

in the right business

Chris Ronzio's Event Video Company (EVC) has covered live sporting events such as figure skating, cheerleading, dance, and martial arts in more than 30 states, starting in Massachusetts and branching out through New England and beyond.

At first a catch-all video production company producing wedding, bat mitzvah, and corporate videos, EVC has evolved in the 9 years since a then-teenage Ronzio launched the company and cultivated it while in business school.

Since then he has narrowed his focus—covering live sporting events is now at the core of EVC's business. "By focusing exclusively on events, we became very efficient at the processes," Ronzio explains. "I realized early on that producing an event was much more formulaic, and as the company grew past what I could do on my own, producing events became a more scalable and repeatable business."

EVC has grown so fruitful that Ronzio recently decided to separate the company into two individual entities—one for the production side and another devoted specifically to distribution, called EventVideo.com. In an industry where we've seen a lot of discussion in recent years of Michael Gerber's E-Myth strategies (which recommend systemizing your business so that it has value independent of the owner's everyday efforts and can function effectively with the owner systematically delegating responsibilities rather than carrying them all), EVC is a fascinating object lesson in a soundly systemized business.

GIMME AN E! GIMME A V! GIMME A C!

We spoke to Ronzio on the heels of a trip to Honolulu, where for the third year, in collaboration with All America Cheer & Dance and e2k, he covered an NFL halftime Pro Bowl show. In addition to live coverage, he produced a DVD/photo package for the performers that documents their experience throughout the week, including practices, social events, and game-day performances.

It's a love of working with families and youth organizations "that are so passionate about what they're doing" that helped convince Ronzio that sporting events would be central to EVC's work.

"When we cover an event, we're rooting for the performer to succeed—partially because we know it will make them want the video more," he concedes, "but also because we truly enjoy watching their progress

THE EVENT VIDEO COMPANY

www.eventvideocompany.com



Event Video Company's Chris and Lianne Ronzio

and development! The organizations that we work with are like big families."

Meanwhile, in Greensboro, N.C., Ronzio's staff was busy covering the first half of the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, feeding the coverage live to the Ice Network (www.icenetwork.com). "For us, live streaming is about getting the video to as many people as possible as fast as possible," he says, adding that he typically offers the live coverage for free. Participants and spectators will buy a DVD package later if they want to, he reasons, "but sharing the video with Grandma or Dad [who is] on a business trip across the country is a service to our customers that they really appreciate." DVD packages are available for sale at the event or online.

A WELL-OILED MACHINE

While EVC's production of each event can vary dramatically (including multicamera live switching, live streaming, on-site duplication, live projection, and instant replay), Ronzio's process is always the same. "Event video is more about the business processes surrounding the production than about the production itself," he attests.

"Anyone can buy the best cameras and put the most RAM in their editing system, but understanding the culture of a sport and the ordering experience of customers is a different thing, and that expertise is a byproduct of producing as many events as we have."

His formula involves the following steps: At an event, after capturing the footage and taking sales, Ronzio either distributes the finished product on-site or keeps everything organized for quick turnaround after the event.



EventVideoCompany.com,
open for business



Working the board
on an EVC ice
skating shoot

Once the event is over, EVC organizes sales data for the organization; sends surveys to the organization, customers, and crew; and creates a postevent report with any internal recommendations and customer or organization feedback, so that Ronzio can make the appropriate changes the next time around.

FOR EVC, IT IS THE TOOLS

What's particularly remarkable about Ronzio and his work is that to streamline distribution, he built his own software that interfaces his website with his duplication, printing, and shipping equipment. All of his productions are archived electronically, and their assets are linked to the corresponding products on his website. Every 30 minutes, the website scans all new orders, batches them out, and sends instructions to his duplication and fulfillment hardware to begin writing a disc, printing the label on the disc, printing the DVD cover, and printing a packing slip with shipment tracking information.

Each afternoon, he can quickly assemble orders that came in that day without digging through the thousands of productions that they have covered over the years. Ronzio describes it as "an on-demand system that allows us to quickly create fully customized products, limiting inventory but maximizing flexibility." As he opens more fulfillment offices, orders will be routed based on the delivery ZIP code to keep transit times low.

To facilitate orders, Ronzio also built an on-site sales tool. While the website is useful for pre- and postevent sales, he felt that using paper order forms or spreadsheets to take on-site orders, as many video companies do, is outdated and inefficient. So he developed an electronic ordering system that works on an iPad, a cell phone, a netbook, a laptop, or a kiosk, so that all sales (online and offline) are processed and recorded electronically.

In creating these tools for his own company's needs, Ronzio realized that he could package the services to other videographers. Taking on some of the administrative burden would free up time for companies so they can book more events and spend more time being creative and differentiating their companies.

This is precisely the aim of his new company, EventVideo.com; to make it easier for companies to sell, store, and track sales for their productions and for customers to find and order their videos. Essentially, as a videographer, you can submit your DVD (ISO) files, and when an order is placed, EventVideo.com duplicates, prints, and creates a shipping label.

BREAKING BARRIERS

Now that EVC is producing event videos in more than 30 states and shipping DVDs to all 50 states and more than 20 countries, the need to spread out has become apparent. In January Ronzio opened a second office in Beverly Hills. Ronzio and his wife, Lianne, now manage an office in Scottsdale, Ariz. "Phoenix is a great hub for getting to Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, and Salt Lake City, and I wanted to focus on growing in those cities."

He says that moving away from the Boston office did two great things for the company. First, it forced him to delegate many of the operational tasks, allowing him to focus on growing the company. And second, it forced EVC to develop systems that are almost entirely remote or cloud-based, so that his 10 in-house employees and 30-plus subcontractors can access them from anywhere. He plans to move most of the production business out to California and to repurpose the Boston office for Event Video, the distribution company.

"I am very excited about Eventvideo.com," Ronzio says. He goes on to explain that he hopes it will reduce the entry barriers for smaller companies to start producing events, and it will build a community of event production specialists who can cover more events around the country. "Our vision is to make event video more accessible for customers by giving them an experience and product that they can trust, all while supporting and benefiting the content producers."

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