

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT AUDIO VISUAL SERVICES

Why are the charges so high?

As the number of high-tech, computer-based presentations has grown, so too have the costs to support them. Presentation software such as PowerPoint has enabled speakers to craft much more visually appealing presentations with less time and effort. Speakers have become more comfortable using this technology, and audiences are coming to expect that speakers will employ PowerPoint in their presentations. Audiences are often underwhelmed when speakers trot out an overhead projector and some transparencies.

Despite the superiority of computer presentations to older technologies, the infrastructure costs are significantly higher. Rental costs for LCD projectors are significantly higher than for overhead projectors and the like, and LCD projectors require more technical support, resulting in higher labor costs as well.

What can association leaders do to control AV costs?

Planning is by far the most important aspect of cost control. Leadership can take several steps to control costs:

- Establish a relationship with a trusted vendor. Use them not only for pricing, but also as a technical advisor.
- Coordinate speakers with similar technical needs in the same rooms. This seems like an obvious solution, but it can be challenging if speakers do not share their needs with you in a timely fashion.
- Support your staff's speaker policies. If a speaker comes to you complaining that the staff won't allow his or her PowerPoint presentation because it was submitted the day before the conference, explain to the speaker that the deadlines allow for cost-effective planning. Last-minute submissions will seriously impact the meeting budget.
- Consider whether a projected presentation is really necessary. Speakers sometimes use PowerPoint when it is not really necessary. Often a successful conference can be achieved with more interactive, discussion-oriented workshops.

Is there an alternative to the hotel-provided AV vendor?

Yes. Before soliciting bids from outside audio visual companies for your AV services; however, check your hotel contract. If you choose to use an outside vendor, you may need to negotiate this in your hotel contract to avoid incurring additional charges.

When soliciting bids, ask for at least three client references for events similar in size and contact them. AV companies have a vested interest in establishing a long-term relationship, which should result in more responsive service, greater flexibility, and greater knowledge of your association's unique needs.

Planning your AV Presentation

- Determining Needs
What is the object of the event (awards presentation, motivational speech, training session, other)?
- Compile a list of audiovisual needs of each individual presenter (computer projection, graphics, slides).
- What is your audio visual budget?

Site Selection Considerations

- Will the room capacity accommodate the event's AV needs?
- Will noise bleed through from adjoining rooms?
- Can a speaker preparation area be provided?

Request for Proposal

- Communicate clearly the purpose of the event.
- Provide audience size (large audiences require image magnification and more powerful audio systems).
- Provide all event information, including date and location.
- Set a response deadline.

The Selection Process

- Does the company simply rent equipment or do they provide production services?

- Ask for at least three client references for events similar in size and contact them.
- How are costs calculated? Does the price include insurance, rehearsals, security, labor rates, local and state taxes and union considerations?
- What is the cancellation policy?
- What support will be provided for maintenance problems?
- Who is responsible for lost, damaged or stolen equipment?
- Can last-minute equipment demands be met? What are the additional costs?
- Can the supplier mass produce tapes of the event for distribution?

This information is excerpted from the brochure "FAQs about Audio Visual Services" by the International Association of Association Management Companies (IAAMC).