

The Best Laid Plans . . . The Trials & Tribulations of Audio/Video Presentations

In preparation for an event, whether it be a business meeting presentation, a slideshow or playlist at wedding, it takes a considerable amount of time to put things together. There is fine tuning along the way to get things exactly the way you want them to be, moving a song here or a slide there. The big day finally arrives and with anticipation you prepare to launch your hard work for the world to see and what happens? The laptop doesn't connect with the projector or your playlist is incompatible. As professionals in the event management industry we see these struggles from time to time. Because of that we often take a proactive approach with our clients so that potential problems are addressed beforehand, and contingency plans are made.

Let's start with the venue itself. When searching for a venue to hold your event or meeting you need to consider what is available for what it is you are trying to do. For example, while most hotels and conference centers have space with tables and chairs along with catering options, they often charge additional fees for projectors, screens, microphones, etc. If you are planning to have a presentation, it is important to confirm pricing and availability beforehand. Keep in mind, in these types of environments there is often more than one meeting space, but not enough projectors or screens to go around for everyone. First come, first serve and the highest bidder often get what it is they need. At the Estate at Elk Point we include audio/video in our site fee. You are welcome to use it if you need it.

If using a projector, don't forget to bring a device that can connect to it. Not all laptops or tablets are compatible with all projectors. Also, bring cables. Not all laptops and projectors have VGA, Bluetooth or HDMI capability. Not all projectors are connected to a sound system. If you are trying to run a slide show or video that has sound be prepared with external speakers or bring a cable that can connect to the sound system. If using the projector at the Estate at Elk Point it is connected to the sound system via an external cable that would connect to your device. If you have your own projector, make sure it is setup somewhere near a power source and within range of the screen. Finding adequate space can sometimes be difficult as well. Getting the projector in focus depending on positioning can be an issue. There may not be room on the main table, so a separate table may be needed. There are many things to consider with the self-projector option.

One reason we at the Estate at Elk Point got away from allowing self or outside DJ's at our venue was because of the problems that came with trying to run a playlist and be a Master of Ceremonies (MC) during weddings or events. Imagine, the person responsible for this is constantly running between their device and wherever the action is to hit a cue within a song at just the right time and try to keep the audience engaged. If planning a playlist, once again please make sure you are using a compatible device and using a compatible format with the sound system at the venue. I would not recommend this option for weddings. It works much better if the music is just allowed to play in the background throughout the entirety of the event. Also, one suggestion from all event venues if choosing this option. Bring your own power cord. We do not have one available that you can use. Yes, no matter how good your device is it is going to run out of power before the end of the event.

I always recommend visiting the venue or checking out the room prior to the event or presentation. By doing so it gives the presenter or planner an idea of what to expect. This will also let you know if microphones will be needed. The use of microphones can be a touchy subject. Many speakers, mostly ministers or officiants, seem to think they are loud enough without using a microphone. Again, experience shows this is seldom the case. As the venue we often receive complaints from guests after a wedding ceremony that they could not hear the officiant or the vows between the couple. This is 99.9% of the time a case of choosing not to use a microphone. When using microphones, especially cordless one's, always ask if it has fresh batteries. It is never fun when a microphone goes out during a speech. It is also important to test the microphone prior to using it. While you may not think a quick volume and level test is important if you are just speaking into it, from a venue perspective we want to get those levels setup correctly, so we do not have problems during your event or presentation. Microphones can be expensive and sensitive. One side note, if you are planning to be "that guy" and do the "mic drop" be prepared to pay for the cost of replacing that microphone.

Going back to our playlist example a few paragraphs back it is important to confirm that your venue have suitable speakers available for your event or presentation. Most venue's have speakers that are suitable for conferences or presentations. However, for a wedding or tradeshow it may be best to hire a DJ or use the one provided by the venue. If you are trying to pump through "bumping" music through the house speakers I can guarantee it is going to sound like garbage. Also, some venue's such as the Estate at Elk Point have indoor and outdoor space, often used in conjunction with one another. Make sure your venue has the ability to project sound inside, outside or both if you are planning to use those types of spaces. Fortunately, the Estate at Elk Point does have indoor and outdoor speakers just for this type of situation.

Because of cost we do not see too many live bands or musicians utilized by our clients. However, if choosing to do so it is absolutely imperative that there be communication with the venue. Not all venues have a sound system available that can accommodate musicians, singers or live bands. It is our policy at the Estate at Elk Point that musicians, singers or live bands utilize their own sound systems separate from the venue.

You hear this suggestion often and we will repeat it here. When it comes to preparing your presentation; backup, backup, backup. If using a laptop, backup the presentation or file onto a flash drive or another device. If using a power point presentation, print out copies for the audience in case the laptop and projector fail to pair to one another that day. Prepare for the worst but hope for the best.

Your venue or conference center does work hard to try and alleviate many of these issues from happening. We do tend to carry extra cables, batteries, projectors, etc. in preparation of problems that may arise. We will also usually try to either meet with the presenter beforehand or try to let them in early to get setup and ensure everything is working and/or compatible prior to the presentation. Because the venue is going to take the hit if things do not work, no matter whose

fault it may actually be, we are very flexible in trying to ensure that your event goes off flawlessly. If things go well, we hope that you will come back and consider using the venue for future events. If things do not go well, we hope that we have done enough to help provide solutions that help alleviate future presentation problems. All in all, we try to set proper expectations beforehand so that our clients know what to expect, or prepare for, prior to booking the venue.