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Thad Langford, a vice president of **Sprint Nextel Corp.**, was looking for somewhere to indulge his entrepreneurial inclinations.

He got several offers to join tech startups in Silicon Valley and Boston. But the prime opportunity turned up much closer to home.

Several weeks ago, Langford started as chief executive of **TDP Inc.**, an 18-month-old Kansas City, Kan., startup intent on transforming stale coupon promotions using technology.

“The technology was incredibly impressive,” he said, “and so was the fact that the technology had benefits for everyone in the value chain. That’s very rare in an early-stage company.”

TDP aims to digitize the entire coupon process. Consumers can hunt coupons online, link them automatically to loyalty cards and never clip a single flier. Participating stores and product-makers save money on printing and distribution and gather valuable consumer data.

Langford spent eight years at Sprint, most recently as vice president of strategic partners and innovation. He helped with several cutting-edge developments through the years, including arranging the infrastructure to deliver applications to phones wirelessly, and he helped found Sprint Ventures, the company’s venture capital arm.

TDP’s investors also sparked Langford’s interest. They include October Capital LLC, a Westwood private equity firm run by former Sprint executive Ron LeMay. His son, Lance, has been working with TDP and said in an e-mail response that he’s excited about the company’s opportunity to “dramatically impact the evolving digital marketing landscape.”

TDP does business as Zavers. Consumers will be able to set up accounts at zavers.com, where they can keep coupons claimed electronically. They could get them through mobile devices, the Zavers site or outside sites, such as by clicking on banner ads with embedded coupons. The coupons are linked to participating retailers’ store loyalty cards, and relevant coupons automatically register savings when the customer checks out.

Retailers or manufacturers would pay a set fee to TDP only when a coupon is used during a purchase. Langford wouldn’t disclose details of how the fees are determined. As an added benefit, companies would gain access to data about how many of their coupons result in purchases.

TDP is in talks with leading consumer product manufacturers and retailers, Langford said, though he wouldn’t give specific names. The company is targeting grocery stores because they’re where most coupons are used.

“We want to be the place where companies can manage digital incentives,” he said. “Putting coupons online is much more efficient and extends their reach beyond papers. We want to reduce the barriers associated with paper coupons.”

TDP has timing in its favor.

Online coupon use has heated up. About 36 million people say they look online for coupons, up more than a third from 26 million in 2005, according to a survey report from **Simmons Market Research Bureau** and **Coupons Inc.** Traffic to Coupons Inc.’s site (coupons.com), which offers printable coupons, has increased 190 percent since 2007, the company reported July 29.

Although overall coupon redemption slipped about 5 percent to 7 percent each year between 2003 and 2006, it remained flat at 2.6 billion last year and is keeping the same pace this year, according to coupon processor **CMS Inc.**

Coupon distribution has stayed around 300 billion the past five years, CMS said.

Zavers is in the midst of a fund-raising round, expected to close at the end of the month, Langford said, though he wouldn't disclose how much the company hoped to raise. The company will continue fund raising through the end of the year.

Last year, the company began a technical trial in one of Independence-based **McKeever Enterprises Inc.**'s eight metro-area Price Chopper stores. One of the primary challenges TDP faces, Langford said, is a longer sales cycle because the application must be integrated at the cash registers.

"Retailers want to make sure additions don't bring down the system," he said. "They're rightfully cautious."

TDP, which has 21 employees, hopes to be profitable next year, Langford said, though he wouldn't provide target revenue or growth percentages.

"The opportunity for Zavers is enormous," he said.

