

BJ Koubaroulis, founder, Synthesis Multimedia Productions

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Welcome to It's All Journalism. My name is Michael O'Connell. I'm here today with fellow producer Julie O'Donoghue, and we have a friend, a colleague, a long-time colleague who has joined us today, BJ Koubaroulis —

BJ Koubaroulis, founder, Synthesis Multimedia Productions

Nailed it.

Michael O'Connell

Nailed it. Wow, OK. I don't know what I've been calling you all these years, but this is probably —

BJ Koubaroulis

BJ. BJ probably. Or stupid sports guy.

Michael O'Connell

Yeah. You have a wonderful Greek name, and I knew I was going to futz it up. BJ is the CEO and founder of Synthesis Multimedia Productions. Could you sort of explain what that is?

BJ Koubaroulis

Sure. Yeah, first of all, guys, thanks for having me. I think this is a great program.

Michael O'Connell

Thank you.

BJ Koubaroulis

I actually went through the site and looked at the stuff that you've done, and it's exciting to be in such great company, so thanks for having me.

Synthesis Multimedia Productions is about 4 1/2-years old. I started the company really as an ends to a means for creating a role for myself where there wasn't one in sports media. I was brought, where we previously worked together, we worked at the [Connection Newspapers](#), and I went over to [The Washington Post](#) and I was doing a lot of reporting there. I saw the writing on the wall as things were changing, as the paper was getting smaller and the Web, they were starting to be more of an increase in importance for digital media.

Michael O'Connell

Right.

BJ Koubaroulis

I picked up a camera, and I started doing these videos with my stories, and people were like “What are you doing?” right, and I got a great opportunity from the sports editor there who had taken over, and he basically just said “Hey, you know, we trust you to do this, and we want you to lead our digital sports strategy.” Before, there was a big video presence at the Post. I took that and the same day leaving, and I came back as a contract with a company launched as [Synthesis Multimedia Productions](#). So the basis as I mentioned earlier was in sports, but now we do all kinds of things — marketing for companies, small businesses, we do a lot of digital strategy, we also work with universities, government agencies, non-profits, we do everything from a wedding to a tour of a university — a digital video tour to a university — we do all kinds of things across multimedia. Where we started to where we are now in the past five years, we are a true digital production house.

Michael O'Connell

Now, you — just to sort of fill in some of the information you sort of glossed over —

BJ Koubaroulis

Yep.

Michael O'Connell

You, Julie and I used to work for the Connection. You were a sports reporter covering high school sports, because that's primarily what we covered. You were doing social media at that time as well. You had come out of George Mason University's communications program, and from my perspective, the chair I was sitting in, I saw somebody who was doing — who was a really forward thinker about where journalism was going.

Julia O'Donoghue, producer, It's All Journalism

Right, and you were doing the TV show and some radio, right?

BJ Koubaroulis

Yes, so — and thanks for saying that — because at the time, you're doing these things and people are like “Why is this guy on Twitter?” Because Twitter, before journalism really accepted Twitter, was like the teenage kid tweeting his friend, it wasn't accepted really, if you remember in the dark ages of Twitter, and so I was doing this, and really what it was about was trying to get our stories out on a different platform. But you're right, in trying to get more experiences, I told Mike I would talk about this — the Washington Journalism and Media Conference was something I spoke at yesterday, actually, with a bunch of friends in the industry, 250 kids from across the country, and the reason I bring that up is because what we talked to them about was doing everything. Don't be just one thing and early on you mentioned I was doing radio and the television show locally. All of that was rooted in doing high school sports, but for me, in my career, I wanted to get as many experiences as I could early because the truth is, when I came into the industry, it was just starting to, so to speak, fall apart. And so here I had gone to this schooling and here I am and I have my degree and I want my job. And the truth is there was that, still, when I came out, and the internship led to the job and all of those things, but slowly I started to see the change in how papers were starting to dwindle and budgets were starting to hit and I realized — and this is what I always tell people when they ask me what's the most important thing if I want to be a journalist and I told these kids yesterday at the Journalism and Media Conference at Mason, I said do everything.

Julia O'Donoghue

This was high school students?

BJ Koubaroulis

Yes, high school students. When budgets are small — and you guys know this because you're doing this thing — when budgets are small, and businesses are hurt, they still want to survive, they want to hire one person to do the job of five people, and if you can do the job of a blogger, a writer, a Web editor, a video producer, a radio host, a TV host, you are going to be in demand.

Back to the business side, what I realized was I was doing all these things, and I was working at all these different entities, but I realized if I could bring it together under one roof and make it my own, I would have more chance to be successful, because I wouldn't have to rely on other people to put the resources in front of me that I needed to accomplish the job, and that's when things really took off.

Michael O'Connell

And just to sort of tie in my own experience, sort of in that same line of thinking, when I went to the Interactive Journalism program at American University and I started picking up all these different skills, I was able to go to my office and say, “Look, I'd like to do some of this stuff with the website,” so the more skills you pick up, the more you push yourself forward and people begin to trust you, then the

opportunities open for you to do different types of things and expand your own skills and experience and, you know, do live blogging, and cover events with video and audio, just do lots of different things, and as you move forward, and you gather all these other skills, it just sort of expands and it grows and opportunities present themselves.

Julia O'Donoghue

Yeah, I would say — so I just graduated from Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism in the spring, and I was in class with some people who really were intent on only doing one thing, like a lot of people, frankly, it was a little surprising for me because I'm older — I'm 30. There were people who were like 22 or 23 who were like I just want to write, I just want to be on TV or something like that. I have not, I am applying for jobs right now, I have not seen any sort of job in a traditional print market, any job that's not asking for video skills, certainly at least video skills and definitely some HTML. You are up a creek if you have not decided to do any Web stuff. I had a really good experience at Northwestern, but I kind of had some idea of what I needed. I think some people in my program were like, “God, why are they making us do this Web stuff?” and “I am never going to do this again” — like wrong.

BJ Koubaroulis

I hear that all the time, that is so refreshing. It is so refreshing to hear somebody who has been through that schooling, because it is a very well-respected institution, and often what you get, too, is people who come out of, like, a Northwestern, and I'm not saying that school in particular, but a school of such prestige, or like a Phillip Merrill, and they have their Masters, and they think, “Well, I'm calling my own shots.” And actually in this day and age, you can't do that, it doesn't matter your education level, and education is such a great thing to have. It's such an important thing to have, because once you get the job, that means so much more, and it takes you so much further within it, but unless you are the absolute best at what you do at your company, they're not just going to let you do one thing. Unless you're Eli Saslow at the Washington Post, they're not going to give you six months to write a feature, and that's it. They don't have the money to be able to do that.

Michael O'Connell

And we're just talking about news outlets, but you know, that's the same for anything that uses these journalism skills. If you get a job at a foundation, or like a government agency that has a media component to it, you're going to be working primarily probably on the Web, and so you're going to need to know some coding, you're going to need to know audio and video, and, you know, you're going to need to know social media.

Julia O'Donoghue

Our old colleague Brian McNeill is the communications director at the University of Virginia Law School and he was like, “You have to be a one-man band,” like you're not going to get a job like this, which is a pretty nice job, a lot of people — university communications, higher ed communications, is great — you get a lot of creative freedom and stuff, but he's like, “Yeah, I have to be able to do everything.”

BJ Koubaroulis

And I want to use that as a launching point, because when I started the company, I was a one man band. It's funny, in starting this company, and people, you know they look at you and they're like, “Oh, you own your own business and stuff,” and what they don't realize is in this digital day and age, when all of your resources are online to help you start a company and to take those steps, the business model and starting the business was not as hard as actually doing the work. You own your own company, but you're out there with a camera and you're creating video and I got my first camera off Craigslist — 50 bucks. I was just playing around a learned it, and taught myself, and a MacBook Pro that I had bought for my wife for her birthday, I pulled that in and I started learning to edit. But what I did with that backpacker mentality was, once I started to build the company and realize, OK, as one backpacker, I can be in one place at one time. If there's 10 of me, we can cover 10 things at one time —

Michael O'Connell

So cloning was involved.

BJ Koubaroulis

Right, so we went into genetic cloning. No, what I did was, I went out, as we started to get more backing from some other companies and some other people who were clients, I took that money, instead of going and partying like a young dummy would, and I put it back into the company and I bought more cameras and I bought more computers and I bought more equipment and more audio and "What do I need now?" I mean, my days are spent on eBay searching for things that I might need, that might help the company. I mean I literally stay up at midnight with my iPad, Google searching the word "livestream" to see what are the new technologies that are part of that.

And so, I was able to take these resources and put them in the hands of other people who wanted an opportunity, who wanted to get published, who wanted to learn editing, and I basically taught them everything I knew, and now, as a collective whole, we became a creative group. And that was five years ago, and now, we have all the equipment, we have all the people, we have all the contracts. And so, that's what it took to get to today. What I often find is, people want to launch their own thing, or want to do their own business, or want to — and they can, but that's the easy part — the legal, and the LLC, and getting the website and the domain. It's getting the resources and getting the work, and I think that that's often the hardest thing to explain to people. You could start any company. You could get any website. You got to have product to go behind it.

Michael O'Connell

OK well what does that mean for you then? What did you do to get to that point?

BJ Koubaroulis

Yeah. I basically took an opportunity and ran with it. When I was given the opportunity from the Washington Post to do all of their high school sports videos and at that time, college and pro videos. They've since added video resources into the building — I can't tell you it's incredible.

Michael O'Connell

Yeah they've got a video whole presence.

BJ Koubaroulis

But I have a great relationship there with the video team as well and they've let us do a lot of things. But at that time, I was seen as a backpack producer who was going to do high school sports. And instead of being one guy on a sideline on a Friday night, I multiplied that to five sidelines on a Friday night. So we're doing five football games and the next year we were doing six and seven and eight throughout the years. And features and more as we continued to expand the company.

And so really what I would say if you want to start your own business and do your own thing, it's really identifying that moment. When you have that opportunity to make it what you want it to be and not potentially what others want it to be for you. And I don't mean to be speaking in code. At the time, no body knew better. Even the people that gave me this wonderful opportunity. They had seen that I'd done some good video work and they would have been content to keep that. But I grew it into something bigger by simply taking the risk, throwing more resources at it. And then, instead of saying "OK, I'm going to make this salary and I'm going to keep it." I multiplied it by now adding in other companies and other contracts. These people who have my equipment are also working for. Kind of realizing at the time, all these different companies had a little money to put into digital media. Not a lot. But if I pulled them together, we could do a lot of good work across a lot of different companies. So we essentially became a contract firm for companies that wanted digital media that couldn't afford to hire a digital media guy or their own team, essentially.

Michael O'Connell

Yeah.

BJ Koubaroulis

So they were outsourcing their digital media needs to us. And it's still a successful model.

Julia O'Donoghue

I want to put in a plug for going to BJ's website, which I don't know off the top of my head.

BJ Koubaroulis

It's synthesismp.com

Julia O'Donoghue

I really liked a lot of your sports features. I mean I'm kind of a sucker for that type of stuff. It's good.

Michael O'Connell

Was there a lot of hockey?

Julia O'Donoghue

No.

BJ Koubaroulis

We do a lot of hockey. We are in the Caps locker rooms and we are doing interviews with the Caps.

Julia O'Donoghue

I mean the high school features. I am a big hockey fan. I don't think that's come up in the podcast strangely. The high school sports features, that one about that girl, the high schooler girl, I want to say a weight lifting or CrossFit champion. I mean that stuff is really cool and it really does lend itself more to video than print. You know, you can see her and see what she's doing and see her presence and all that stuff.

Michael O'Connell

One of the reasons that I was really looking forward to bringing you in for a very long time on our podcast because of the scale of what you do. Certainly you're doing Washington Post stuff. You're in the Caps' locker room. There are a lot of journalists who aren't at big papers. They are at community papers. They are weekly papers. And you know some of their big stories are high school sports, high school plays and things like that. Being able to develop video content at that level and serve the community that way I think is sort of, is kind of important to let people know yeah you can do some of this stuff. You don't have to be the ABC News or ABC Sports. You can find a way to do this and serve your readers. So just along that line, tell me about your team goes to a high school football game, what do you guys do?

BJ Koubaroulis

So we do a lot of stuff across the board. So for example, as a backpacker, we have a group of anytime between seven and 10, and we can cover that many events on any given night. So you know, I do so much high school sports and people recognize me, but the truth is, and I probably shouldn't say this, I haven't been to a high school game in probably two to three years. But I'm doing the studio stuff and I've built these relationships where I know these people. I can pick up the phone. And Mike, back to your point about community journalism. As you guys know because we were in this together at the Connection, which is the most community journalism you can get. To be able to pick up the phone and people know you, that solves a lot of problems. They're going to let you into their school system with a camera. They trust us. So on a Friday night, we'll send out a group of our guys and girls to whatever games have been selected and they shoot, they edit and they reate the video and they send it with all of the dressings to the client, which in this case if it's a sports event would be The Washington Post. And then they take the

content and simply upload it to their system and publish it. So we have a whole system that our content is being filtered directly through to their system and live online. So we're able to cover live events and then within two hours of the completion of the event, there's the video online. And then we have someone on our team who is a social media expert, who takes that video in that URL from the client and then tweets it to everyone has a stake in it, every kid that was in it, every kid on the roster in the high school sporting experience. For our other clients, for example, right now we're working with George Mason's admissions department.

Michael O'Connell

George Mason University.

Julia O'Donoghue

Where you went to school.

BJ Koubaroulis

Where I went to school, great school. My alma mater. Great school Um, ya know when we're working with them right now. I've got a guy on Capitol Hill who is going around with students as they meet their senators. He comes back, he shoots, he edits, he does interviews and files that directly up. Puts it on the client's YouTube page, embeds it on their blog. Does the social media treatment as well, so we take it from start to finish.

What I always prided us on was, we're not video people. We're journalists with a video camera. That's very important to me because we have taken that style of video storytelling. We've not only done it in the journalism world, we've done it in the marketing world and the small business world. Because now, the digital explosion of video, that's what they want. They don't want a 30 second ad that says "Hi this is what my company is." They want a testimonial. They want a real video inside their building and not just a logo looping saying "Come join us for lunch on Thursdays at 12." It doesn't work that way anymore. We're able to tell journalism for all kinds of companies not just newspapers. That right now, and I know this is a sin. But that sells. You have to do that to be able to survive in this economy.

Michael O'Connell

What this is is a business model that's functional right now that incorporates journalism. Not saying yours is the answer. It is an answer that a problem that a lot of people are trying to crack. We're all looking at and debating whether the Washington Post and the New York Times should do a paywall; whether, that is going to succeed or not. But there are tons, tons of other journalists and newspapers and media outlets that are out there and are very small that have a certain, select audience who is being underserved because papers are running much smaller because they don't have the staff to get to the high school football games or whatever. This is an opportunity for other people to do things like what you're doing at local levels to sort of grow that. I know there's been, when you look at Patch where they've put somebody in the neighborhood and they're trying to cover everything. They do a pretty good job in many ways, but it's a tough type of journalism to do, so wherever you can fill in these gaps. We forget that newspapers were money making machines. They did journalism but they were about making money, selling ads to businesses, doing special sections that were business oriented, so I mean I don't think that that you're breaking, making any cardinal sin here in trying to make money so that you can do journalism.

Julia O'Donoghue

I would say also that I have professors in grad school who are working at a very high level doing documentary stuff and two of them have a company where they're doing commercial stuff, like documentary style commercial stuff to fund their documentaries. And they're in the higher ed world where it's easier to find funding for an obscure project and they're still doing that. But a little bit back to your point, this is the style that people want? I know that in the 2012 election, if you looked at any of the Obama videos. I don't know so much on the Romney side, but I'd assume it was the same. In Chicago, that's where Obama was based and I was there. All of their videos, they had long form cuts where they

were little documentaries about factories closing in Ohio or you know, hard times in Michigan where they featured people, and you know.

BJ Koubaroulis

People are seeking that out though. That's what people want. The Romney or Obama sitting in a chair surrounded by their family saying, "Hi, we're great, vote for us." They do that still, but that's not what's catching people's eyes.

Michael O'Connell

Peoples' perception of what the Internet is is changing as well and I think a lot of that has to do with the amount of entertainment we get through digital platforms, through iPads. We're used to watching TV shows. Now maybe we'll watch a 10 minute news piece that tells the story of something we're really interested in. Again, this is all changing. The other company that you started in January sort of speaks to the sports thing. It's DMVstream?

BJ Koubaroulis

DMVstream.com and it's a great launching point when you talk about watching things on your iPad or on your phone or computer even or Apple TV. Um, so we've been live streaming for about two years and what that means for me, was sort of, we were doing it, we were experimenting with it. It was the same way when I was starting the company Synthesis. Go get dirty, go figure out how it works and when you're ready, boom. Go for it. Now you know what you're doing, put the resources in, go do it. For two years, I was out at local high schools, because high schools were a great place to start this because they allow you to do whatever you want and they want the coverage. So for me, it was a low, sort of, risk opportunity.

Michael O'Connell

And you knew there was an audience there as well.

BJ Koubaroulis

Absolutely and I want to tell you about that too because that actually blew my mind. But we went out and we were finding the 4G connections at each field. We were really in the field. This isn't just some company who's invested some money who wants to start streaming games. We're out there figuring out how to do that. Frustrating but also totally rewarding. Two years later, snatched up a bunch of equipment. Created some really cool technology basically building an entire production truck into a 42-pound box. You can find that on my website synthesismp.com and also DMVstream.com. Essentially, it's a suitcase but it's a hard case built by Clydesdale. They do a great job. I ordered it out of Canada. Flips up, there's a monitor in it, a dry caster in it which is a high end production switcher. It can switch between cameras. Three, four cameras come out of that. And essentially, you can go anywhere with that. You can do a high level television-style broadcast for the Web and that's the difference.

People want to roll in trucks. You're starting at \$25,000. Nobody is going to throw \$25,000 at a high school game. But what we did is we brought the technology in that made it affordable. And then said, OK, were going to do this, we're going to risk it. We're going to put a platform up. That platform has led us to relationships with other media companies who want us to go do that for them. So we have used DMVstream.com as an advertisement, as a platform, but also for a place for people to go see live high school sports. We dangled that, essentially, in the local media. And now people are seeing that as something they can say, "I want that. I want what you're doing, but I want it on my site." It's live high school sports. You can watch it on your computer, your tablet, your mobile device, on your TV if you have the hooks, and there's nothing like live in this day and age especially in that arena.

Julia O'Donoghue

Also that means grandma or grandpa, especially in this area, people who have family members overseas can watch it.

BJ Koubaroulis

When you get an email from a Georgetown Prep kid's dad who watched the game from Afghanistan in a hole somewhere, it's pretty touching on an emotional level. But on a business level, you also realize on the back end, when you have control of the platform, when you're not just streaming things for another client and you can see the numbers. We launched in January, we did 100,000 clicks by mid-February. 100,000 clicks. I am a high school sports buff in this area. I've been doing it for 10 years. I've never seen numbers like that. I was shocked. And when I saw that, I started taking all my money and pushing it into the middle of that table and now we're ready. We're strong in it. And I'm really excited about the upcoming high school football season. You're going to hear a lot about not just that platform, but about our company out there doing multiple games on multiple nights doing live that you can watch on all kinds of devices.

Julia O'Donoghue

Hey BJ, can you talk about the crowd-sourcing you do to pick the games you cover.

BJ Koubaroulis

Yes. It's funny because it's a high level broadcast. So the kids see it. It's a three camera switch. It's got graphics, it's got video roll-ins, it's got highlights. It's not like a guy with a laptop. Not that there's anything wrong with that, right? But, when they see this, they get excited about it. It's a, we dangle it, it's their reward. So what we do is, we add a poll to the website. We say come vote on which games we should stream live. We put up five games, so that's 10 teams. We have a social media person in the company who goes through and finds every single kid on that roster and tweets them, "Hey vote here." So you would imagine, say out of 100 kids, when each of those kids tweet that link, 100 more kids tweet that link. We did a poll where 10,000 people voted for the Flint Hill-Potomac School game.

Julia O'Donoghue

Oh my God. And Potomac School maybe has 600 people K-12.

BJ Koubaroulis

I was shocked.

Michael O'Connell

Those are two private schools.

BJ Koubaroulis

But it's a huge rivalry and it means something, not just to those people but alumni. So for the last 50 years, every alumni who has come out of there, even though it's 600 people and so exponentially it grows. And then they're tweeting at celebrities, "Please help us win this game. Please retweet." It catches fire, we actually lose control of it and just let it go. They've actually broken the site before. It's pretty amazing to see something and all of us have this experience in working with the local community, but to see them embrace something and make it bigger than local, and make it something anybody can see anywhere and have a stake in by voting. That is what has made the site popular, but it's funny because the broadcasts, they do good traffic, but not as good as the voting. And the site as a whole, if that makes sense. Because the broadcast, it may get 5,000 views, which is good. But it may have gotten 25,000 votes. But then that night, people come back and watch it and are tweeting. There's always that experience for them to go back and see it. But really they just wanted to win. And isn't that the whole point of sports? They just wanted to win. So I feel like we're harnessing that at a very organic level. Finding the exact people who have a stake in that broadcast and letting them control it.

Michael O'Connell

So the monetization of it then is you taking that model and selling it to newspapers, outlets or anybody who wants to have some type of platform like that?

BJ Koubaroulis

So what's really good about what I learned from Synthesis and moving forward with livestreaming and DMVstream is we are doing DMVstream.com as an advertisement. To show people, OK, have the game. You can watch it. We don't care. We're going to do this anyway. I'm not trying to make money on DMVstream, because I'm not going to. I know that. But what I'm saying, "Hey check this out. Don't you want this? This is what we can do." And at any level you're doing that. At any level in journalism, you're showing people your clips or how you can write or how you can be on camera or TV. What we've done is taken to the privatized community like a small business owner or another media organization who wants to stream an event or even weddings. People are thinking about streaming those things, which I want nothing to do with.

Julia O'Donoghue

Oh my God.

BJ Koubaroulis

Yeah, for example, we took our two kits, those kits I was telling you about with the four cameras and flip open, and we flew to Chicago with them and we did a three-day event at a university where they were doing a statistics conference. We literally sat in Loyola and we streamed and recorded live people doing statistics. It was the most boring thing you would ever imagine, I had no idea what they were talking about. But you know what? There was an audience for that. They did thousands of views. People were into it. It was sold as a learning experience to those people and it was actually easier than doing a sporting event because there was no one moving. They're standing at a podium. So we're just welcoming in their PowerPoint presentation to really make a nice presentation for people to see at home. But the point is, that pays very well. And that money we put back into DMVstream to pay people to work on that project to continue to make us other clients who want streaming, and so, we're being found at the media level but then we're taking it and we're doing conferences. And as you would imagine there are plenty of those in D.C.

Julia O'Donoghue

And I think it goes without saying that in this market and I'm sure, I know it's true in Chicago and other major markets, sports, high school sports they are fighting tooth and nail for any attention they can get, because there's so many other things to cover from professional sports to, obviously, our college teams and stuff like that. I think it's really nice. I played high school sports in this area. So did my brothers. And you know, it's like any little scrap of attention you get, it's like, "Oh my God. Thank God."

Michael O'Connell

We've all worked in local news. We all see when local news works, good things come out of it. The real benefits and the power of it. I mean, you used to cover election night. Imagine using that technology and putting a team to cover election night somewhere, getting all the local candidates. It would be a huge thing. And just being able to do that, not for again ABC News, but being able to do it for the local news and the issues that matter to people in their neighborhoods, I mean that's a lot of power. It's a lot of untapped potential for the Web.

BJ Koubaroulis

And what I found too, and back to your point about high school sports. It's such a visible thing that my company does and people know us for it and I love that. But it's actually become a smaller part of what we do as a whole. For small businesses and state organizations and others, we're doing the same style but for them on a marketing level.

What I will say about both of your points about community journalism and the high school sports, people are fighting for this attention. What I found, when I came in, from a journalism level, I wanted to come in, do my time and go move on and cover the Yankees, the Nationals or whatever. Every sportswriter dreams of that. "I'm going to ESPN." But what I found was, everybody wants to do that. What a really wise

mentor told me, and this has become so true. If you take the job no one wants and you do it well and you do the hell out of it, you're in demand. So right now, there is no company that I know of that can cover seven high school football games in one night, in our budget, for one client and have the game go live in two hours from completion of the final whistle. It can't, I know it to be true. And it's not me pounding my chest. What I'm saying is, because of that I'm very secure in that arena and that has made our company sustainable. And then we go take risks like DMVstream and we find these other clients to cash in on that sustainability, so to speak. We have the resources now. We have the people. Let's take these people and multipurpose them. So if John came into the company and learned how to be a digital media producer and we taught him on a low risk level like high school sports and he's proven himself to be an amazing producer who is capable of more, we take him and move him over to the NGO stuff or the government stuff. That's a proven model. And he can go produce higher level content for other clients. And then, oh by the way, he's got a portfolio and he can get a full-time job anywhere in this city where there's digital media producers' jobs that they're throwing around. If you go on our website too, I'll just plug it for a minute, on the "Our Team" part, there's tons of people that have come through the company that have actually used this experience to go get a full-time job paying very well at that level. And to be honest with you, that is the thing that I'm most proud of, of our company. I started as a guy that couldn't get an opportunity and I feel like that our company has helped create those for people and I'm very proud of that.

Michael O'Connell

It sounds like as a businessman and a journalist, you're forward thinking in everything that you're doing. What are your thoughts about where digital journalism is right now and where it's headed?

BJ Koubaroulis

I think if anybody tries to tell you they have the answer, you should punch that person in the face and run the other way, because they're lying. You can't trust them. Nobody knows. But we're all trying. That's the thing I often tell people. I've seen a lot of people get discouraged in this business. I've seen a lot of people saying "You know what man? I'm done. I've tried so hard. I can't take it anymore." I've seen that happen unfortunately. But what I have also seen as a whole from a lot of good people like yourselves who have stuck it out and who have done what we are doing here today and who continue to seek new opportunity, to see and to be forward-thinkers like yourselves, if you put in that effort and you put in that work and you seek those opportunities, this is the most exciting time in the history of journalism. I'm not saying that as a buzzword. That's the truth. You can do whatever you want to do. I find it incredibly boring if they say to me, "Come write for my newspaper. And be that and that's it." I couldn't imagine. I'd be bored to death, but five years ago I would have died for that opportunity.

To answer your question, nobody knows the answer. The only thing we can all do is our part collectively, and that will eventually take us to the answer. I can only do what I can do in the video journalism world and the multimedia world and I can only go the DMVstream route and continue to livestream and see where that takes us. And who knows? How quickly things changed to where we are now, look how quickly they're changing back and how forward we are pushing with digital media as a whole.

So, I think that what I'm most excited about is, there is more opportunity than there has ever been. But the buzzword that I use is entrepreneurial journalism. And what I mean by that is, you are your own best advocate. Right now, you can do whatever you want because you are your boss in your job, or even if you don't have a full time job and you are your boss, go do that. Add something to this conversation that is journalism. That's what I tell people. Eventually as people continue to add things to the conversation, we will collectively come up with a solution. The big companies right now, they're going to keep taking risks, and they have to. Gannett is completely retooling everything to be totally broadcast centric. As I mentioned, the Post, their video resources are just ... and this is me just talking about video. There's so many other things that are happening too, but that's my expertise. When I see that I get excited. As a guy with a camera many years ago by myself standing on the sideline of a high school game filming sports, not knowing where it was going. I questioned. Everybody does. I doubted. I thought, what am I doing? I

think those things are starting to be solved now. Five years later is actually a pretty short time in media. I see the answers coming but I don't have — and I don't think anyone does — a collective answer to how we solve this. It think it's actually happening believe it or not.

Michael O'Connell

I agree with you. It's all changing and I think the days of somebody waiting for somebody else to fix the problem are over.

BJ Koubaroulis

And how many of those guys have we seen come through major corporations who say I have the answer, follow me and they don't.

Michael O'Connell

It's changing, you've got to get involved in the conversation and contribute something for God's sake. This has been really fascinating. I think we're going to wrap up here. Again, give me your websites.

BJ Koubaroulis

So the website for the company is syntesismp.com and you can also find more about the livestreaming stuff at DMVstream.com and there's plenty of ways on each of those sites to get in contact with us. We offer all kinds of freelance opportunities as well as internships, which is a big thing for us as a company. Creating opportunities is actually the thing I most pride us on and we will always do that. I hope whoever is listening today took something from this. My biggest goal is to motivate people. I hope that I can. I know I needed pep talks along the way. I hope anybody listening, who's finding a hard time in digital media, will take this and run with it. You are your best advocate. If you want to do something, it's actually as simple as going and doing it believe it or not.

Michael O'Connell

I don't think there's any reason to add anything else to that.

BJ Koubaroulis

Thanks guys. Appreciate it.

Julia O'Donoghue

Thank you