NHL Checks Slingbox To Encourage Video-Sharing

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Soon, the National Hockey League will sling more than hockey pucks.
The NHL and Sling Media Inc. have agreed to a deal in which Slingbox owners can record their favorite hockey moments and most clips on Sling's Web site. The partnership for "Clip+Sling" technology, announced this week, marks a first for major professional sports. Sling Media's SlingPlayer software allows users to share the clips with friends and family with a few clicks of a mouse.

Although customers need the software to create and share clips, anyone will be able to access the clips on Sling Media's video Web site. The site will organize and categorize the clips according to its 30 clubs, whose members represent more than 20 countries. The NHL will also post its own long-form and short-form content. Clip+Sling is currently in private beta. The site is accepting applications from people in the United States and Canada who want to be included in a broader public beta this summer.

Keith Ritter, president of NHL Interactive CyberEnterprises, said it's a perfect match.

"Having the most tech-savvy fans of all major professional sports, who also tend to be early adopters of new technology, makes offering NHL content through Clip+Sling a natural fit," he said in a prepared statement. "This partnership expands the visibility of our NHL games online and we are excited and proud to be the first sports league to offer this service to our fans."

A Simmons Market Research study found that NHL's 100 million fans are younger, more educated, more affluent, and more inclined to access content through digital means, compared to other sports fans.

Jason Hirschhorn, president of Sling Media's Entertainment Group, acknowledged those findings and said they are key to making the partnership work. "The NHL has consistently been at the forefront of embracing new technologies to empower and grow their fan base and we are incredibly proud to have them as our first sports league partner," he said in a prepared statement. "Clip+Sling makes it extremely easy for fans to share a priceless moment with others, dramatically changing the way consumers socialize around TV. In addition, it enables content creators to build new communities as well as new revenue and marketing opportunities around their content."

Other professional sports leagues such as Major League Baseball have been more proprietary about their content, but Sling Media leaders hope that could change with the success of the NHL partnership.

Sling Media's other products allow consumers to watch and control their living room television shows at any time, from any location, using PCs, Macs, PDAs and smartphones.