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Raycom fires up consulting division

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Longtime TV syndication company Raycom Sports plans to create a management consulting division for events and sponsorship sales that will open next month.

The additional services are a natural progression of existing ancillary accounts, company principals said. The consulting work won't require additional employees. Ken Haines, executive vice president and chief operating officer, and Ray Warren, president and chief executive officer, will coordinate the new business.

Warren said Raycom decided to make the move after several internal discussions about potential business opportunities. Warren, a former network ad executive, and Haines, a former college administrator, have extensive ties to different sides of the sports business and can help others determine revenue and sponsorship potential for corporate clients.

"This is very much a business-to-business type of work," Warren said. "With so many experienced people from different backgrounds, Raycom is uniquely capable of doing this."

Because there are minimal start-up costs, Raycom expects to turn a profit in its consulting business quickly, although Warren and Haines declined to reveal rates or revenue projections for the venture.

The consulting work will be done at Ray-



MARK SLUDER / STAFF

RAYCOM Sports

- **The deal:** Raycom Sports adds consulting services.
- **Prime target:** Event management and sponsorship sales.
- **Core business:** Syndication of TV sports properties, principally Atlantic Coast Conference basketball games.
- **Parent company:** Raycom Media, owned by Retirement Systems of Alabama.

COO Ken Haines (left) and CEO Ray Warren: Different backgrounds, one goal.

com's offices in New York and Charlotte, where it was founded. The company, owned by Raycom Media, employs 60 and doesn't disclose revenue.

The company already has some experience with event management through its Charlotte-based college basketball tournament, the Food Lion MVP Challenge, and its administration of the Micron.com PC Bowl in Florida. Raycom manages three Ladies Professional Golf Association tournaments and helped Frito-Lay Inc.'s Tostitos brand secure title sponsorship of the Fiesta Bowl in 1996.

John McCassey, executive director of the Sacramento Sports Commission, tapped

Raycom earlier this year to help sell sponsorships for the city's role as host of the U.S. Track & Field Olympic trials in July 2000. "They did a phenomenal job when you consider that they were working with us, the U.S. Olympic Committee and Track & Field USA, all of which have different agendas," he said. "They provided a lot of insight and help."

The proof was that Raycom secured the Sacramento group's targeted goal of \$750,000 in sponsorships eight months before the event. The track and field campaign convinced Raycom executives that they should add a more formal consulting emphasis.

"When you take an established name like Raycom and diversify, this can be a very successful thing," said Jim Riordan, director of sport administration at Canisius College. "They're in the sports and entertainment business, which makes them very capable of being a good consultant. It's a nice idea."

Warren said the company will begin aggressively marketing its new service early next year. "We've digested a couple of things, and now we're ready to go after this a little harder," he said. "But we're also not taking our eye off our core business. These can play off one another extremely well."