

Ross Video

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Headquarters	8 John Street, Iroquois, Ontario K0E 1K0
Year Established	1974
NAICS	334310 - Audio and video equipment manufacturing
Employees	820
Major Expansions	1982, 1999, 2013, 2019
Exports	US, Central America, South America, Asia-Pacific, EU
Parent Company	N/A
Other Locations	R&D Facility - Ottawa

Ross Video Limited is an Emmy-winning designer and manufacturer of live video broadcast equipment. From small beginnings, the firm has experienced dramatic growth in the past several decades and now boasts a workforce of almost 1,000 employees across 13 global offices.

Ross Video was founded in 1974 by its namesake, John Ross, a former engineer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Flying down the St. Lawrence River in his personal plane, Ross identified the town of Iroquois as an optimal location for the business. After selling his plane for \$3,500 of starting capital, Ross set up a small production facility in a local strip mall. In 1982, having outgrown the original location, Ross built a brand new 10,000-square-foot production facility. Over the years, this facility has expanded several times—in 1999, 2013, and again in 2019. The firm is already looking for ways to continue expanding, despite not having completed its most recent renovation.

“We can’t expand the building fast enough,” says Senior Vice-President of Manufacturing and Services Jeff Poapst.

In 2005, John Ross transferred ownership of Ross Video to his son, David Ross. John’s leadership built a strong and stable company, and David’s leadership continues to build on that legacy by pursuing aggressive growth and expansion. With a high reinvestment rate, the firm has grown organically through

acquisitions, earning David the Ottawa Business Journal's 2016 CEO of the Year award. The firm has seen 27 years of consecutive exponential growth, with its strongest growth occurring within the last decade—Ross Video grew by 20.5 percent last year and is on track to grow by 17 percent this year. Since 2009, Ross Video has acquired 14 smaller companies that have allowed the firm to round out its live broadcast portfolio. The first acquisition was of Media Refinery, a Dutch graphics company and world leader in on-screen graphics. Today, this subsidiary alone generates 35 percent of total revenue and enables Ross Video to service large clients such as high-profile award shows and a majority of NFL stadiums.

Ross Video's product line spans over 600 different products across 18 product lines. The company supplies comprehensive solutions for live video productions, including production equipment, broadcast infrastructure, and software. One of its most notable products is the openGear® box, an open-protocol signal processor that allows for the use of non-proprietary circuit boards from specialty production software companies. Through a partnership of 80 other circuit board manufacturers, this frame allows customers to use what they need without the constraints of incompatible hardware. For this product, Ross Video received a Technology and Engineering Emmy Award in 2015.

Ross Video's extensive product line services a diverse range of industries in addition to television networks. The firm supplies equipment for a wide range of applications, including live venues production, virtual studio production, government broadcasting, education, and house of worship production. Ross Video has even supplied its products to technology firms like Google and Facebook, which are also beginning to branch into video production for things like in-house advertising and live video streaming. A new opportunity for Ross Video is professional e-sports (competitive video gaming), which requires large stadium video production and live streaming.

This diversity in product applications smooths out seasonality effects but also creates a competitive business environment. Ross Video faces competition from both large video production conglomerates and small specialized businesses. The firm's management realizes that it won't always be able to compete on price, so it focuses on being a quality and innovation leader. Reinvesting a large portion of profits into research and development, Ross Video builds an average of eight new prototyped products each week. The company's research and development function is centered in a dedicated facility in Ottawa that employs almost 300 workers. The firm has additional R&D staff distributed globally including in Virginia, California, Utah, Australia, the Netherlands, the UK, and more. In August of 2019, the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) awarded Ross Video up to \$5 million in research and development funding through its Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP); this is the largest research funding agreement that the NRC has issued to a Canadian business to date.

Poapst claims that Ross Video wouldn't be able to build nearly as many prototypes if it outsourced its manufacturing, due to the extra costs and latencies outsourcing introduces. The firm benefits by having the research and development team so close to production.

With such a strong focus on innovation and acquisition, Ross Video has found itself on the leading edge in various areas of live video technology, and this has translated into remarkable revenue growth. One example of this innovation is the firm's high-efficiency 4K routing systems, which were introduced two years

ago and have exceeded initial sales forecasts. To promote its innovations, Ross Video attends over 100 industry trade shows per year. For its largest trade show, the National Association of Broadcasters tradeshow in Las Vegas, Ross Video has a 10,000-square-foot display and brings over 100 employees.

All of this growth means that Ross Video's manufacturing facility is tight for space, despite ongoing expansions. All manufacturing is done in Canada, so the production of acquired products is often moved to the Iroquois facility – a stark contrast from the decisions of many firms to move their electronics manufacturing operations offshore. The facility has implemented lean manufacturing practices to free up space and reduce product lead times. To remain innovative, Ross Video keeps its production process modern and efficient. It is currently in the process of retrofitting outdated machinery to maintain consistent production quality. The firm makes use of automation wherever possible for processes such as printed circuit board assembly and quality control. In 2018, Ross Video produced 110,000 circuit boards, and it will likely produce more in future years to match the company's growth. The firm also implemented a parts tracking system that allows access to an individual part's detailed production data simply by scanning its barcode.

Ross Video's labour force contains roughly 820 workers, 500 of whom are located in Canada. However, given the firm's strong expansion, it is looking to continuously grow its workforce and has nearly 50 job vacancies. Unlike many other Ontario manufacturers, Ross Video has not had significant difficulty recruiting skilled workers, aside from certain specialty positions. Many workers are attracted to the company because of its reputation for investing heavily in its workforce. In addition to a competitive salary and benefits package, the firm offers a variety of perks, including a flexible working environment, opportunities for professional growth and development, and personal wellness allowances. Management knows that the company's success is driven by the quality of its workforce and therefore makes these investments to attract and retain top talent and continuously improve productivity.

Ross Video's management is well aware of the changing trends in live broadcasting, particularly those driven by evolving media consumption habits and an increase in media digitization. By staying ahead of the curve with a keen market insight and extensive research and development, Ross Video is sure to ride the momentum of its recent success for years to come.