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To Examine and Implement Principles and Protocol of Starting a Wedding Videography Business

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**TO EXAMINE AND IMPLEMENT PRINCIPLES
AND PROTOCOL OF STARTING A WEDDING
VIDEOGRAPHY BUSINESS**

Tracy B. Dupre, M.A.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Lindenwood University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

ABSTRACT

This thesis will focus implementing the principles and protocols of opening a wedding videography business.

Wedding videos have become big business and are an extension of wedding photography. Photographs capture isolated moments of the wedding day, where video can tie these moments together. I truly feel the wedding video is a keepsake many will cherish in the years to come.

This paper will first identify the processes of setting up a home based wedding videography business. Preparation is crucial to ensure the wedding day is taped according to the bride's wishes. The videographer has an obligation to the bride. He needs to be aware of her needs and wishes for the video and plan accordingly. This process will include legalities, equipment needs, pricing, standard operating procedures, etc.

Secondly, once the setup process is completed it is time to implement advertising tactics, gain experience, improve business and customer service procedures.

Once the setup process is complete, it is important to take a step back to examine and evaluate previous work experiences. Experience is key before diving into the business of wedding videography. No two weddings are alike, and each

wedding requires different set-ups, shot sheets, lighting, etc. Before accepting pay for a video I suggest taping several weddings to insure there is an understanding of the different problems that can arise. At this point, the paper will examine three different wedding shots and analyze their individual requirements, setups, arising problems and solutions.

Finally, there will be discussions about the pros & cons of business ownership in both the general sense, and tailored to the wedding videography industry. Results have concluded that along with the skill required to complete the task, the owner must possess creativity, have organizational skills and be self-disciplined to make this business a success.

Lastly, the paper will conclude with an overview of implementing principles and protocols of starting a wedding videography business, and include brief discussions of its drawbacks and further tips for success.

**TO EXAMINE AND IMPLEMENT PRINCIPLES
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Tracy B. Dupre, M.A.

An Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Lindenwood University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

2009

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

Business ownership is an exhilarating, yet arduous and never ending process. Ownership can give freedom & creativity while simultaneously enduring long hours & unstable pay. This is especially true in the niche of wedding videography. Not only does the owner need to be a shrewd businessman, he or she needs to be a creative individual possessing great computer technology skills. "Wedding videography demands a superior sensitivity, an attention to detail, and the ability to function as apart of a team. These special attributes are not usually required in other forms of professional video production," (The WEVA Difference).

Some may question the importance of a wedding video. In 2002 WEVA conducted a survey of brides who were married. Before the wedding, a wedding video ranked at 54% for being one of the Top 10 important bridal services. However, after the wedding, the percentage jumped to 79% in importance (Nationwide Survey of Brides Reveals Value of Videography). Let's begin to examine and implement the principles and protocols of wedding business ownership.

Setting Up a Business

Before the adventure of business ownership begins, it's time to set the business up. In my business plan, it took a lot longer than planned in setting up the business than I thought. In my mind, I calculated one month before I could open my business, Brookstone Video. However, that month quickly turned into nearly nine months! A vast array of setup tasks need to be completed before business begins. Let's begin to explore each process.

Choosing a Name

The business name should be a representation of the final product which is a artistically edited wedding DVD. The business name should be a name people can trust (Barber 6).

Secondly, search the government's listings of business name to ensure it is available. Check with the local county clerk's office. They can aid in locating this document.

Others business owners have told me they intentionally named their company's starting with the letter A to reserve the first spot in the Yellow Pages. Although this is a clever tactic, it is not necessarily true for a wedding videography business. We will discuss this later in the "Advertising" section.

Create a Company Logo

Having a well designed logo keeps a company's image in a customer's mind. That image can last a lifetime. For instance, which business comes to mind when you think about "golden arches" (8)?

I personally have the Brookstone Video logo on a multitude of advertising. From business cards, flyers, brochures & the website, I feel the more visible a company's logo is, the more name recognition it will receive.

License and Insurance

Once the client agrees to use your services, an agreement needs to be drawn up. For starters, a business must obtain a business license, insurance and in some cases, a reseller's permit (8). Some local governments require videography companies to charge sales tax on the video.

A business license is inexpensive and may be required by local governments before conducting business. Business insurance is highly recommended for the videographer. These are two important documents that need to be implemented.

The two types recommended are liability and error & omissions insurance (9). Liability insurance covers damage claims that are caused by video production. An example would be if a guest tripped over a camera cord and injured themselves. Liability would protect the business by covering their claim. It may also cover stolen equipment. I personally have had a camera stolen at a wedding while I packed up my car for the evening. Liability insurance did indeed replace my camera.

Error & omissions insurance is another type of insurance a videography business should carry. It works hand in hand with liability insurance and protects you from unforeseen accidents.

An example of a wedding day mishap would be if the camera breaks during the ceremony, or if a videographer forgot to push 'record' and the whole ceremony was lost. Error and omissions insurance would cover these kinds of catastrophes.

Tax Information

One of many incentives for owning a business are the tax deductions. Whether the business is leased in a commercial building, or the business is based at home, there are significant tax deductions available. Just a few include rental space fees, supplies, traveling expenses, advertising, etc. If the business is home based, other possible deductions may include utilities and the room where the home office is located. Contact a local accountant to insure the business is following the proper tax guidelines (10).

Equipment

A wedding videography business will need equipment for both the administrative side as well as the production & post-production side of the business.

Table 1

Three Types of Equipment Needed For a Wedding Videography Business

Administrative

1. Desk
2. Computer chair
3. Computer & monitor
4. File cabinet
5. Telephone
6. Fax Machine
7. Calculator
8. Computer software
9. QuickBooks (accounting software)
10. Microsoft Office (word processing & spreadsheets)
11. Internet/ DSL service
12. Cell phone service

13. Business cards

Production

1. Video camera- a quantity of two or three
 - Full-sized
 - Mini DV
 - 3CCD (3 chip camera)
 - Manual iris, shutter speed, focus, white balance & audio
 - External microphone input
 - Brands- Sony, Canon, Panasonic, JVC
2. Audio mixer
 - Allows volume control for all audio hookups
 - Brands- Azden, Beachtek, Mackie
3. Tripod- for each camera
 - Fluid-head
 - Ball level
 - Brands- Bogen, Sachtler, Vinten, Miller, Gitzo & Cartoni
4. Batteries- Several extended length batteries
5. AC Adapter
6. Lights
 - 30 watts or less
 - Brands- Anton Bauer, Frezzi, NRG, Arri & Bescor
7. Microphone
 - Wireless lavalier microphone (omni-directional pickup)
 - UHF frequency
 - True-Diversity microphone
 - Handheld microphone
 - Buy two different brands to avoid possible UHF interference
 - Brands- Audio-Technica, Azden, Samson, Sony, Telex
8. Extension cords
9. Duct tape cords to prevent tripping hazard
10. Cables & Plugs
11. Microphone cables
 - BNC, S-Video, RCA, XLR, coaxial, component
12. Videotapes
13. Buy professional recording tapes
 - Stay with same brand to avoid problems
14. Projector- For optional videos to be shown at reception
15. Backup equipment
16. Extra camera, microphone, projector, bulbs, batteries, tapes
17. Numbers for equipment rental company
18. Numbers for backup videographers

Post-Production

1. Non-linear editing system
2. Brands- Final Cut Pro, Avid, Media 100, Vegas Video
3. Video capture card- preferably with a break out box
4. Photoshop software
5. Scanner
6. DVD Burner
7. Firewire
8. Production monitor
9. Audio mixer- optional, but if you choose to buy, purchase a Mackie
10. DVD player
11. VCR player

SOURCE: Section from Brookstone Video's Equipment List

Buying & setting up equipment for a videography company can be a daunting task. I would recommend buying from a reputable company that carries professional products rather than the electronic stores down the street. Several reputable companies are listed below.

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| - | B & H Photo & Video | www.bhphotovideo.com |
| - | Armatos | www.armatosvideo.com |
| - | ProMax | www.promax.com |

Pricing

Start by scoping out the competition. See what packages and additional options they offer. The average ceremony & reception package costs between \$900- \$1200.00. Many videographers starting out think by lower prices they will get ahead of the competition & attract more clients than the more expensive videographers. Beware! By lowering prices, it can create the illusion that the company is less reputable & does a lesser job than some of the other companies (Barber 86). Below is an example of a typical wedding videography business pricing structure.

Table 2

Brookstone Video Packages & Pricing

BRONZE

- Raw footage (ceremony or reception)
- 2 cameras/ wireless microphone
- Mini-dv format
- Up to 3 hours
- \$450.00

SILVER

- Ceremony only
- 2 cameras/ wireless microphone
- Elegant graphics & special effects
- Custom printed DVD's (3 copies)
- Up to 2.5 hours
- \$550.00

GOLD

- Ceremony & reception
- 2 cameras/ wireless microphone
- Elegant graphics & special effects
- Custom printed DVD's (5 copies)
- Up to 4 hours
- \$950.00

PLATINUM**Most popular!**

- Pre-ceremony video montage/ ceremony
- Pre-reception video montage/ reception
- Guest interviews

- 2 cameras/ wireless microphone
- Elegant graphics & special effects
- Custom printed DVD's (6 copies)
- Up to 5 hours
- \$1200.00

DIAMOND

- Pre-ceremony video montage/ ceremony
- Pre-reception video montage/ reception
- 'Love Story' montage
- 'Wedding Day' montage
- 'Honeymoon' montage
- Photo session videography
- Guest interviews
- 2 cameras/ wireless microphone
- Elegant graphics & special effects
- Custom printed DVD's (8 copies)
- Up to 8 hours
- \$1750.00

A LA CARTE

- 'Love Story' montage (up to 50 photos) \$100.00
- 'Wedding Day' montage (up to 50 photos) \$100.00
- 'Honeymoon' montage (up to 50 photos) \$100.00
- Rehearsal Dinner (Up to 3 hours) \$300.00
- Photo session videography (up to 2 hours) \$150.00
- Guest interviews \$75.00
- DVD copies \$25.00 each

SOURCE: Section from Brookstone Video's Packages and Pricing

Payment Methods

The easier a business makes it for the client to do business, the more likely they will hire your services (Barber 109). Most businesses allow customers to pay by cash, money order, or check. However, many clients prefer to purchase

big ticket items with a credit card. I highly recommend every business offer this option to their customers (108). When I began Brookstone Video, I only offered cash or check options. I quickly realized many clients wanted to pay by credit card and I lost numerous clients by not offering the option to pay with credit.

In addition, if your business is a member of WEVA (Wedding and Event Videographers Association International), they have a credit card merchant program that's easier and cheaper than most commercial offers (Advice For Wedding Videographers).

SOP- Standard Operating Procedure

When the business office, legalities, SOP and insurance are in place, it's time to create guidelines better known as the Standard Operating Procedure. This insures that the staff fully understands the reoccurring work processes and daily routines. I feel SOP's are crucial to a business's success. Before starting Brookstone Video, I've worked for several unorganized videography companies. These work environments were chaotic and stressful and work was always having to be redone due to lack of communication & unaware of expectations. Complaining customers was a daily occurrence. I feel if these businesses had implemented an updated SOP, they would be more organized, successful and productive.

Once a bride has booked you as her official wedding videographer, you now have an obligation to her. This may be a heavy burden, but it can be handled with proper preparation (Hurth 5). Below are examples of a few important sections from Brookstone Video's Standard Operating Procedure.

Table 3
Brookstone Video's SOP

BROOKSTONE VIDEO, LLC

Standard Operating Procedure

STEP 1- INITIAL PHONE CALL

- Date of service
- Client's name
- Client's address
- Client's phone number
- Client's Email
- Production needs
- Post- production needs
- Set up client meeting
- Ask if client would like a demo DVD mailed to them
- Other needs

STEP 2- DOCUMENTATION

- Create order forms if applicable
- Create client file folder
- Add client to Quicken's Brookstone Video Clients
- Mail client
 - Agreement
 - Bill
 - ONE MONTH PRIOR- "Wedding/ Production Questionnaire"

STEP 3- PREPARATION (24 hours prior)

- Charge batteries
- CAMERA BAG- pack camera batteries, AAA, AA, C & D batteries, mini-dv tapes, tape labels, cables, cameras, tripods, lights, legal pad, pens, white board, business cards, wireless mics, headphones, head cleaner, highlighter, pen light, glow stick, canned air, duct tape, extension cord
- Clean camera heads/ lens
- Pack client questionnaire response
- Pack extra order forms
- Get directions

STEP 4- PRODUCTION DAY

- Arrive one hour prior
- Get a program
- Set-up equipment- SECURE CABLES- TRIPPING HAZARD!!!
- White Balance
- Test mic/ audio
- Videotape main events/ B-Roll footage- Look at "Wedding/ Production Questionnaire"
 - Arriving at church
 - Church shots
 - Announcement
 - Groomsmen
 - Bridesmaids
 - Bride & groom getting ready
 - Flower girl/ ring bearer
 - Guests arriving
 - Church décor
 - Ceremony
 - Receiving line
 - Bubbles/ rice toss, etc.
 - Couple leaving church and entering limo
 - Limo
 - Photo session and B-Roll of each site- if applicable
 - Reception hall
 - Reception décor
 - Gift table
 - Bar/ food table
 - Cake
 - Bridal party table
 - Band/ DJ setup
 - Guests arriving
 - Bridal party arriving
 - Bridal party entrance
 - Toasts
 - Cake cutting
 - Words of wisdom
 - Series of dances- 1st dance, father-daughter, mother-son, bridal party, dollar dance, etc.
 - Miscellaneous dancing throughout night

STEP 5- POST- PRODUCTION

- Create file folder in Brookstone Video- Videos In Progress- Title with name & date of service
- Sub folder:
 - Music
 - Final DVD Segments
 - DVD/ Lightscribe label
 - Titles
 - Pictures

- Program
- Vegas timeline
- Editing notes:
 - Pre-ceremony- Black/ white to color scheme
 - Transitions- Iris with 80% fade
 - Fonts- Lucida Handwriting, Book Antiqua, Garamond
 -
- Duplication & labeling

STEP 6- COMPLETION

- Mail final DVD's
- When complete transfer to external hardrive
- Bill if applicable
- One week later mail "Thank You" letter & "Survey" & business cards

MISCELLANEOUS

- Check supplies
 - Tapes, tape labels, DVD labels, printer ink, computer paper, pens, sharpie, DVD's, CD's, legal pads, batteries, DVD sleeves, DVD hard covers, DVD mailing envelopes, legal envelopes, business cards, stamps, file folders, canned air, duct tape
- Sign up for wedding booth
- Order advertising
 - Pens
 - Magnets
- Equipment checks
- Website maintenance www.brookstonevideo@hotmail.com
- Expense/ income ledger
- Save 30% of each final sale for taxes
- Regularly check business email brookstonevideo@hotmail.com
- Regularly check business bank accounts

SOURCE: Brookstone Video's SOP

Agreements

In business ownership, making sure every job has a signed agreement is like wearing shin guards while playing soccer. These documents are here to protect the business and its owner. Agreements are the same as contracts. However, never

use the word "contract." Agreement is a less threatening word. A client needs to feel as comfortable as possible in this stage of the game (Barber 101).

Make sure all specifications such as the number of cameras, packages, add-ons, etc., are written down to prevent future miscommunication pitfalls.

At this stage a deposit needs to be collected. A smart business owner knows deposits are not refundable. This protects the videographer in case of cancellation. This deposit will at least cover some money the business will lose, so the date is not a total financial wipeout. A deposit is typically due when the client signs the agreement and the rest is due two weeks prior to wedding.

One last addition to the agreement should be in regards to equipment failure or mishaps. In that case, the company will not be held responsible for more than the cost of the video. Lastly, the videographer should make a disclaimer that he or she owns the final copyrights to video & has the right to show sections if needed for advertising purposes.

Table 4

Sample Agreement

WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHY CONTRACT

Contact Person: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone #1: _____ Phone _____
 #2 _____ Email: _____
 Names: (please print full name if Platinum Package)
 Bride: _____
 Groom: _____
 Bride preferred first name _____ Groom preferred first name: _____

 Bride will be getting ready at: _____
 _____ Photographer arrival time: _____

Ceremony Location: _____ Ceremony Time: _____
 _____ Approx. Length: _____
 No. of guests expected: _____ Clergy: _____
 Carriage Ride: Yes No Scheduled time: _____ to _____
 Cocktails Location: _____ Cocktails Time: _____
 Approx. Length: _____
 Reception Location: _____ Reception Time: _____
 Approx. Length: _____
 Misc. Contact Info:
 Photographer: _____ Photographer Phone #: _____

 D.J./Band: _____ D.J./Band _____
 Phone#: _____
 Coordinator: _____ Coordinator Phone#: _____

Other special information: _____

Production Package: Platinum plus Platinum Gold Silver Bronze
 A non-refundable **deposit of \$400** is due at signing of this contract to secure availability. Package Price: \$ _____
 It is further agreed that the remaining balance due will be paid in full 30 days prior to Deposit: - \$ **400** _____

first video shoot unless other arrangements are made. Balance Due: \$ _____

Copyrights: Omega Studios reserves the right to display/copy any part of produced video for future demonstrations/displays and advertising purposes.

Liability: Omega Studios will perform production tasks to the best of their ability, but accepts no responsibility for unforeseen circumstances including but not limited to equipment failure, power outages, illnesses, inability to attend and perform services, and/or any other situation where the resulting video product is less than ideal. Omega Studios' sole liability in any case shall be limited to a monetary amount no greater than the total of monies paid by the customer. In other words, if a video session either fails to be recorded or is unable to be performed by the fault of Omega Studios, the customer will receive a total refund of everything the customer paid to Omega Studios for the event. Failure to provide payment in full by the due date as named above may forfeit the reservation of services as well as payment made up to but not to exceed the non-refundable deposit. Omega Studios uses DVD-R as a final format that video is distributed with. Some older DVD players, most manufactured before 2000, may have some difficulty playing this format. It is the client's responsibility to make sure this format is acceptable. Omega Studios can assist client in this research if needed.

The undersigned, having read the above contract, agrees to the terms as set forth.

 (client signature) (date)

 (client signature) (date)

SOURCE: Omega Studios. www.omegastudios.info/downloads/contract.pdf

Gaining Experience

In the wedding videography market, a demo reel is important when attracting clients (Hurth 142). They want to see examples of videos before shelling out money and signing an agreement. However, when getting started it is hard to get a demo reel if you have no previous wedding videography experience. A few options are to call wedding vendors and tell them you are interested in taping a wedding for free. Also, if any family and friends are getting married take your camera along. Then you can take the footage and create a short demo reel for your potential clients (Appendix A).

Another reference to keep close by is a website called ProVideo Training (<http://www.provideotraining.com/>). This site helps train the videographer and keep their skills current. It's a great resource for technical questions, new equipment, troubleshooting, etc.

Lastly, many wedding videographers hang out at a wedding video forum within the Video University website (<http://www.videouniversity.com>). This is another place videographers can go to gain insight in the field (Advice For Wedding Videographers).

Professional Organizations

Another way to keep a business's image professional and trustworthy is to belong to a professional organization. If a business belongs to a professional organization, clients are more likely to trust the organization and hire them for the job. In addition, these professional organizations can help the videographer improve the business. These organizations usually meet once or twice a month and videographers exchange

ideas, problem solve and learn more about video production.

WEVA stands for Wedding and Event Videographers Association International (<http://www.weva.com>). “Members of WEVA International have access to the best new technology, techniques, industry information, and advice” (The WEVA Difference). This organization helps wedding professionals improve their skills at a yearly convention, keeps video editors up to date with current trends in wedding videography and list it’s members on their website. Having your business on their list is extremely helpful when brides go to search for a videographer. WEVA is a name people can trust.

STLVA stands for St. Louis Videographers Association (<http://www.slva.com>). This is a local association that meets monthly to discuss video production in the St. Louis area. Like WEVA, STLVA has a special bridal section on their website listing local videographers that belong to their organization. According to their website,

“STLVA members are dedicated to advancing the craft of professional videography by continuing their education and furthering their skills. STLVA members can share their knowledge with clients assisting them in obtaining the best possible video product to suit their personal or business needs” (St. Louis Videographers Association).

Belonging to a professional organization can make or break a potential booking. One of the first questions many of my potential clients ask is, “Does your company belong to WEVA?” If we didn’t, our company probably would not have been hired for the job.

Advertising

In the field of wedding videography, there are different levels of clients to attract

based on your price, quality of video & service (Barber 86). When the business is just starting out you will be targeting lower-end clients that want a video, but at a lower price. However, as the business grows and the product improves your prices should raise bringing the clientele you attract to the next level. It's a win-win situation.

No matter which stage your business is in, there are several staples a business needs in order to market itself. Business cards, brochures and a demo reel are the main elements a wedding videographer needs. When creating these documents they need to be appropriately designed to tailor the market you wish to address (86).

Another benefit to a wedding videography is that the business at times can possibly sell itself. Many wedding videographers I know use bridal shows as their main source of advertising (Hurth 142). Once a videographer has secured a booth in a show, they will receive a list of names of each bride attending. This is direct marketing at its finest! Once you have that list you can mail these brides a brochure and maybe a demo DVD. From personal experience, this is where 90% of my advertising budget lies.

Joint marketing is another option to explore (Cheap and Effective Ways to Market Your Wedding Business). This is a low cost, yet effective form of marketing. For example, find a reputable limo service in your area. Arrange with the limo company to give your brides a discount on your services if they book with the limo company and you.

Direct sales can be as simple as opening the newspaper. Look in the newspaper under bridal announcements. Mail them a demo reel and brochure. Also include

a coupon for \$25 off if they hire your services (Cheap and Effective Ways to Market Your Wedding Business).

Lastly, image is everything. Too many times I have seen videographers looking scruffy while videotaping. This is a huge mistake. I feel the completed DVD is the final product. However, your appearance and personality say a lot about the business and can be a deciding factor for a potential client. Therefore, men should dress in tuxedos & women in black pants, rubber soled black shoes and a nice top.

Dealing with Common Problems and Customer Service Tactics

Mishaps occur in every business. Understanding where the problem originated a can aid in finding a solution. Below are several problems and possible solutions.

Table 5

Wedding Videography Problems and Customer Service Solutions

PROBLEM #1

Customer having unrealistic expectations

Many customers don't understand why they can't get something for nothing. Occasionally the potential customer thinks the videographer should videotape everything no matter what.

SOULUTION

Having a detailed agreement lessens the possibility for an upset customer after the fact. The more thorough the agreement, the less likely misunderstandings will occur.

PROBLEM #2

Technical Problems

There will times where technical mishaps will occur. Such event may include equipment malfunction, the videographer though the record button was on when actually it was set on pause or there may be interference with the wireless microphone.

SOLUTION

When these types of problems arise, do not run to tell the bride or groom of the mishap. Many times alternate solutions can be provided in post-production. For example, if the wireless microphone had interference, it may be possible to take audio from another camera that was rolling at the same time. Or, if you missed the bride walking I because of the photographer was in your way, etc., you may be able to ask the bride & groom you would like to try something so you have them reenact the scene again.

PROBLEM #3

Unexpected Events on The Wedding Day

It never fails, a videographer will be conducting a guest interview and suddenly the best man breaks out into a song and dance that has the place cracking up hysterically. By the time you get over to him, he's getting a standing ovation and you've missed the act.

SOLUTION

The Wedding Questionnaire (Barber 112). One month prior to the wedding I will mail a wedding questionnaire to my client. They are to fill this out letting me know what to be aware of on the wedding day and if they are planning any surprises I need to know about.. This saves you from those 'out of blue' moments that you just can't get to capture. Most likely they will understand and if not, you have the wedding questionnaire to back you up.

SOURCE: Barber, Kirk. The Wedding Video Handbook. San Francisco: CMP Books, 2005.

Getting Business from Referrals

There are two ways of getting business from referrals. These two methods go

hand in hand and work wonders if executed properly (Barber 214).

First, by exceeding the customers expectations. For example, if you promised a client their video would be completed in six to eight weeks and you deliver in four, you have gone above and beyond and they will remember you for that.

Secondly, simply ask for referrals (213). Especially if you have exceeded their expectations. You then have the right to ask, “Do you know of anyone that might benefit from my services?” If they say yes, ask for a phone number and mail. It is as simple as that.

Improving Current Business Tactics

By this point your business has probably been up and running for sometime. However, in order to maintain success a few suggestions needed to be noted.

For starters, never stop marketing. If you need business now and begin to market, results will not be seen for a few months (228). Therefore, marketing needs to be a continuous effort. Otherwise, you may be out of business before you know it.

Secondly, never stop learning. How you use your equipment will always be more important than the equipment itself (227). Videographers needs to attend seminars, read books, blogs, etc. to stay on top of their craft. I know personally it is exhilarating when I learn a new technique. It makes me wan to keep growing as a videographer and editor. It has reinstated my passion for this field.

Lastly, answer your phone! As crazy as it sounds, many underestimate the value of answering your phone. Clients usually will move to the next business if they were unable to contact a live person.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Experience

Writing this thesis has been an effective learning tool and taught me new business tactics that has already increased clientele. It has opened my eyes to new ideas in editing, advertising and organization. Here are a few small examples.

First, when videotaping a wedding, the bride and groom are the most important subjects. However, the video becomes completely nostalgic as it ages, like a fine wine. “Think of your own wedding. 10 years down the track you’re more interested in the people who attend than yourselves. Sure, you want to see how you looked and all those things, but “look, there’s grandpa and Aunt Flo” become treasured sights (Advice For Wedding Videographers).

Second, during guest interviews at the reception, many guests are apprehensive about talking on camera. An easy fix is to flip the LCD viewfinder so they can see themselves. It was amazing how well this simple technique worked (Advice For Wedding Videographers).

The third example deals with pricing structures. I’ve always been apprehensive about increasing prices, especially in today’s economy. However, this makes sense on two fronts. First, the level of clientele increases and second, why do two weddings at \$600 when you could do one for \$1200 (Your Own Wedding Video Business)? It just makes sense!

Interview- Richard Rodriguez

To gain a better insight in the field of wedding videography, I interviewed a fellow freelance videographer, Richard Rodriguez. I wanted to listen to his perspective on the business in general and any advice he had to offer. After all, you may have the best equipment and know how to produce a beautiful wedding DVD, but without clients, it's useless. Richard has this to say,

“I use a customer survey to help me find the weaknesses of business. Nobody will be more honest than a paying customer. Sometimes another point of view is needed. If I can fix all these problems, my business will become stronger, resulting in more referrals from previous clients. Secondly, I offer a raffle at my wedding booth. Whoever wins gets a free spa treatment the day of the wedding. It's amazing the number of women who sign up just for the spa treatment, but as they walk away I give them a packet with a demo and my business card. Works like a charm!”

Chapter III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of Projects

In this next section, I will briefly go into explanation of three different weddings where Brookstone Video was the hired videographer. It has been my experience that no two weddings are alike. Each was unique in their planning, setups and editing. I will explain the different needs of each wedding.

Tricia Locher's Wedding

This particular wedding was my most expensive package. Tricia wanted everything option possible and didn't want me to stop rolling camera at any time. This wedding by far has been the most time consuming. The craziest part of the day was the photo session after the wedding. In the wedding questionnaire, she wanted photos taken at a local park near the church. That's it. However, on a whim, she decided to go to four different locations which were 30 miles away. The wedding location was in O'Fallon, but the new destinations were The Muny, Kiener Plaza and Forest Park. The photographer insisted she stay close as she had originally planned, as did the limo driver, but she refused. She said, "This is my day." We all obliged. However, she ran over on limo time resulting in extra money and we were all one hour late to the reception resulting in unhappy guests and no set up time for the photographer or us. It was a good thing we had extra tapes!

Kate Fink's Wedding

Kate's wedding was a favor for a friend and her package is our most popular. We videotape the wedding and reception with no extra bells or whistles. I nickname this package the "Plain Jane" package.

This wedding was pretty easy. However, the bride hired me to use two cameras. One to be placed in the front of the church and the second was to be manned by me. She wanted me to move to around and get different angles during the ceremony. I told her it is usually looked down upon and many churches forbid this. She proceeded to tell me she knew the people at the church and that it would ok. I figured it would be fine.

Knowing it probably wasn't ok, I brought four cameras. Two were placed on either side of the alter, one at floor level in the back of the church and the other in the balcony. I didn't tell I wouldn't be moving around. I just created a lot of different shots at different angles in the editing process. She loved it!

Melissa Schloss's Reception

Melissa hired my company to videotape her reception the day before it happened. She and her husband were married in Florida and the reception was a week later. Their original videographer cancelled and they heard about me through word of mouth and I accepted the job.

In my mind I figured this would be an easy job. Little did I know, not having a wedding questionnaire filled out I was in for some surprises. The location was one I had never been to and it was the worst lighting ever. Plus, the room was extremely small and any type of light would have been obtrusive. Plus, as the

groom is having a heart to heart with his father-in-law, the bride comes out singing “Happy Birthday” to someone in the wedding party. I missed the first 20 seconds trying to get over to where she was. It is surprises like these that make the “Wedding Questionnaire” so valuable.

Arising Problems

No matter how organized or well planned a videographer may be, there will no doubt be problems that crop up. In times like these, videographers must think quickly and troubleshoot the problem. Sometimes this may be done on the spot, or the problem may have to wait till post-production to be fixed. Next I will discuss three weddings and different problems that occur along with possible solutions. One thing to remember- Do not rush to tell the bride and groom of the mishap. Do not ruin their day. Majority of the time it can be fixed in editing.

Problems at Tricia Locher’s Wedding

Like I stated earlier, Tricia’s wedding was our most elaborate package. I planned for day way ahead of time to avoid any obstacles. However, right before the groomsmen walk out, the groom turns off his microphone. There is absolutely NO time to run back and fix it. I had to think fast. I was already near the alter so I moved the camera on tripod near the alter closer to the center to pick up better audio. It was the best I could. Luckily it worked and I was able to bump up the audio levels in post production.

However, after that catastrophe I researched to find a better backup plan for

audio. I learned a great backup would be a mini disc recorder. Make sure it has a microphone input (A Short Course In Wedding Audio). It makes sense, small enough to slide in a groom's pocket, yet stellar audio. Besides accidentally turning the microphone off, sometimes interference gets in the way causing troubles. I will always use the mini dv recorder for recording the bride and groom.

Problems at Kate Fink's Wedding

Like I stated earlier, no amount of prep time can prepare you for unexpected events. It's time to think fast on your feet to prevent disaster- and unhappy bride with her wedding video!

Again, Kate's wedding was fairly simple. The week before the wedding I received her "Wedding Questionnaire" she mentioned there would be a scripture reading. No problem, I would use the back camera to focus on the pulpit. However, I didn't expect for the congregation to rise as a scripture read. Normally, the congregation stays seated. Still, there was no problem. As she walked to the pulpit I raised my tripod about one foot clearly the heads of people. Then, halfway through the reading, a dad lifted his little girl in his arms blocking my entire shot. Luckily, another camera was placed at the front of the church. It would be a side view, but I would have to do. The bride said about it. I particularly didn't like that shot, but at least there was video coverage! Next time there is a reading I will make sure to see if the congregation sits or stands!

Problems at Melissa Schloss's Reception

As stated earlier, Melissa's reception was a last minute job. Preparation was

sparse. Upon arrival I noticed the low lighting, but I could set up a light because the room was small and the light would have been obtrusive. However, when the dancing began the only lights shining were the flashing lights from the DJ booth. Luckily, the bride and her entourage stayed close to the DJ booth. I could at least get footage of her and some guest, but I knew I had an editing nightmare ahead of me.

It turned out I was able to use creative editing to solve the problem. I turned her dancing sections into a sort of “music video” style. It worked for my client because they were young and vibrant. This flashy style worked for their personalities.

However, I needed a better solution if this were to occur again. I’ve used a soft box because it bounces light around the room which helps when adhering to the standard 3- Point Lighting Technique (The Standard 3-Point Lighting Setup). However, the light would have been too large and can cause tripping hazards (Lighting Issues For Wedding Videography). I’ve been apprehensive in the past about purchasing a light that fits directly on the camera, but I don’t want the couple to feel their in the spotlight. I know ask my clients if it’s ok to use a light. If they say no I proceed to tell them the differences they will see on their DVD is they opt not to have a light. After all, the customer’s always right! See Figure 1.

Figure 1

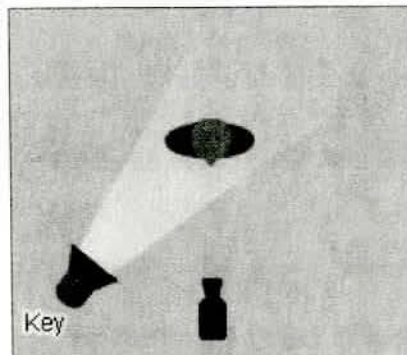
The Standard 3-Point Lighting Technique

The Standard 3-Point Lighting Technique

The *Three Point Lighting Technique* is a standard method used in visual media such as video, film, still photography and computer-generated imagery. It is a simple but versatile system which forms the basis of most lighting. Once you understand three point lighting you are well on the way to understanding all lighting.

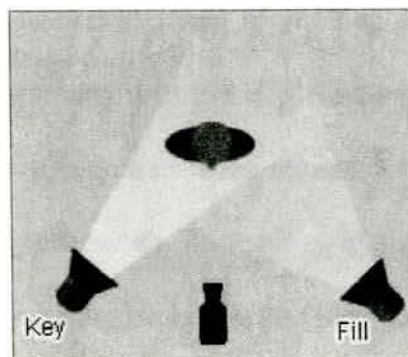
The technique uses three lights called the **key light**, **fill light** and **back light**. Naturally you will need three lights to utilize the technique fully, but the principles are still important even if you only use one or two lights. As a rule:

- If you only have one light, it becomes the key.
- If you have 2 lights, one is the key and the other is either the fill or the backlight.



Key Light

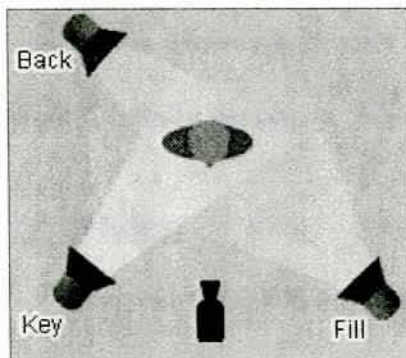
This is the main light. It is usually the strongest and has the most influence on the look of the scene. It is placed to one side of the camera/subject so that this side is well lit and the other side has some shadow.



Fill Light

This is the secondary light and is placed on the opposite side of the key light. It is used to fill the shadows created by the key. The fill will usually be softer and less bright than the key. To achieve this, you could move the light further away or use some spun. You might also

want to set the fill light to more of a flood than the key.



Back Light

The back light is placed behind the subject and lights it from the rear. Rather than providing direct lighting (like the key and fill), its purpose is to provide definition and subtle highlights around the subject's outlines. This helps separate the subject from the background and provide a three-dimensional look.

SOURCE: <http://www.mediacollege.com/lighting/three-point/>

Research in Comparison to Experience

Research has been on point in accuracy and has taught me how to create a professional business image, attract new clients, organize tasks and efficiently advertise. Even with all this golden information, it didn't prepare me for certain reoccurring happenings and trends in this line of work.

Technology

For starters, the field of wedding videography has changed drastically in the past 10-15 years. 15 years ago, video technology was a fairly new, expensive and not very user friendly. However, 15 years later nearly everyone has access to some type of video camera & they have the notion that they are a great cameraman. Technology in the video sense has become very user friendly. Every computer comes with video editing software. Therefore, it has been my

experience that people try to save a couple dollars and videotape the wedding themselves. However, I rarely hear about it turning out like they thought. That's when I usually get phone calls to help save their video and make it better.

Easy Money?

When people first learn of my profession, they instantly assume that being a wedding videographer is easy money. This is one of my pet peeves. Many years of technical training has gone into my art and I find this insulting. They are completely ignorant to the fact of the number of hours that go into creating a wedding DVD.

The wedding itself takes up a complete day. Not to mention the planning and possibly attendance to the rehearsal. The main time comes from editing. I recently found a site that logged the time it takes to edit a wedding and the total hours came to a grand total of 43 hours (Advice For Wedding Videographers). So let me ask you this one question, "Is wedding videography easy money?"

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Pros to General Business Ownership

There are many attractive benefits to starting a business. For starters, freedom. A business owner can make their own schedule and not have to stick to a nine to five regimen (Unofficial Guide To Starting A Home-Based Business 22). This is especially convenient if the owner has children. He or she can work around the schedules of the children. Personally, business ownership is what has kept my child out of daycare and allowed me to be both a mother and a business owner.

Next, people become business owners is financial freedom. Personally I think a home based business has the advantage due to no rent or related overhead costs (23). In addition, there is more time to focus on the business due to no need to commute. Think of all the gas money saved and the lessened amount of wear and tear on your vehicle.

A study of home based businesses in 1999 concluded that home based businesses are more successful than conventional companies (23). In addition, Prevention Magazine did a study of business owners and their result found out that business owners were happier and healthier due to more free time and time to exercise (25).

Pros to a Wedding Videography Business

There are a lot of good incentives to becoming an owner of a wedding videography business.

First, once the initial office has been set up and equipment has been purchased, there are not a lot of costs to keep this business afloat. The main purchases are mini-dv tapes, DVD's jewel cases, business cards etc. These few purchases are extremely cost efficient.

Second, majority of the work is editing the video. Therefore, the wedding day is essentially the only day you "have" to commute. The rest of the week can be spent either attracting new clients or working on editing the project. Again, on your time frame, not someone else's.

Cons to General Business Ownership

Ok, so we just discussed many reasons and upsides to business ownership, but there are a few issues to be aware of.

First, there is financial uncertainty. I feel the lack of steady income is the biggest pitfall. In the conventional work environment an employee works 40 hours per week and brings home a check either weekly or bi-weekly. The employee knows their exact take home pay and can budget accordingly. However, in business ownership, pay is an unknown factor. There may be months where income is steadily flowing, but there will always be those months where little or no money is made.

Secondly, discipline plays an important factor while owning your own

business. Yes, as we discussed earlier, business ownership allows freedom. However, you must be disciplined enough to balance work and personal time. I personally have delegated certain hours to family time and certain hours to the business. It's hard at times, but must be done if you want to be successful

Lastly, the possibility of failure can definitely be a deterrence when thinking about starting your own company. Some people are afraid of taking that leap of faith. I once knew a single mother wanting to start an event planning business but choose not to due to the possibility of failure. She proceed to tell me she couldn't spend \$50,000 on start-up costs just to turn around and possibly close up shop. It's a risk and you must ask yourself, "Are you a risk taker?" Below are questions from a test to determine if entrepreneurship is for you (31).

Table 6

Are You an Entrepreneur at Heart?

1. Are you a self starter?
2. How do you feel about other people?
3. Are you a leader?
4. Do you like to assume responsibility?
5. Are you a good organizer?
6. Are you a good worker?
7. Are you decisive?
8. Can people trust what you say?
9. Can you stick with it?
10. How good is your health?
11. Are you competitive?
12. Are you creative?
13. Do you plan ahead?
14. Do you have self-discipline?

SOURCE: Strauss, Steven. The Unofficial Guide to Starting a Home-Based Business. Foster City: IDG Books Worldwide, Inc., 2000.

Cons to a Wedding Videography Business

There are several pitfalls to owning a wedding videography business. First and foremost are the costs of new equipment. Let's say the camera fell off the tripod and broke. To replace it, it would cost you nearly \$5000. Likewise, when starting the business you need three cameras before even attracting customers.

In addition to replacing expensive equipment, new equipment needs to be purchased to keep up with the trends of technology. This is what keeps your business competitive and is must if you want to succeed.

Lastly, EVERY Saturday will be spent at a wedding. This has deterred many videographers from entering the world of wedding videography. I used to be one of them. In my younger years the thought of giving up EVERY weekend didn't appeal to me. However, with a family and a four year old, this allows me to be home the other six days of the week.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Overview

Owning a wedding videography business can best be described as a roller coaster. It definitely has its ups such as freedom and creativity, but there surely are unenviable drops such as lack of security and expensive equipment. However, it's my passion for editing and creating an artistic wedding documentary that keeps me going.

Drawbacks

My biggest concern and drawback of business ownership is financial stability. Before I had my son the unstable pay wasn't a concern. However, since he's been born I have been thinking how nice it would be to have a stable check. Although, it makes work twice as hard to ensure business is flowing on a regular basis.

Suggestions

Even if you have lots of skills and experience in video production, it is very important to start slowly when venturing into weddings (Media College). I would suggest taping at least 10 weddings for free to ensure you encounter as many common issues that arise during a wedding videotaping. This way, you are prepared and feel confident when these problems come back up while taping a client.

If you are already in the field of wedding videography, I suggest learning new techniques and better yourself. Would you hire a videographer if his work looked like was created in the 80's? I truly believe this keeps your one step above the competition and is key to a successful business!

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Appendix A

SAMPLE DVD FROM BROOKSTONE VIDEO