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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR CORPORATE & ENTERTAINMENT STAGING SOLUTIONS



12-Story Staging

CPR Enlists 32 StudioColors to Wash an 80x80 Scrim in the 100-Year-Old National Building Museum

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For the American Friends of Turkey meeting in Washington, D.C., CPR lit an 80'x80' scrim/drape in a 12-story atrium with 32 StudioColors from

High End Systems. IMAG 6x8 video screens were positioned on either side of the scrim in the 100-year-old National Building Museum.

STAGING PROFILE

Breathing Life into Special Events

CPR evolves to serve demanding government, corporate markets

Jeffrey Studley has sworn off being an early adopter...until the next time.

"We have always tried to be at the state-of-the-art, and because of that we have too often been at the bleeding edge of technology and suffered the frequent pain that early adopters often suffer," claims the president of CPR Multimedia Solutions, a full-service rental and staging firm nestled inside the heart of the country's political beltway. "I have learned that if you are not a really large player with really deep pockets, that is one of the things that you have to do in order to maintain a high profile and a competitive advantage. I have sworn off being the first to buy something — probably 10 times. Then something

comes out and there I am, lining up to get it."

This willingness to create hassles for himself is borne out of Studley's mandate to, as he puts it, operate a "client-driven" company that caters to the needs of its customers, whatever they may be. With a client list boasting the likes of the White House Communications Department, the NASA Goddard Spaceflight Center, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, Silicon Graphics, AOL, and HBO, it's important to provide the latest and greatest technologies the market has to offer, despite the technology-related hassles that may ensue.

The brainchild of Studley's first cousin, Brett Cosor, CPR Multimedia Solutions was formed in 1988 as Computer Projec-

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Breathing Life into Special Events

With 23 full-time staff members, and drawing from a large pool of independent freelancers, CPR provides full lighting, audio, and video staging services and production.

tion Rentals, Inc., a venture specializing in exactly that: the rental of projectors that would perform data display functions during, initially, corporate and government events. Cosor, a manufacturer's rep, related to Studley his desire to delve into the computer projection market — an area that Cosor believed offered enormous growth potential. Studley, who now admits that it was a savvy call on Cosor's part, left his career in New York City's highly competitive restaurant and hotel industry to join his cousin and provide his operations skills to the start-up. Together, the pair began renting monochrome, single-gun CRT projectors, becoming dealers for Electrohome and Barco.

"Our major marketing technique was to call companies up who we knew were doing data and pushing the limits of high resolution," Studley recalls. "We would say, 'If you let us come in and support your sales pitch or your training seminar, we will provide our services to you for nothing. Just give us some signage and tell people who we are.' After some head-scratching, they usually acquiesced, and that is how we started to become well-known."



Computer Projection Rentals initially targeted government clients. "Washington, D.C. was the best place in the country to do this, because the people that were doing data display were the military, the intelligence agencies, and the scientific agencies," Studley states. "The people who had the money to pay for this were either contractors to the government or the government itself."

During the early '90s, clients began inquiring about how to obtain permanently installed systems, inspiring the partners to launch a systems installation division that eventually led to the company's transformation from being known as Computer Projection Rentals to CPR Multimedia Solutions. Although the new systems integration department soon began to flourish, it was the beginning of the end of a partnership for Studley and Cosor. As the story goes, Studley became frustrated with Cosor, who paid an increasing amount of attention to the new department, spending less time on the company's first business. Cosor, passionate about the long-term problem-solving process involved in designing permanent systems, had difficulty understanding why Studley wasn't equally excited about CPR's new expansion.

The pair spent several years attempting to work out their differences — calling upon business consultants and "marriage counselors" — but, in the end, they decided to dissolve the partnership. Three years ago, Studley assumed the position as president of CPR Multimedia Solutions, which continues to concentrate on event and media production, including audio, video, and lighting systems, as well as staging when required.

"When we originally formed the company, I was an operations person," says Studley. "That's what I did in the restaurant industry: I managed restaurants, I worked in large hotels, and I did a lot of scheduling and logistics. Those back-office type of functions were what I originally intended to do at our new company. Brett, who had long been a manufacturer's rep and who is a salesman at heart, was going to be the sales and marketing person. At a certain point, Brett's attention kept going more and more toward the full range of issues on the systems integration side, and I was handling most of the rental and staging business. Instead of each of us doing what we felt we were well-suited for horizontally, across the company, we ended up vertically managing our own divisions."

Nonetheless, Studley admits that the systems division did provide CPR with an edge. "There were synergies and benefits to having the two different divisions. Certainly we got to try, in the rental world, lots of things that we could then talk to [systems] clients about. That was a crucial benefit to having our feet in both worlds; we could talk about real-life experience to people before they built a room using a certain technology or methodology," he concedes. "But, at the same time, we argued or fought for internal resources. A good technician that would be helpful on a rental job was needed for weeks on a systems install. Those were the kinds of pressures that caused problems."

Today, CPR employs 23 full-time staff members, and draws from a large pool of independent freelancers. "We learned a long time ago that the really good people in the rental world gravitate to freelancing because they can make more money," Studley states. "I have a number of people that I consider to be graduates of CPR, who we hire a lot."

The amount of activity in CPR's region enables Studley and his associates to target lucrative corporate accounts in the technology and biotechnology sectors, in addition to the company's efforts to woo show producers and event planners. At the same time, CPR enjoys a close working relationship with numerous government accounts, although servicing the government is definitely different than working with a private-sector clientele.

"In dealing with government clients, there are two issues. First, is the procurement methodology. You can have a happy end-user in the government, but they often can do nothing to make real

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their desire to work specifically with you as an organization,” Studley explains. “If the project is large enough that they have to go to bid procurement, it’s very difficult for them to make sure that you are going to be the company that wins the bid. They can spec the job in a certain way that might be more suited to your strengths as a company, and a company has a certain advantage from working with an agency before because it knows the infrastructure, how the procurement is done, and, historically, what purchases have been made and how much they cost. However, we’ve got one government client with whom we have worked for a number of years. Every once in a while, they will do a bid procurement for a series of their shows, and some other company may put in a lower bid. Even though they may not bring a historic relationship with that client to the plate, if their dollar bid is one dollar less than ours, they’re going to get the work.”

While that scenario is frustrating, there is an upside, Studley points out: “In general, the concept is pretty good. As a taxpayer, I like to see that the government is at least trying to get the most bang for the buck.”

