

Drone Business Case Study 1: How Andrew Kobza built Naples Drone Solutions and provides excellent service



TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR BACKGROUND!

I started off in RC and Drones very backwards. Most people either start in photography or RC cars and work up to RC planes and drones. Not me. I started flying Cessna 172s when I was 15. When I was about to turn 16 (and fly solo for the first time) I was having a hard time understanding what the physics were behind crosswind landings. My instructor put me on an RC simulator to mess with wind settings and watch how it affects the physics of the landing. I loved being able to fly and not have to pay for fuel, plane, annuals, etc. I started flying RC Planes at 16. I always had my eyes on camera mount helis and eventually drones when they came out but by then I was broke and in college. I was 20 when I received my Bachelors in Marketing from the University of Florida and I moved back to Naples. I continued to work at my father's construction company called, ironically, The Aerial Companies - due to the company's beginnings in hi-rise remediation. Drones became something that suddenly was very important and within 3 months of starting back at Aerial I had my purchased my first 350QX and had it out on a job. This was a multimillion dollar estate home owned by a billionaire. The flight was the first drone flight our company had done; our mission was a chimney inspection. This was also my first drone crash. I had been flying collective pitch helis and smaller drones for years at that point. I

had spent 3 months practicing with this one, fine tuning throttle curves etc. That was the cause, was my flight mode switch being misplaced and switching from 25% at max to 100%. The switch was flipped accidentally 18 inches from the chimney. It all worked out for the better, I upgraded to the brand new DJI Phantom 3 Pro and haven't had a catastrophic crash since.

HOW AND WHEN DID YOU START YOUR DRONE BUSINESS?

Having founded Aerial's drone program, I was looking to take drone photography to the masses. Being an FAA Licensed Part 141/61 pilot I was worried about flying without a confusing section 333 and the part 107 was out. I was the first person at Naples Airports FBO to get my Part 107 according to the proctor. This was Sept 2016

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

Obviously, construction companies were squarely in my cross-hairs for getting business, and trying to build outside the extremely

competitive realty market in Naples. About 3 months after launch as my photography skills improved and I invested in ground equipment and editing suites I started actively pursuing realty.

WHAT SERVICES DO YOU PROVIDE NOW?

Everything from basic real estate shoots to volumetric calculations using photogrammetry. I work with Construction companies, HOA's, community management firms, utility service providers, earth moving companies and more. We provide photography, video production, inspections, renderings, 3d modeling, even 3d printing.

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?

Skillful flying is a great help, but I will say my skills have grown rapidly and significantly from when I started, so I wouldn't

discourage someone who is a safe flyer and who can fly adequately from trying to start a company. I think the ability to learn and adapt are foremost. I also think that marketing, responsiveness, and passion mean more to my customers. You can learn to fly with more skill, but try to learn how to get passion or how to be timely... good luck with that.

HOW DID YOU STUDY FOR AND PASS THE PART 107 EXAM? WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHERS ASPIRING TO GET CERTIFIED?

I studied literally for five minutes. I decided that morning to get my license and studied by overlooking the basic regulations for 5 minutes. I have my license for full sized aircraft and did at the time and I had an excellent flight instructor, ex-air force and the whole 9 yards. My advise for others- it isn't as easy as you may expect. It has little to do with drones and more to do with things that really matter; airspace, radio work, map reading, airport proximity and basic pilot actions like flight patterns etc. are mentioned. This is because the FAA could care less about drone pilots except that drones have a massive ability to harm general aviation. Much of the 107 test focuses on keeping GA safe.

How much do you think one would have to invest to start off in a drone service business in realty? What drone and equipment would you pick if you were to start all over?

How fast do you want to grow and where? In highly competitive markets, like the one I am in- SWFL, it takes a lot. Phantom 4 Pro at a minimum and a lot of time to invest in lead generation. Web development skills and knowing where to get good cost-effective SEO are key. All told, you are looking at around \$5-10k in start-up costs, not including your time. I would have invested less in the large machines- S1000s, DYS D800 X8, etc. I only have needed one of them once and not for real estate. To the point, I would have kept my business much leaner.

ANY ADVICE FOR BEGINNERS WHO WANT TO MARKET THEIR SKILLS AND BE RESPONSIVE?

Get a good VOIP forwarding program like sideline or Google voice. List that number on your site and you will always know when a business call is coming thru and you can know to answer. Past that, get out into the market, talk to realtors, go to their businesses, get comfortable presenting, study, become an expert in your area. We are seeing a very high response to this approach.

WHAT OTHER SKILLS WOULD YOU NEED TO SATISFY YOUR CLIENTS APART FROM FLYING AND MARKETING? WHAT ABOUT THE LEVEL OF POST-PROCESSING SKILLS, FOR EXAMPLE?

If you can teach yourself programs, I have learned HTML, CSS, and some PHP and java by self-teaching as well as CAD, GIMP, and a few other editing suites I hold close to my chest, you will be fine with post production. Study up on the programs, choose one that will allow you to have a good product with less time in editing. You don't necessarily need some huge editing suite- *cough* Photoshop* cough*. You can do much of your editing through setting your shot properly. God makes awesome landscapes and skylscapes. Only a little retouching is needed to get colors to pop and maybe remove an object or two.

What steps did you take to scale your business from only being in the realty business to providing all the services you do now?

I actually started in construction from the get go. Realty was the second place we went, market wise. I marketed hard and listened to feedback. Many realtors and HOAs were asking for services, so we provided them. Once we did our first shoot in a market, we put it on our site. "we have done that before" is a phrase people love to hear

HOW DO YOU PRICE YOUR SERVICES?

What a question. I have just recently gotten really confident with my pricing, and I swear I am in the high end of the market. But then I give presentations and some realtors comment that my prices are really competitive. I work doing IT work for my father's construction company on the side of my drone business and, honestly - this isn't the answer you want- but I know what I want to make in life. If a shoot can't pay me above X times what I make hourly doing IT, what is the point. I have overhead with my drone company. So it has really been a long and difficult road to finding where I can grow well enough to start to take on other employees and where I have to make a certain amount for my risk to be worth it.

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

(I easily make in the thousands a month on the off season and I have yet to really go through a full on season here in Naples. And in Naples there is a huge on and off season. My customer base is at least 5 times larger than the middle of the previous season, when I had been in business for 2 months. A good month in

season could see the revenues climb into the ten thousand mark, and with a few other programs we are cultivating, in a few years I genuinely expect to be managing a company with at least 100k revenues a month, though not entirely from drones.

HOW DO INDIVIDUALS AND COMPANIES GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU IN CASE THEY NEED YOUR SERVICES?

I love email and respond fast to it.

AJKobza@NaplesDroneSolutions.

I also can be reached by cell at 239-330-1015

Or contact us via contact form on our

webpage: www.NaplesDroneSolutions.com