



Andover man's love of big screens turns into business

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by Eric Hagen
Staff writer

David Baum of Andover has always loved big images. His family bought its first big screen television 15 to 20 years ago. They later bought a projector, which they still use for family movie nights. Five or six years ago, they spent about \$7000 on one of the first plasma and surround AV systems.

Baum has turned his love of big images into a full-time, stay-at-home business that leases mobile 12- by 9-foot Jumbotron screens to event organizers around the Midwest.

Baum had 26 years of experience with a local advertising agency and had been a business partner for the last five years, but he wanted more creative freedom.

"I was a suit and tie guy for 26 years," Baum said. "Now I grow my hair long and I don't shave very often. I'm like a roadie now."

Fire Up Video (www.fireupvideo.com) is a little less than two years old, but Baum has utilized his "smile and dial" talent to contract with the organizers of a speaking engagement for former President George W. Bush, a rally for President Barack Obama and Grandma's Marathon in Minnesota. He has also brought his mobile Jumbotron screen to the world's largest gatherings for motorcycles (Sturgis), snowmobiles (Hay Days) and farming (Farm Progress Show). He has brought the big screen to outdoor concerts including the Prior Lake Jazz Fest, which featured Johnny Lang, Danny Gokey of American Idol, Sawyer Brown, and Loretta Lynn

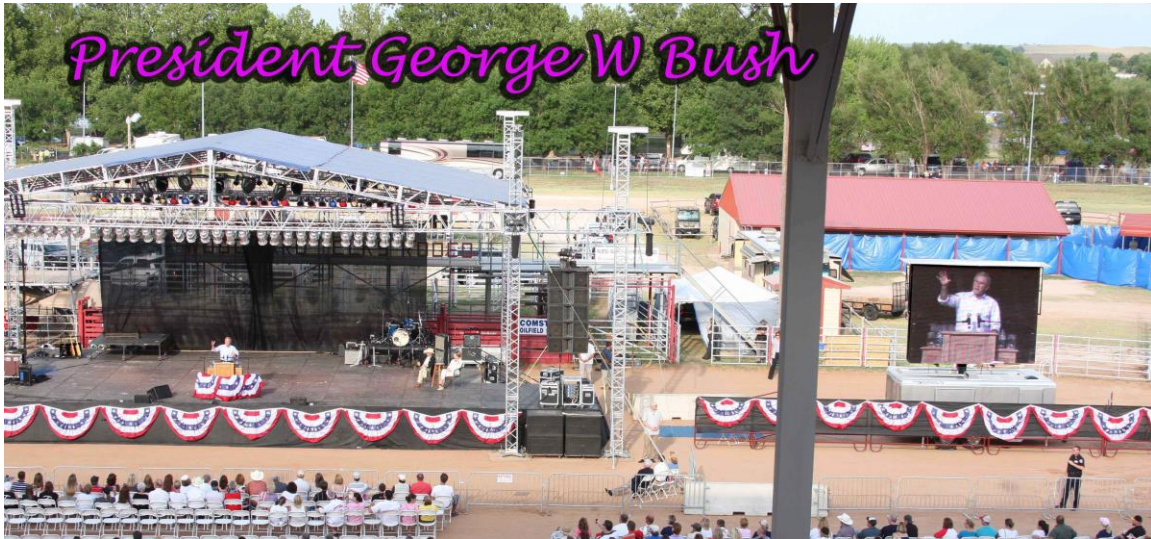
"I understand the sales cycle and what it takes to create business," Baum said. "It just doesn't happen unless you're putting yourself out there."

Professional sports arenas have large Jumbotrons, but outdoor locations where rallies, events and some concerts are held have nothing. Imagine going to a concert where you need binoculars to see the faces of the performers or you just look at fuzzy shapes on the



David Baum of Andover has a home business in which he leases mobile Jumbotrons and his video production services to various events. Courtesy of Fire Up Video

stage. Baum said the audience in the back should have the opportunity to clearly see the faces of the performers. The same goes for speeches.



Fire Up Video has its own cameras so it can take video of a performance or speaker or the organizers can feed the video images onto Baum's screens. Besides giving people going to events larger images to enhance their experience, the large screens can be a selling point for event sponsors that get their logos, videos and even marketing tools such as coupons or text to donate displayed on a large screen. And Fire Up Video is looking for new avenues of revenue to partner with retail organizations as other mobile screen companies have done in other parts of the country.

Baum said he is the only mobile Jumbotron company in Minnesota. His nearest competitor is in Milwaukee, Wis., so he believes he can fill the void in this market.

Second screen available

A large spreadsheet calendar sprawls across one of Baum's basement walls to track the events he has already secured and potential clients. Almost every summer weekend could be booked just from summer events across the Midwest. His winter hours are spent lining up clients for the following spring, summer and fall, although he will be bringing his 12-by 9-foot Jumbotron to the St. Paul Winter Carnival and a Polar Plunge in Wisconsin.

Baum started Fire Up Video in the spring of 2009 when he was still a partner in the advertising agency business. He sold his interest in the advertising agency in the spring of 2010. That same year, Baum doubled his Fire Up Video business. He is on pace to double his business again in 2011.

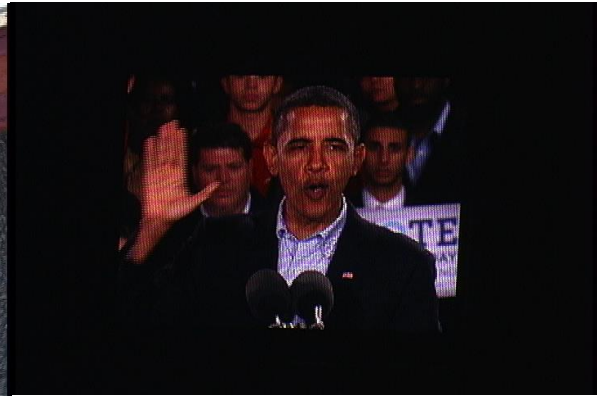
Baum anticipates that his purchase of a second Jumbotron screen this past fall will lead to more clients. He will be able to have two screens at two different locations or have two Jumbotrons at an event where the organizer wants a screen on each side of the stage.

Baum said he just short of a half-a-million-dollars invested in this business between the Jumbotrons, cameras, video editing equipment and trucks and trailers to move the equipment. He has a couple of drivers that can help when needed, but Baum does most of the driving himself because he enjoys the journeys almost as much as the events. “I grew up in Minnesota pulling a fishing boat to all corners of the state trying to land a big walleye.” Baum said with a smile, “The driving and hauling is something I like. It is the calm before and after the storm.”

Baum does not have any investors, but he has been able to borrow financial loans to himself. “It’s all me. It’s my baby. I bootstrapped it,” Baum said. “Fortunately it was a good time with low interest rates to borrow cheap money.”

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