

Case study 2: Eagle Eye Drone Service

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BACKGROUND!

I came from a TV broadcasting background working as a TV meteorologist. Building 3D flythrough weather maps for viewers. Produced TV commercials and was a radio host for 15 years.

Then became a politician for 4 years and helped forge the path for drone use on Michigan through effective legislation.

HOW AND WHEN DID YOU START YOUR DRONE BUSINESS?

Started in 2014 after my term as State Representative expired. Built a business model and took my productions skills (and my experience as a FAA pilot for 36 years and started a business).

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR FIRST SET OF CLIENTS? WHAT SERVICES DID YOU PROVIDE IN THE BEGINNING?

We gave a few aerial shoot away as a donation to a local charity and did such a great job that word of mouth took over.

We provided aerial imagery exterior and flew indoors too. Provided basic stills exterior and interior too.

WHAT SERVICES DO YOU PROVIDE NOW?

We provide drone aerial and ground based imagery, mapping and surveying, thermal, search and recovery, we're more of a media company than we are a drone company. We provide commercial services for TV. Produce agent profile videos.

HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK KNOWING HOW TO SKILLFULLY FLY A DRONE IS TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL SERVICE BUSINESS WHEN YOU ARE STARTING OUT ALONE?

It's about 35% of the job. You really need to be creative in your shooting composition and produce a video really well madding music that will evoke emotion.

YOUR 36 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS AN FAA PILOT MUST HAVE HELPED YOU PASS YOUR PART 107 EXAM WITH FLYING COLORS. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHERS ASPIRING TO GET CERTIFIED?

Take the course offered by Certified Training Institutes (Drone program). Study and review as much as possible.

HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK ONE WOULD HAVE TO INVEST TO START OFF IN A DRONE SERVICE BUSINESS? WHAT DRONE AND EQUIPMENT WOULD YOU PICK IF YOU WERE TO START ALL OVER WITH MINIMUM BUDGET?

The minimum capital outlay would be \$3000 this would include drone and computer + production software. I like the DJI Phantom 2+ and 3 Advance. Very versatile and easy to fix.

ANY ADVICE FOR BEGINNERS WHO WANT TO MARKET THEIR SKILLS AS A DRONE PILOT?

Know your client and their needs and watch a lot of videos to review what looks good and apply that to your videos.

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP THE CREATIVE SKILLS FOR SHOOTING AND COMPOSITION? HOW IMPORTANT IS ONE'S LEVEL OF POST-PROCESSING SKILLS?

Takes years of experience and learning from TV production professionals or photographers. Shoot in thirds and take your time shooting.

WHAT STEPS DID YOU TAKE TO SCALE YOUR BUSINESS FROM ONLY PROVIDING AERIAL IMAGERY TO ALL THE SERVICES YOU DO NOW?

I listened to our customers and met their needs. It was their ideas that helped us grow.

HOW DO YOU PRICE YOUR SERVICES?

Based on per battery usage. \$220 for first battery and \$110 thereafter. This does not include stills with a tripod.

WHAT DOES YOUR REVENUE LOOK LIKE NOW (ROUGHLY) AND HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO GET THERE?

First year (1/2 year) = \$24,000. Second year \$55,400. Third year (this year) projected to be \$65,000.

DO MOST OF YOUR CLIENTS COME TO YOU THROUGH WORD OF MOUTH EVEN TODAY?

It's a 70/30 mix. Mostly return business now.

DO YOU PROVIDE NATIONWIDE SERVICES?

Yes - we have 5 offices nationwide.

DID YOU HIRE DRONE PILOTS WHEN YOU SCALED YOUR BUSINESS TO PROVIDE MORE SERVICES? IF SO, WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN HIRING?

It more based on geography. If we can travel to do the job, we subcontract and look for pilots through their webpage.

HOW DO PEOPLE/COMPANIES GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU IN CASE THEY NEED YOUR SERVICES?

www.eagleeyedroneservice.com