



AUDIO VISUAL

Lights, sound and vision is a major component and cost of any event. Yet so often it is not consciously seen. We know it's there, but does the audience really appreciate the quality, or how hard it was to make the sound seem normal in a space that did not lend itself to that?

Does the audience understand what has been done with lighting to create the feel and mood the room has and do the conference participants really appreciate the skill and that went into fixing the Powerpoint deck 30 minutes prior to doors opening and speakers heading to stage?

The answer to all of the above, in my experience, is a resounding no for the most part. We see the AV and really, the only time we comment on it, is when something goes wrong.

Many years ago, I watched a young performer hand the AV tech an unmarked CD. The tech asked what track she wanted and for any special notes or requests. Her reply was, "it's not rocket science just play the CD" and flounced onto stage. The tech inserted the CD and at the appropriate moment hit play. The track started to play and a look of panic came over the performer as she realised it was the wrong track. She stopped and loudly stated "how hard is it to play a CD. It's the next track" and then belittled him publicly as he advanced the CD and pressed play. Her sound was not great that day.

The moral to the story is, techs are really important, so don't piss them off.

The flip side to that, was arriving at an indoor/outdoor event for bump in on a day that was definitely going to weather me. I looked at the sky, took the tech director aside and discussed what we were going to do. The result was completely redesigning the event on the fly and do a very different install than originally discussed.

Not one word of complaint was uttered. Every member of that team worked their butts off to make it happen, improvising and offering suggestions on the fly.

The result was a flexible AV system, one could never have pulled off without the help, knowledge and understanding of that amazing crew.

The big question that always comes up is, do you use the inhouse AV team or do you bring in your preferred team?

The inhouse team always has the ability to provide a cheaper tech solution. They own the gear and can literally give it away. That does not mean you will get a better job. Just a cheaper one and sometimes that is a false saving. On three separate events I was forced to use the inhouse technical supplier in a venue, due to budget and on advice from the client. All three times I regretted doing that. The level of expertise just was not there and yes they "knew the room", but the gear and the operators just weren't up to scratch.

You really do get what you pay for with AV. When the lighting operator looks at you in panic, and explains he does not know how to program the lights, he just knows how to push the "enter" button to make them go, you wonder at the cost for that operator and know why you pay that little bit more with the guys you want to use.

I think of it now as insurance. I pay more, but I get peace of mind. I can walk in and throw curve balls at the tech team and they look at me, wince and get on with the job of making it happen. They instill confidence in me and therefore in my client.

I do hasten to add, that not all inhouse tech companies are the same, or as described above. It really depends on the venue, the team in that venue and how busy and important the venue is in the scheme of that tech company. But on the whole, I find bringing in my own team, who know me and what I need/want and can deliver that seamlessly, works better for me. It's just another element to the event I don't need to worry or think about.

So my advice with tech is, use the team you like and if that means paying a little extra, either talk to them about it, or suck it up and call it - tech insurance policy and know that at the end of the day your brand and your client will be happy. Because when the shit hits the fan, you want your team on site and not some random tech, telling you he does not know how to fix the lights, he just knows how to press enter!

Thank you, Marty, Dave & Luke you guys rock!