

## Conference Tips

### Making sure your AV is all right on the night

The provision of Audio Visual (AV) equipment is an essential element for any successful conference and 2 questions are good starting points for planning: what equipment and technical support will ensure a smooth running programme and how much will it cost? Technical equipment for visual projection and sound is advancing at a fast pace and at the same time A-V requirements of conference presentors are changing. To anticipate the A-V requirements of your association conference, your experience of the most recent past conferences serves as a valuable guideline. Do half of the speakers still use overhead projectors or do they all now expect data projectors? Is an internet café desirable or a requirement?

### AV Providers

The Media Facilities Company, Sound & Vision AV Ltd and Visual Services Scotland Ltd all contributed their tips to consider when deciding on AV provision for your conference or event. Pulled together their information provides the following top ten tips:

- 1 Start planning as early as possible.
- 2 What is the size of the audience at each event and how technically minded are they?
- 3 Determine from the venue what equipment is included in the room hire charge. Then, allow a separate budget for any additional audio visual production. Choose your AV supplier on reputation and not budget alone.
- 4 When choosing your venue, consider the ceiling height, blackout capabilities, power supplies and access. AV suppliers work regularly in venues and will be able to advise you on the considerations.
- 5 Allow plenty of time for set-up, rehearsal and de-rigging and check with the venue that the rooms are free for this duration.
- 6 Do you require tailor made presentation slides and graphics? What are the speakers' requirements and experience using AV equipment?
- 7 Is there going to be audience participation? A question and answer session, and interactive voting, award winners approaching/exiting the stage area for example?
- 8 AV can be used as a very powerful marketing tool. It can assist you with projecting a conference image; logos, lighting, signage and should also reflect the image already set by the invites, adverts and brochures.
- 9 Remember that you don't need to know everything – that's why we hire professionals. However, you do need to know what you want!
- 10 Enjoy your event – you may wish to create a permanent record of your event eg video, CD-ROM which will assist you with future events and also is a testament to your success.

### Venues

The venues you use have a different view when it comes to AV provision but they do tend to be on the more practical side. For example, The Hub, Edinburgh's Festival Centre suggests the following: Time is money, for both the venue and the client. In order to save in both these areas:

- Be very clear about what you want to achieve before agreeing to hire equipment

- Use a reputable audio visual supplier who preferably knows the venue
- Liaise closely with the venue to understand the possibilities and the limitations
- Don't get carried away with new technology – keep it appropriate. Size isn't everything!

The events team at the Sheraton Grand Hotel have the following suggestions:

- Plan your AV requirements at the beginning of the conference preparation. Find out what was required at the last event.
- Provide all your event information right from the start ie back projection, translation booths, staging.
- When an exhibition is involved, agree at the beginning a maximum number of exhibitors to avoid over selling and being left with no room at the inn!
- Indicate the budget available for AV provision. This is often left to the last when there is no money left.

Finally, for most people any event is a break from the norm: a change of location, a chance to get a bit creative, meet new people and learn new skills. You're conference audiovisual equipment and technical support must provide a reliable, up-to-date environment that allows your speakers to shine.