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The Ultimate 'Solution'

A/V Solutions, LLC, blends expertise with mom-and-pop customer care.

By Dan Ferrisi

A/V Solutions, LLC, was born over a spaghetti dinner at co-owner Bobby Dengler's home. Dengler and his new business partner, Jamey Lerew, opened for business Oct. 1, 2003, in Biglerville PA, located near Harrisburg, York and Gettysburg. Through a lot of hard work and dedication, A/V Solutions has established itself as a top-flight audiovisual design and integration firm, with more than 250 projects to its credit. It casts a wide net in terms of markets served and technologies provided.

Although a small company, the central employee base includes a business manager, Cathleen Lerew, who both owners agree is an instrumental part of the firm's success. This year, some changes are planned, as this family-oriented business becomes even more of an industry force.

Dengler and Lerew built up their business the old-fashioned way: talking with prospective customers on a one-to-one basis. Explained Dengler, "We designed fliers and we walked to houses of worship, introducing ourselves to whomever may be there. Basically, we explained what we could do and said, 'If you ever need any help, give us a call.'" There were many weeks of doing that, because the startup



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A/V Solutions, LLC, delivers its services to a broad range of venues, integrating audio, video and lighting to suit the customer's precise needs.



didn't have any business and they certainly didn't want to sit around the office waiting for something to materialize. Perhaps the most important distinguishing characteristic of A/V Solutions, though, was yet to emerge.

According to Dengler, "One day, we came up with the idea to do a seminar. We invited our reps and our dealers to come along and bestow some of their professional knowledge." The topics ranged from video projectors to speakers, as well as microphones and their proper usage.

Dengler added that the company was committed to fostering a pure education environment.

"We were keeping the entire sales aspect out. We charged a nominal fee to cover our cost, and that gave you a day of education, a nice continental breakfast and lunch."

The first year, the seminar attracted about 30 people. Despite the numbers being somewhat low, Dengler and Lerew were happy

because of the strongly positive feedback the program earned. Success bred success, as the next year's event attracted 70-some people. As this interview was being conducted, A/V Solutions was preparing for its third seminar, for which they were expecting 100-plus attendees. And, according to both

owners, there are quite a few new vendors willing to help out with this day of education. This seminar always is held in February. "Ultimately, this has led to some wonderful relationships and new designs and installations," confirmed Dengler.

Lerew discussed some of the company's plans for the 2007 event. "We started out with having individual classes throughout the morning. This year, we're going to try something new, because it seems like our popular classes just can't fit into 45-minute sessions. In addition to numerous 90-minute sessions, we're actually going to have a video workshop that lasts three hours, a mix workshop for three hours, and a speakers and monitors workshop."

While, previously, Dengler and Lerew had their time substantially occupied by presenting at the seminars, for 2007 they had a different plan. "We actually have people speaking about each of our topics

this year, so Jamey and I can sit back, enjoy the day, develop a nice rapport with our new friends and talk to people," said Dengler.

It's telling that Dengler refers to prospective clients as "new friends," because A/V Solutions exudes a family-oriented spirit. The owners and business manager understand that, without the full support of family, business success can dwindle. This is why A/V Solutions closes between Christmas and New Year's every year, so its employees can fully enjoy the season with their families. A/V Solutions also closes shop a few times a year to go on company trips that ensure employee relaxation and exude employer appreciation.

In addition to its customer service focus, the firm also distinguishes itself through its concentration on custom solutions. Dengler and Lerew are less interested in serving up cookie-cutter jobs and more inter-

ested in solving AV issues, venue-by-venue, in the most tailored and effective way possible. Lerew mentioned two installs of note—a house of worship in Westminster MD and an entertainment complex in Highspire PA—that required the team to "think outside the box" and innovate in terms of design and installation.

"That's really the kind of work Jamey and I take pride in doing," commented Dengler. The owners' knowledge and experience in the audio, video and lighting industries gives them a reliable foundation for meeting the needs of their customers.

In a fact sheet compiled at the dawn of the year, the company laid out plans for the coming months. A/V Solutions intends to expand the company core business to enhance the residential target market; expand the business to encompass security systems; create an in-house, high-tech home theater room with a

wide-screen projection system, in-wall speakers and fiberoptic stars; and remodel the equipment show-room to resemble a stage equipped with light trussing, hanging speakers, microphone stage boxes and a comfortable listening area. In addition, the company is beginning an in-house training program, which takes the owners to the customers, to train them on current systems and/or expand their knowledge base on new systems.

Although the company is growing steadily, both owners stated they want to retain the firm's small-business ambience. The company will continue to operate by its mission statement, which is to provide professional audio, video and lighting solutions with diligence, value and friendliness.

A/V Solutions, surely a name we're going to hear a lot more of in the coming years, has its hands in all segments of the industry: houses



From left to right: Bobby Dengler, Cathleen Lerew and Jamey Lerew.

of worship, entertainment, residential, business, government and education. It has expertise with an equally broad range of gear: JBL, Soundcraft, Crown, QSC, AKG, Sennheiser, FSR, Da-Lite and Eiki, to name just a few. And, it has Dengler and Lerew who, far from being perched in an ivory tower, eagerly take on all elements of the job. "One day, we have the business

executive suits on, meeting with customers and clientele. Then, the next day, we're in bib-overalls, climbing up in attics and down in basements running wires," laughed Dengler. Most importantly, though, in either situation, they're having fun, doing what they love most and making sure that, at the end of the day, customers are satisfied with the product and service provided. ■

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