in the end if that's what helps change the sedentary lifestyle of those who are now struggling, that's a great legacy for our product to have."

The brand is still in its relative infancy, but with an All-Star like Pierce involved, and hopeful support of a fervent athletic community in the tri-state area, the chances for Switch2Health to pull in All-Star rewards themselves are pretty strong. And if those rewards help change the lifestyles of young people struggling with health issues today, then Tropper's legacy could easily trump that of any of the athletes he may work with.

A legacy of health and well being in the name of social change.