

Go to Plan C?



When you decide to become a videographer, you commit to the often impossible attempt to capture lightning in a bottle. Moments come and go and if your camera is not pointed in the right direction, focused, and turned on at precisely the right minute, you'll miss it. And your clients won't be happy.

To make matters worse, there are a lot of moving parts to a production shoot. And it is very easy to have something go south on you. Which is why it is important to have a backup plan to your backup plan.

Case in point: I was hired to videotape some high level animal

experts who were presenting at a recent veterinary conference here in the Orlando area. I packed my bags, loaded the car, had an assistant with me, double checked everything. I thought I was ready.

As we arrived at the venue, a local convention hotel in South Orlando, I found that instead of filming a lecture at a live conference as I expected, the clients decided to recreate the presentations just for my camera. In a hallway... at the hotel. With people passing by... on their way to and from an open bar.

It was not what I was expecting but no problem. I adjusted my plan. I set up my equipment. I had brought my lighting kit so the lack of adequate lights was not an issue. I brought my lavalier mikes in case we needed them which enabled me to reduce the amount of ambient noise distractions (i.e. well lubricated convention goers.)

I had an extra DSLR camera with tripod for B-roll and as a back up camera to catch the footage from a different angle in case I needed to edit in a cutaway shot during an unplanned break in the presentation.

To my utter dismay, what I didn't bring was the DC cord to the main camcorder. No worries, I thought to myself, I'm glad I tossed in that backup battery for the camcorder just before I left.

I was there to record six presentations. I recorded the first one and my battery went from 100% to 78%. I quickly did the math. I was going to have to switch batteries halfway through in order to capture all six presentations. But I wasn't really worried... yet.

At the halfway point, I switched batteries. The one I had been using was down to 30%. The new one I put in... 0%. It was completely dead. I had 3 more presentations to record. And not enough battery strength to do it. Cue the sweat glands.

I did have the back up DSLR with its two full batteries so I knew I could get the video but the lav mikes needed my camcorder's XLR jacks to capture the best audio. And the camcorder was going to die before the end of the next presentation.

I suddenly remembered that I threw my Zoom H4nPro audio recorder (pictured above) in my video bag on a whim. I didn't think I would need it (in fact had never used it before on a production job) but I had space in the bag so in it went. This device accepts the XLR jacks of an audio cable so I could direct the lav mikes output to the Zoom's SD card while the back up camera could record the main video signal.

I completed the shoot and everything fell into place. It turned out great. Thanks to the Zoom H4nPro and to the people who suggested to me 2 years ago it might a good thing to have in the camera bag. To quote Hannibal from The A-Team, "I love it when a plan comes together."

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories through the digitalization of film, videotapes, audio cassettes, photos and slides. For more information, call 352-735-8550 or visit our [website](#).