

YOUR TRUSTED PARTNER IN CREATING
INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES



Budgeting & Booking A/v

For Meetings and Conferences



[DCEPRODUCTIONS.COM](https://dceproductions.com)

The Challenge

You've been asked to manage an offsite meeting or corporate event using hotel meeting space. You've narrowed it down to a couple of venues, and now it's time to pick one and sign a contract.

The hotel salesperson has introduced you to "your A/V contact." But did you know that, most of the time, hotel A/V services are actually provided by a third-party company, only affiliated with the hotel through a commission-based partnership?

Understanding in advance who is responsible for what, and getting clear pricing for all the A/V and technical services you need, should ideally happen before you sign.



Budget Implications of In-house AV vs. Independent AV Production Company

It's easy to assume an in-house A/V company would be better suited to handle all of your A/V requirements. "It's just easy," is a common reason we hear for booking with the hotel partner. But at what cost? And is it really easier than working with a consistent team from one event to the next? This quick solutions guide is designed to help you with some of the key considerations every event manager should address and resolve as early in the event planning process as possible.

A/V SERVICES



Your Own A/V Partner

The right to use of your own A/V vendor is something you can and should always specify in your hotel agreements. Whether you opt to use a specific vendor or not, including this right allows you the flexibility to choose. Some venues will imply, or try and convince you of, exclusivity for A/V services however this is often not the case, or a negotiable term prior to signing a contract.

Responsiveness and Collaboration

An unfortunate reality of many in-house A/V companies is poor communication, especially during the planning phase of your event. Depending on the venue, it's not unusual for requests for pricing of A/V services to go unanswered for weeks at a time.

Your own A/V vendor should offer a broader range of resources including pre-show planning and collaboration with you and your co-workers.

Know Your Team

When booking A/V through an in-house vendor, the reality is you likely won't know who's supporting you until the day of your event. It's always a bit of a toss-up, and not every tech working in-house is strong at what they do.

A good A/V partner will introduce you to your actual show lead well in advance. Independent production companies tend to bring a higher level of professionalism, and the better ones will assign a dedicated Customer Success Manager to support you throughout the planning process.

It's also common to see different A/V techs each day of your show, especially if it runs long or spans multiple days. Many of those techs may also be working other events in the hotel at the same time.

A/V SERVICES



Day Rates and Time of Day

It is becoming increasingly common to see crew work days range from eight to ten hours. You should confirm the crew/labor day rates and lengths as these vary greatly from city to city.

Likewise, in-house A/V companies are prone to charging overtime labor rates for evenings, nights, early mornings, weekends and holidays. Always get labor rate details in writing to help you avoid excessive overtime labor charges.

Exclusive Services

Some venues try to make certain A/V-related services “exclusive” to the in-house provider such as breakout rooms. Typically, you will pay a premium for an in-house provider to plug power strips into wall outlets in a hotel. Rental charges for extension cords and power strips may even exceed the actual price of buying those items.

Many of these services can be negotiated in your contract before signing. It is fair and reasonable to ask if there are “exclusive service areas” in your negotiation process. These are usually presented as “exclusive services” after you sign, and many times — unless you ask in advance — pricing for such services is not disclosed until you are ready to arrange those details.



SHIPPING, RECEIVING & STORAGE



Shipping and Receiving

It is always smart to understand the venue's shipping and receiving process. We have seen situations where items were shipped to the venue, but the receiving office was closed and not accessible. In addition to the fees you may be charged, you should also negotiate for the venue to staff around your expected arrival and departure times, so your deliverables are easy to retrieve when you need them.

Dedicated Dock/Storage Space

If you are hosting a significant event, you should ask for and expect some storage space. It's becoming increasingly common for venues to deny overnight truck parking or storage of equipment in service hallways. Make sure to negotiate space to securely store equipment before signing a contract.

Drayage rates

It's becoming more and more common for a venue to charge you a shipping and receiving fee for items shipped to the venue on your behalf. These are negotiable charges that you should look to include in your contracts. Especially if you are receiving A/V equipment or printed materials as most of these charges are based on weight.



POWER



Bulk Power

The venue is typically going to charge you for a large distribution of power. There are a couple things to know about power. First, you may get charged an engineering fee. This is typically a labor charge for an electrician to tap into the power.

The other variable is distribution amps. These are the physical devices placed in the room. This is something you will want to aggressively negotiate before you sign your contract. It is usually a service of the hotel directly and something you can see sizable savings on.

Use of Wall Outlets

As silly as this seems, you should include in your RFP that you do not pay for access to wall outlets. It has become increasingly common that not only are events paying for use of a wall outlet; they are also being required to use extension cords and power strips from the venue at excessive rates, especially in breakout rooms.

Rates

Before you sign your contract, make sure the venue has provided you with all their rates for power and power-related services before you sign. All these values are typically direct hotel fees and can usually be reduced or eliminated before you sign.

INTERNET



Complimentary Wi-Fi

You should expect to pay for dedicated conference wi-fi access. However, many venues will provide “basic wi-fi” access if you negotiate it. This can often save your event significant expenses if all you need is for your attendees to check e-mail.

Hardlines

If you have any virtual stream out or stream in, a minimum of 10mb up and down hardline is necessary for a stable internet connection. The rates for hardlines vary dramatically, but a fair price to pay for a hard line is \$175 per hardline for 10mb up and down. If you need more speed than that, you will pay for it, but most of what you may need from the internet can be accomplished with 10mb up and down. If you know you are going to need multiple hardlines, negotiate your per line price.

Bandwidth

Dedicated bandwidth is the biggest expense for internet access. A medium-sized conference (125+) will need 75 mb up and down. A large event (250+) will need 100-150mb. You should expect a hefty bill for big bandwidth needs. This is an area you should plan to aggressively negotiate before you sign a contract. We have seen venues offer 40-50% discounts when the fate of the contract hangs on the internet.

Custom SSIDs

Wireless networks with a conference-specific name is an area of pure profit for the venue. It takes about 2 minutes to add an SSID to a system, and you are typically going to be charged \$250-\$500 or more for the service. If you are buying significant internet service, it's fair to ask for custom SSIDs for little to no cost.



Event production partners who bring your vision to life!

DCE is your partner in event production. Our goal is to understand your company's culture and business objectives, and translate them into a well-executed live, virtual, or hybrid event. You provide the vision, and we provide agnostic technology solutions and expertise so your event is smooth, successful, and memorable.

From start to finish, our team integrates event management, video production, and creative services to deliver a cohesive experience that engages your audience and elevates your brand. Customized white-glove service is all we know, and digital solutions are in our DNA.



The DCE Difference

Since 2012, we have brought events to life in person and online by combining AV, event management, video production, and creative services into one seamless experience. What sets us apart is how we work. We listen carefully, communicate clearly, and stay fully involved from start to finish because your event matters to us.

When you work with us, you get more than a service provider—you get a partner who cares as much as you do. We make your life easier by anticipating challenges, solving problems together, and keeping every promise. We take pride in great work and a positive, collaborative process. That commitment drives everything we do and defines the DCE experience.



Your vision, our mission.

At DCE, we believe the best events start with trust and a shared vision. That's why we focus on building real partnerships with our clients. Your goals shape everything we do. From the first conversation to the final cue, we're right there with you—listening, planning, and guiding every step of the way. With years of experience in event design and production, we know how to bring big ideas to life. We mix creativity with technical know-how and a serious attention to detail to make sure your event doesn't just run smoothly—it makes an impact.

Comprehensive Solutions, All in One Place

We handle the planning, design, and production so everything comes together smoothly. You share the vision—we make it happen.



Event Production

Transforming your vision into successful events with bespoke solutions.



ProVirtual Services

Delivering seamless engagement for any audience, anywhere.



Experience Design

Crafting event experiences with our industry experts from start to finish.



DCE Studios

High-impact video production and graphic design services.



DCE Offers Complimentary Hotel Contract Review Service

We've seen our share of hotel contracts over the years and are keenly aware of areas buried in the legalese that can easily cause budget overruns if close attention is not paid in advance.

DCE's Event Management team offers complimentary contract review services. Even if you opt to use another vendor or decide that for your requirements an in-house provider will suffice, let us provide a second set of eyes to help give you peace of mind with your event budget.



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