



The 4EVER Group

Tim Ryan • (516) 385-4384 • TimR@4EVERGroup.org
9 Beechwood Court • Massapequa • NY • 11758-2401

Steve Wernick • (215) 750-7797 • SteveW@4EVERGroup.org
3300 Neshaminy Blvd • # 562 • Bensalem • PA • 19020-1777



Party On, Dude!

The Fundamentals of High-Quality Reception Coverage

It's time to PARTY ON, DUDE!

Well, I'm not much of a "stoner" myself, but we'll muddle through.

This workshop is going to cover the
FUNDAMENTALS OF HIGH-QUALITY RECEPTION COVERAGE.

Fundamentals doesn't mean "see spot run" simple... not to worry, there's going to be plenty of basic and advanced talk for everyone here.

We're going to be talking about the basics of reception coverage, frankly... because that's not only what I preach... it's what I do.

My coverage is NOT EFFECTS driven, it doesn't rely on the newest artistic trends... instead it's firmly grounded in the fundamentals of composition, and storytelling.

What we'll be talking about for the next few hours isn't theory... it isn't what WE THINK will work... it's what WE KNOW works, because it's what works for us day in and day out when we cover receptions.

We're going to try to squeeze a lot into the next two hours, but first let me just take a minute to set down the ground rules and explain how things will be going.

Ground rule #1

This is a WORKSHOP, not a lecture... don't be afraid to raise your hand and ask a question.

We're going to be showing lots of examples of everything we talk about... some on video, some we'll demonstrate right here in front of you. Some, **You'll** be demonstrating right here in front of you.

So... let's get started.

Here are the major topics we're going to be covering.

How to plan your coverage using pre-visualization(and preparation)

We put this up FIRST to talk about, because frankly... we think it's the most important part of what we do.

I always have a plan... I'm always preparing using what I call PRE-VISUALIZATION, seeing the shots before I shoot them. I'll talk about how to prepare by pre-visualizing.

The ABC's of receptions: Always Be Covering (yourself)

What I mean by that is twofold. First... And most obvious, you've always got to be covering what's going on. Seconding, covering yourself. We'll talk about the importance of having cover shots.

One Camera vs Two Camera Coverage

We'll touch on the advantages and disadvantages to both... and what to do to make each work for you.

The importance of getting "up close and personal" (without getting in the way)

A big mistake I see all the time is being too far away in an attempt to be "unobtrusive". I'll talk about the importance of positioning yourself in the right place and the right time... and in the right way.

Basic and Advanced Shooting techniques

Now I don't want this to be a complete techno rap... so I'm also going to "rap" about shooting techniques ...basic ones and even some advanced stuff. And best of all... YOU GET TO HELP!!!!!!

Lighting - on camera and off

No two ways about it... you have to have good light if you want good video. We'll talk about how to get it using on-camera and even OFF-camera lights.

Getting the best audio you can (the importance of consistency)

A very overlooked... and maybe misunderstood part of receptions is audio. I'll have some tips and tricks that can help you get great audio. I'm also going to talk about the importance of getting CONSISTENT audio. A very important thing too.

Simple interviewing techniques

Everyone is always asking HOW to interview guests. Well, I'm going to show you how to interview someone, without asking any questions.

Understanding the importance of the "overall" (shooting for the edit)

I've seen a lot of really great, artistic, creative... wiz bang shooting at receptions, but the final product is either incomplete or practically unwatchable... because all those awesome shots don't gel together to tell the whole story of the day. I'm going to talk about keeping your eyes on the prize... the finished product... the OVERALL.

Finding YOUR voice (your unique style)

And finally... see, I told you I was going to be covering a lot of ground... I wanna help you find your voice... your unique style. The one true way to make it in our industry is to set yourself APART from your competition... it's NOT to have everyone look like so many cookies on a cookie sheet. We'll try to have a lot of fun and maybe we'll even try to inspire some really great wedding videography along the way.

I worked for many years in TELEVISION NEWS where I literally didn't have any time to prepare for what was about to unfold on the news stories I shot and wrote.

I had to learn VERY FAST how to prepare myself for almost anything that came up. What I learned to do in those situations was to use PRE-VISUALIZATION to assist me in my ANTICIPATION. I learned to *anticipate* what might happen and to be prepared before someone did something. Sounds an awful lot like shooting a wedding day to me.

Now, I'm not going to blow any smoke here... it didn't always work, and it doesn't always work. But I'm going to be honest with you. I WAS very rarely was out of position or unprepared for what was happening then... and it don't happen too often now either.

Shooting a reception is very similar in some respects to covering a breaking news story. Lots of people, lots of noise... and 9 times out of 10... NOBODY knows what's going to happen next. Right? WRONG??? The majority of receptions follow a fairly standard script. Arrive, eat... party down. That's the simple version of that script.

But if you really think about, you have a great many opportunities to find out ahead of time what's going to be happening... when. The first... and most obvious some parts of the country, is to talk to the wedding coordinator or consultant. They're going to have a

rundown on the evenings events. Don't be afraid to ask them for a peek. You can do this days or even weeks ahead of time if you know who they are... or you can do it on the morning of the wedding or even as you're walking into the reception.

Now, some of you are probably saying... "...how do I find out WHO the consultant is?"

Now this is really another seminar... but I always have an information sheet that I give every client the day they sign the contract. It asks a bunch of different questions... all of which are important to ME.

One of them is...

DO YOU HAVE A CONSULTANT?

WHAT IS THE CONSULTANT'S NAME?

WHAT IS THE CONSULTANT'S PHONE #?

Now, if your bride DOESN'T have a coordinator...

Maybe the band or even better, the DJ will have a rundown. Worst case scenario... go to the horse's mouth, so to speak... the all seeing, the all knowing... BRIDE.

You can also ask HER (or the groom) for a rundown on the evening's activities. If you explain WHY you want it... I'm sure they'll be happy to supply it.

So... armed now with said Rosetta stone of knowledge about said reception... we are armed with the basic tools we need to prepare ourselves for the ensuing combat... eh, I mean coverage.

Time to PRE-VISUALIZE what you're gonna do.

(Pause and pre-visualize)

Are we PRE-VISUALIZING????

Lemme see if I can help you... this is the reception portion of my old demo... this is probably close to 7 or 8 years old... full of VHS and SVHS stuff... take a look.

<p><i>SEGMENT ONE 5:14 (Reception part of DEMO)</i></p>
--

Are we feeling it yet?

So, pre-visualization. I also call it "watching the movie" in my head BEFORE I shoot it. What do I mean by "watch the movie" I'm about to produce? It means I VISUALIZE... I SEE what's going to happen unfold in my mind. That way, I've got a idea of what I want to do when it does actually happen. When I arrive at a reception site, especially one that's new to me... I first look all around... and not just at the obvious shots. I want to know all the possibilities of where I might want to be when something is happening.

I find out where the tables are, where the food will be served from... where the CAKE is, where the dance floor is... I want to pre-visualize my shots and any possible obstacles that might be in my way. I want to be prepared to move and change things to my favor, in advance. I'll actually see the shots that will unfold from that spot.

Don't be afraid to VISUALIZE... as you saw earlier, it's not really that hard.

Now in PRE-visualization... is the word PRE. Another word that starts with PRE is PREPARE. You really need to prepare yourself ahead of time so that you can anticipate better what's coming up. I usually start my preparation the day before by attending the rehearsal. It's my opportunity to; of course understand what's going to happen at the ceremony... another, another seminar topic. But it's also a good reason to meet and talk with the bride and groom one last time, with the parents, with the COORDINATOR etc.

You can't really OVER-PREPARE for our job. There is no such thing. You can definitely UNDER prepare, but not the other way round. The more information you have, the more comfortable you are, the better your final COVERAGE will be.

Part of preparation is preparing for your shoot.

<i>SHOW CONTENTS OF PORTA BRACE PRODUCTION BAG</i>

My second topic is **A B C**

Always **Be Covering**... slightly different spin on the old sales Always Be Closing theme... but what the heh?

I hear all the time, "we were eating and they cut the cake while I was in another room." Bad preparation. You have to always be ready to COVER what's going to be going on during your reception. I've covered wedding days that literally lasted 12 to 14 hours. You're going to need to take a break every so often. If you're aware of the rundown for the evening... said breaks are easier to schedule.

If you use more than one camera in your coverage of the reception, or if you have an assistant with you, always have one of you "on" and aware of what's going on. Don't get caught flat footed. Now, I want to also talk about the importance of always COVERING YOURSELF at the reception. What's that mean???

Always having cover shots.

Let's say you're a one man band... or one woman band. You can't be everywhere all the time. You need to PREPARE ahead of time, or even after the fact... for those times when you're going to need shots during editing.

Some quick examples of when you may need such shots is, during toasts... during cake cuttings... bouquet or garter tosses... the big important "set" things that go on at almost all receptions. Here's what I mean...

SEGMENT TWO - (1:12) (TOAST SHOTS)

Now if you have the ability to have TWO camera coverage of receptions... all the better. And let me say, two cameras doesn't always HAVE to mean an extra expense. If you've got an assistant with you (your spouse for example), instead of having them just get you sodas and batteries, give them a second camera and point them at the crowd.

And I'm not joking about that. Cutaways, cover shots are simply shots of the people at your event WATCHING your event. Now of course, I'd prefer that your assistants were skilled videographers, but I also understand the reality of starting a business.

Instruct your assistant in the basics of composition if you have to... you know, head room... rule of thirds... etc. and use them during the toasts, the cake cutting... the first dance... father/daughter dance. They are a cover shot... so they don't have to get fancy. Just stay in focus, stay steady and stay on the shots long enough that you can use them. I like cover shots to last a good 20 to 30 seconds at a minimum.

SEGMENT THREE - (3:45) (Dance Examples with BLACK)

You can see that having a cover shot can free you up to get a little more creative with your shots. The one DOWN SIDE to having two cameras is, you do have to watch that you don't shoot INTO each other too often. Remember, you don't want to ruin the ILLUSION for the viewer... you don't want to break that imaginary "fourth wall" and show that there are camera people there. Always be aware of what you're doing, if you're the primary camera. If you're going to get yourself into a situation where the cover shot will shoot you, make darn sure your shot is worth it.

One of the BEST advanced shooters I know is Mark Von Lanken who runs Picture This Productions in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma... with his wife Trisha. I want to show you a couple of clips from their amazing instructional DVD called

THE ART OF MOVING CAMERA TECHNIQUES

It's really amazing stuff to see what you can do with not a lot of effort. Best of all... Mark shows you HOW TO do each camera move... take a look.

SEGMENT FOUR - (1:45) (VON LANKEN CLIPS)

One of the things that set the professional apart from the amateur videographer is the ability to NOT be afraid to get in the middle of the action and get the shots that are needed. Remember, your clients are PAYING YOU to get the shots that tell the story of their day. If you're up against the wall away from the action, you're not earning your pay. First and foremost in my mind is... GET OFF THE TRIPOD!!! In order to get the shots you need, you need to be MOBILE. You need to be able to move around freely. And believe me, having your tripod on wheels, don't mean it's mobile.

SEGMENT FIVE - :55 (MOVING AROUND dance)

I use a monopod with my PD 150's. All our tripods and monopods have quick releases. You can get a real variety of angles and you can be where you need to be when you need

to be there. Now, everybody wants to shoot all the fancy “advanced” shots that win all the awards. Well, that’s another seminar.

But I will show you some “basic advanced” shots that I use all the time to COVER the event. Here’s some samples of a cake cutting and the bouquet and garter toss.

SEGMENT SIX 2:40 (cake/bouquet/garter)

Nothing real fancy here. You don’t have to be a contortionist to be a good shooter. You have to understand WHY you’re using the shots you get.

All the fancy shooting techniques aren’t gonna mean a thing if you can’t SEE what you’re shooting. I know that you’re going to run into as many different lighting scenarios as there are stars in the sky. You need to be as ready as you can for all of them.

We use a combination of ON-CAMERA and OFF-CAMERA lighting to get the best quality images we can. When I meet with the couple, I also explain to them that our cameras are very good in low light, but they can’t shoot in the dark. We need and will use some illumination. On camera, there are a lot of different choices. I use a little SONY light that has two different wattages. I’ve also used the NRG VariLight. The varilight is very good, but it has the drawback of needing a lot of battery power, I have 4 battery packs... and you’re restricted by how long the cable is that goes from said battery pack to the light. The advantage is you can VARI the strength of the light quickly and easily.

What you have to find is what feels right to you. For OFF-CAMERA lighting, some will use actual lights on stands... usually set near the band or DJ. LOWELL TOTA lamps with umbrellas seem to work best. Make sure you set the lights up, first thing. I’d recommend putting them up front on either side of the band or dj. The umbrella is used to defuse the light so it’s not so harsh. Put them up as high as you can. You can get 13 foot stands so you can get them up very high. They give off a nice “general” lighting, that’s not TOO obtrusive, but does help us get good shots.

Audio is another issue that could be a two hour workshop by itself. It’s impossible to go into all the possibilities for you in the short amount of time we have. I’ll explain, in general terms what we do.

We use as many different ways of getting audio as we can. We’ve used the camera mic... probably the least desirable, to get what we need.

This was shot a long time ago, using the old 456... so excuse the picture quality. I’m showing it so you can SEE where I’m standing and hear what I’m getting.

SEGMENT SEVEN - 3:11 (ON-CAMERA Mic)

If all you’ve got is ONE-CAMERA... you have to stand and shoot from the spots that give you your best chance to get decent audio. I would always shoot four or five songs, straight through... from one location so I had good CONSISTENT audio. I could then

edit a multitude of shots from a multitude of dances over those songs. Always tried to get a mix of fast and slow too. Don't want all one or all the other.

You can see, if you LISTEN while you shoot, you can get very good results. Same thing with toasts, you have to be VERY CLOSE to the person speaking or close to the speakers, if you're going to get good audio during toasts. A fall back, would be to have a second camera be JUST A MIC source during the reception. Position it near the speakers and have your assistant, or you... turn it off and on when you need it.

A note here... it's very, very important that, however you get your audio, you get it CONSISTENTLY. A big mistake I see is to have great audio of say, the toasts, and then lousy audio of the music. If you've got good and bad audio, the good only makes the bad seem worse. Always strive for CONSISTENT. Now... if you've got wireless mics, you have more options. You can, as with the second camera, place them near the speakers.

You can place them ON the speakers, but you really need to have a wireless system that allows you to adjust the volume on the transmitter to do this. If you CANNOT adjust the transmitter volume, I wouldn't put the mics to close to speakers. All you'll get is distorted audio. Another option is to use a direct box to get a direct feed from the DJ or band console. As I said earlier, audio is another whole seminar... and it is.

DEMONSTRATE ROLLS MATCHBOX

John Goolsby does, HANDS DOWN the best audio seminar I've seen. He shows you step by step what he does to get good audio. I asked him if he could show you, very quickly, how he goes about using his direct box setup at receptions... let's take a look.

SEGMENT EIGHT - (2:23) (John Goolsby)

John is very approachable and he's full of information. He's even wrote a book I'd suggest you all get if you're serious about having a successful wedding videography business. It's called... **"The Business of Wedding and Special Event Videography."**

It's in its 5th edition and it's excellent. If you see John in the hallway... stop and say hello and see if you can buy one from him. Great resource.

Simple interviewing techniques

Now, I don't do reception interviews anymore, unless the couple pays me a lot of money. But... since many of you most likely do them, I'm gonna touch real quick on how I did them. I did not... repeat, DID NOT "interview" people like you see an interview on TV. The last thing I wanted to do was interject/inflict myself into the couple's video. I would not recommend doing it that way. I simply talked to the people who wanted to say a few words on the video... and I let them say a few words.

SEGMENT NINE - (:53) (Interviews)

I would tell them to look directly into the camera, just like the bride and groom where standing there in front of them... and say a few words, or say some advice... some words of wisdom. The shot was very straight forward and simple. I did not want it to distract from what was being said. These were messages to the bride and groom, not to me. It can take a while to track everybody down and get them to do it, which is why I only do it for an additional fee. Right now, I only do them a few times a year.

Well, we've covered a lot, and time is getting short. I wanted to touch on the OVERALL... and why it's important to always keep the OVERALL, the final EDIT in mind when you're shooting. I've seen a great many great shooters, get a lot of great stuff at receptions. Many of those times, however... they had to sacrifice something to get those shots. What they sacrificed was the OVERALL story of the evening. You have to remember, you're telling the story of the couple's day... of their reception. Everything I've talked about... good audio... good lighting... good positioning... good preparation is part of that OVERALL. If you take care of the little details of your shoot, the OVERALL will fall into place.

SEGMENT TEN - 3:38 (FOOD / Gina Vitale Horse Ending)

Finally, it's very important that you understand that you DON'T have to be EVERYTHING to EVERYBODY to succeed in this business. You need to take in everything that you see and hear this week and decide what works best for you... then you need to SELL THAT. There's nothing wrong with being the romantic videographer in town, or the journalistic one... the artistic one... the straight forward, I shoot it the get it one. The biggest mistake I see in companies who've gone down in flames and can't hack it is... they tried to offer 25 different coverage options so they had all the bases covered. Find what you like and make that style the best you can.

I produce STORYteller Movie Biographies... you've seen a bit of them, where the bride and groom actually narrate their day. I push the STORYtelling theme very hard in all my advertising and promotion...

SHOW MARKETING MATERIALS

What's really important here, really in EVERYTHING we've talked about today... is that you find what style you like best and work to make that style your own. Find a way to take all those little fragments of a wedding day experience... and transform them into wonderful memory.