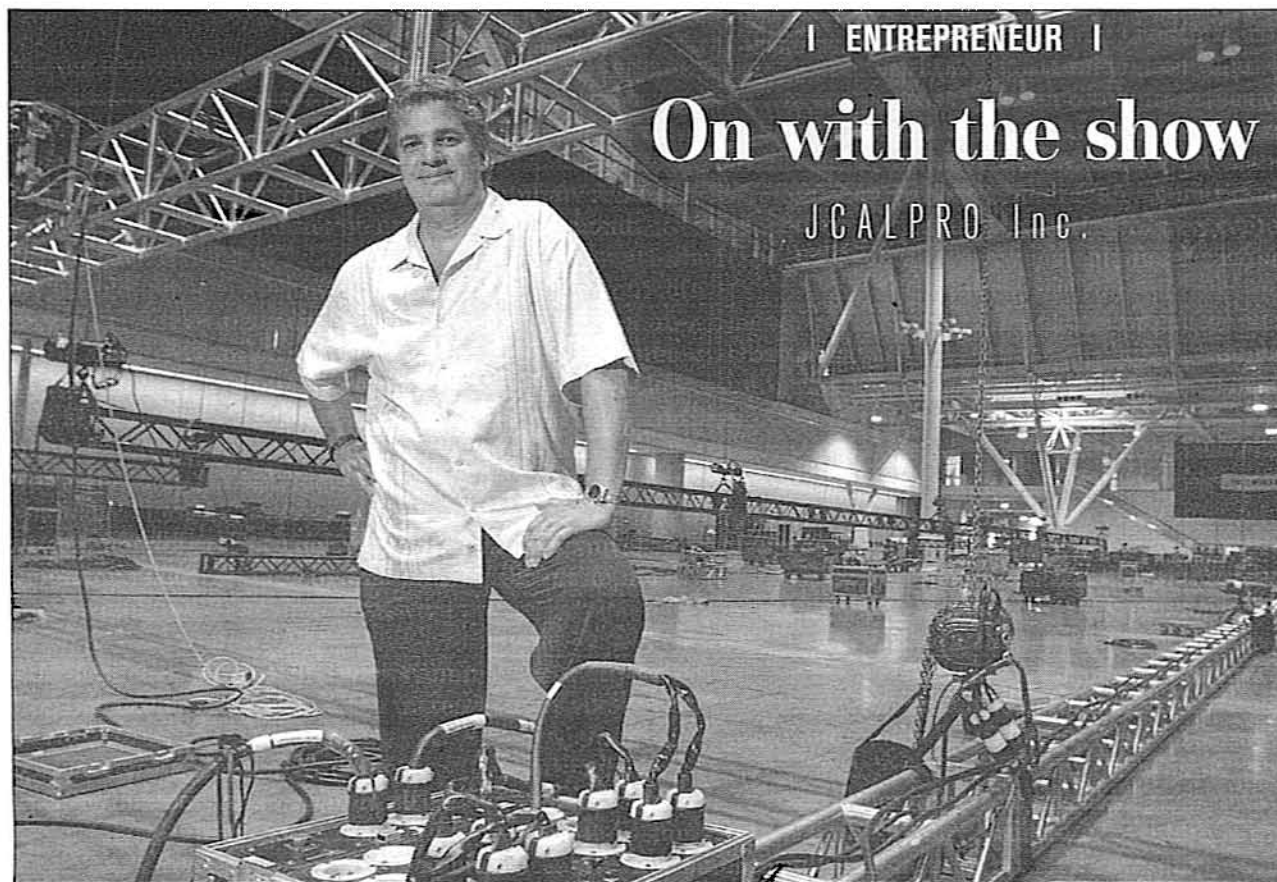


Growth Tools

BostonBusinessJournal.com

July 25-31, 2008



| ENTREPRENEUR |

On with the show

JCALPRO Inc.

Jimmy Callanan, president and CEO of JCALPRO Inc., at the Boston Convention & Exposition Center, one of the venues that exclusively uses JCALPRO for lighting and rigging.

Event rigging company looks to experienced labor, as well as expanded services, to broaden its business

BY SEAN MCFADDEN
JOURNAL STAFF

Jimmy Callanan got into the theatrical rigging business because he says he was bitten by the “entertainment bug.”

The reality of the experience, however, has been less about glamour than about long hours and hard work: Managing Boston-based JCALPRO Inc. has proven to be as much of a balancing act as the hundreds of thousands of pounds of equipment he typically hoists high above the heads of event and con-

cert goers.

“When I was just a head rigger, after you walked out the door (at the end of the day), the work was all over; now, it’s 24/7,” says Callanan, 50.

“I’ve gone from wearing a harness to wearing a suit.”

Callanan started the original business as a part-time operation in the late 1980s, while working full-time as a rigger and stagehand at various venues.

A key turning point came when he received an opportunity in 2004 to bid on a contract with the **Massachusetts Convention Center Authority** to serve as its exclusive rigger for events at both the **Hynes Convention Center** and the **Boston Convention & Exhibition Center**. Pursuing the contract necessitated that he incorporate his company in order to be considered, says Callanan.

The company was incorporated in May 2004, and JCALPRO was award-

FAST FACTS

Jimmy Callanan, a 30-year veteran of the entertainment industry, incorporated JCALPRO Inc., a rigging events production company, in 2004.

Rigging is a term used to describe work and equipment related to a theatrical fly system.

In 2004, the company was awarded a contract with the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority to be its exclusive rigger for events at both the Hynes Convention Center and the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center.

ed the MCCA contract in June of that year. Since then, it has been a major driver of JCALPRO’s revenue, contributing approximately 70 percent of the company’s total business. Last year, it worked on a total of 130 shows for

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

JCALPRO: Riggers shining a spotlight on growth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

MCCA, including the **International Boston Seafood Show** and Gov. **Deval Patrick's** inauguration ceremony.

The remaining 30 percent of the company's revenue comes from a mixture of corporate meetings at hotels as well as concerts and shows at area concert halls and outside venues. JCALPRO worked on 25 shows for non-MCCA clients last year.

JCALPRO recently signed a three-year contract with **Gillette Stadium** to handle rigging for its concerts.

Revenue for JCALPRO has grown accordingly to \$6.6 million in 2007 from \$4 million in 2006.

Nick Langella, former general manager for MCCA and current senior vice president of arena business and operations at **TD BankNorth Garden**, attributes JCALPRO's success to "their level of expertise — not only Jimmy Callanan's, as the principal, but the company as a whole. He has extremely skilled labor and rigging professionals, who really know the business. That provides a safety comfort level with building managers and customers alike."

A potential stumbling block is that JCALPRO's contract with MCCA is currently up for competitive bid again. And while Callanan certainly

hopes to have it renewed, he understands it makes good business sense to branch out.

"We definitely do have a lot of dependence on the business we're generating through this contract — it requires a lot of our time and resources," Callanan says. "However, since it's allowed us to grow, as well, we've started outreach into other revenue areas."

The company, which once sub-rented the majority of its equipment, has more than doubled its in-house rental inventory over the last year; recent purchases at the close of 2007 came in at around \$250,000.

The reasoning, says Callanan, is that the cost to sub-rent equipment resulted in smaller profit margins for the company.

It also is expanding into other production aspects: Included in its recent cost expenditures is an estimated \$60,000 investment in theatrical lighting equipment.

The recent expenditures have also increased the company's total investment in theatrical drapery to \$250,000 since 2004.

Marketing the business remains a priority: The company is budgeting \$30,000 this year for efforts including a rebranding of the company's logo and marketing materials, as well as

a new Web site and PR outreach conducted by two local firms, **Spotlight Communications Inc.** and **Conventures Inc.**

Dusty Rhodes, president of Conventures, says Callanan possesses the right stuff for his line of work: "It's 50 percent planning and 50 percent ability to perform on-site. Jimmy immediately creates a solution, and he does it seamlessly."

Equally important to its success, says Callanan, is the company's ability to attract and retain qualified staff. JCALPRO currently has 17 full-time staff members, though it may supplement that with up to 200 union workers if a particular job requires it.

The company has invested in recruiting experienced industry talent who've worked with acts such as **Billy Joel** and shows such as **Cirque du Soleil**.

"Our strategy is to employ some of the industry's best workers, while also nurturing and developing youth into our organization," Callanan says. "People like these come with a price, so it's also important to bring in youth that can be trained to be JCALPRO's leading riggers and stagehands in the future."

SEAN MCFADDEN can be reached at smcfadden@bizjournals.com.