



5LINX Goes Pro

by Sarah Blaskovich

Products from 5LINX are so legendary even the pros can't pass them up. Baseball player Jason Grilli and former NFL linebacker LaVar Arrington use the 5LINX VideoPhone to stay in touch while on the road. Jason says the phone changed his life. And LaVar doesn't shy away from the company's setup for successful sales.

Either way, the brand is backed by these two eager to share the 5LINX story.

A LINKED-IN FATHER

"The big news" didn't come in the form of a black-and-white sonogram because the dad-to-be was out of town. Jason Grilli was in Texas for a baseball game, pitching for the Detroit Tigers. His wife had budding news to share, but they were hundreds of miles apart.

Jason can narrate the whole episode, play-by-play. He got off the airplane in Texas and received a text message from his wife—call when you get to the hotel. He hurried. At the hotel, he plugged in his VideoPhone and called home. She broke the news, and they cried together over the small television screen. His wife was pregnant with their first child.

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—Jason Grilli, pitcher, Detroit Tigers

"Using a VideoPhone is like you're sitting across from one another, like you're in the same room," Jason says. "I'm on the road half the year. It was great because I can see her in real-time video."

Now, Jason can also see his 2-month-old son while halfway across the country. The first thing Jason does when he arrives in a new city is to set up the VideoPhone so his family is accessible. Then, they're just a phone call away. Jason signed on with 5LINX about two years ago and he calls himself a "gadget guy," and says he's infatuated with the VideoPhone industry.

SECOND INCOME OPTION

What appears to be a comfortable professional baseball career can be financially taxing if athletes aren't careful with their money, Jason says. He wanted another financial option. "I was bugged by the fact that we make a whole year's salary in six months' time," he says. "With job stability the way it is, even in my occupation as a professional athlete there's really not a lot of job security. My grandfather was right—you can't do just one thing anymore."

Jason came to know some independent representatives at 5LINX. He learned that he can control his hours, be his own boss and continue his athletic career. He says he's not a "hard salesman," but he doesn't have to be. He's reeling in clients from his Web site, where prospective

customers can see the phone and watch videos about why Jason uses the technology.

In 1997, Jason was studying business marketing when the San Francisco Giants drafted him from Seton Hall University; he says 5LINX offers him an education in place of the degree he's still pursuing. "I've gotten a subsequent education just meeting people through the network portion of what this business entails," he says. "Meeting other people, we can accomplish something bigger. It goes beyond selling a phone."

A SMART APPROACH TO BUSINESS

He also hopes 5LINX can inspire other people to take a positive, financially smart approach to business. He compares 5LINX to his sports career: As a pitcher, Jason needs eight other guys behind him to win a baseball game. It translates to the boardroom. "I need eight, nine, 10 good, quality people, and we're going to work together and we're all going to win," he says. "If everybody gets hooked up, it can be a great thing."

The empowering business model also teaches people how to do good work—for themselves. "I'm trying to use my platform as a ballplayer," Jason says. "I think there are a lot of people who are sick and tired and frustrated. They want to be in business for themselves, but they don't know how."



Photo by Mark Cunningham

The phone is portable and doesn't rely on having a computer nearby. Here's the cool part, Jason says: The phone is plugged into the wall like a traditional phone line, but works through an Internet connection.

It's also user-friendly, and Jason's parents now have one, too. The phone allows Jason to feel not so far from his wife and parents. "It keeps us in close connection until we see each other in a nearby city or go out to visit," he says. "It's not ruling out any visits, but it does bridge the gap."

Now when Jason gets to his hotel room—one of several in a typical week during the season—he heads straight for the VideoPhone. It has become the bearer of good news between him, his wife and their infant son.



Photo by Paul Spinelli/Getty Images

THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE

Salesmanship is in LaVar Arrington's blood, says the former professional football player. He's a competitor at heart. And now he's working to merge his business with the interests of 5LINX.

He's good at coupling the two companies, he says, because he has solid experience: His hardest sale resulted in a similar union.

"I always say that if I could get my wife to marry me, then I can build the brand of 5LINX," LaVar says. "It was a beautiful thing when I met

her, and I had to put on my best salesman's cap. That was probably my biggest sale ever."

Since the end of his NFL career in 2007, LaVar has turned to 5LINX to build a business and continue his love for sales and meeting people. He put in six seasons with the Washington Redskins and one season with the New York Giants. He doesn't miss the sport just yet, he says, because there are many more steps left in his professional path. "I don't miss the game of football, because I still have the game of life to play," LaVar says.

And, the new career is a different kind of contact sport. "It's less painful, too," he says. "I don't have to run into anybody."

LaVar remembers traveling to Rochester, N.Y., to meet the three 5LINX co-founders at company headquarters, a building stocked with energetic, positive faces. Craig Jerabeck, Jeb Tyler and Jason Guck, the three who established 5LINX, acted not as management figures in the company, but as peers, LaVar says. "They were very down-to-earth, very driven and very humble individuals. It was attractive to me—and very natural—to be a part of it."

"I don't miss the game of football, because I still have the game of life to play."

—LaVar Arrington, former NFL linebacker

But LaVar knew the 5LINX name long before he became part of it. He owns a restaurant in Maryland called The Sideline, and 5LINX partners often came in after their community meetings. 5LINX became a household name in LaVar's restaurant, he says. And it's circulated far beyond his home in Maryland.

The sports star—who was chosen second in the 2000 NFL draft—says he relates to 5LINX' vision for achievement. LaVar is no stranger to success: He played football at Penn State, garnering three national awards, including the title of the best defensive player in college football in 1999. He was snatched up by the Redskins and played in three consecutive Pro Bowl games.

LaVar says the 5LINX founders aren't strangers to success, either. "The people who are successful out here are willing to try to win," he says. "If you never try to win because you're too afraid of losing, then you'll never have the *chance* to win. I take a real aggressive approach."

The company's VideoPhone is a cutting-edge piece of technology that will be successfully marketed to LaVar's friends and colleagues, many of them professional athletes, he says. LaVar's wife, Trishia, is rounding up NFL wives who may want to buy the phone for use while their husbands are traveling during football season.

"It's just an awesome mechanism to have while guys are at training camp or away for games," LaVar says. "5LINX is, to me, the wave of the future." **SFH**