

Site Visit

! **Site Visit:** *the opportunity to visit a venue to determine if the location has the logistic and technical requirements for an event or meeting*



A site visit usually happens several months prior to an event, often before a contract is signed. Site visits for corporate events, for example, generally include the meeting planner and production company, but can also include those involved in marketing and hospitality events.

Whenever possible, your production company should be included with your team during a site visit. When you are in the contracting phases with a venue, it is recommended that you ask several questions to avoid unexpected technical challenges and significant charges to your master account. In many cases, identifying and negotiating with the venue on some of these items before signing a contract can save thousands of dollars. The Facility Sales Manager, Convention Services Manager, Engineering/IT Manager, and the in-house AV representative may need to be involved in order to cover all areas of services.

From the production company's perspective, there are two primary decisions made during contracting that are critical to executing an event:

Consider the time

Every event is different, but in general, the production company needs at least 24 hours prior to an event's start for load-in and to run technical tests. If the technology is more complex, or if the client requires rehearsal time, 48-72 hours may be required. A strike also takes a few hours following the conclusion of an event or may be scheduled for the morning of the next day to save overtime charges.

Consider the space

Venue capacity charts indicate the maximum number of attendees the room can hold in various seating configurations. When rear projection is used, there is a guideline for determining how much space the audiovisual and staging will require in the venue:

The One-Third / Two-Thirds Guideline: Find your desired seating configuration on the venue chart. Subtract 1/3rd of the capacity number from the chart to account for the space needed for audiovisual and staging. For example, a venue with a max of 600ppl in theater seating will hold an estimated 400ppl with AV (rear projection) and staging.

The following questions touch on other areas for discussion on a site visit:

Venue/Meeting Rooms

- What is included in the rental of a meeting room? For example, are there additional charges for risers, step units, lecterns, and tables?
- Do you have a room for dead case storage in **close proximity** to the primary venue space if backstage storage is not adequate?
- Have you contracted the appropriate amount of time for your event, inclusive of load-in, rehearsals, show days, and strike time?
- Does your contract indicate a 24-hour hold through the full range of event days? For example, if the meeting ends at 5p on Monday and resumes at 8a on Tuesday, you do not want another group using the space for an evening event on Monday night. (This happens frequently, especially in New York and Chicago, if the hold on the space is not clearly spelled out in the contract.)

Labor

- Does the venue require union labor?
- Does the venue require that their supervisor be available during the load-in/strike?
- Does the venue provide riggers, motors, and lifts? If so, are you **required** to use these in-house services?
- Are there premium rates after certain times of day or on weekends?

Power

- Is the venue able to provide dedicated, isolated, clean power?
- What power is available in the venue? 20amp, 60amp, 100amp? Three-phase power?
- What are the charges for power? Are there additional charges for wall outlet power in breakout rooms?

Audiovisual

- Does the venue have an in-house AV provider?
- Is there a fee if the client brings in an outside production company?
- How is the house audio controlled in a room? What is the quality of the sound? What is the fee?
- How/where are the house lights linked and controlled? Is there a house lights control unit available? Is there a fee, or is it included with the venue rental?
- Does the venue contain permanent rigging?
- Are there CAD drawings of the venue available?
- Is carpet protection required in the venue?

Loading Dock

- Does the venue have a truck-height loading dock?
- Are there any restrictions to accessing the dock during certain hours or days of the week? (i.e. noise/traffic ordinances)
- Is there a freight elevator, or are there only service elevators?

Miscellaneous

- Is there a charge from the shipping department to receive packages?
- Are there discounts for Internet and phone access? In a hotel venue, does this include the meeting spaces as well as the sleeping rooms?
- Are there other groups in the adjacent meeting spaces during your event? (sound, logistic, or security issues) Are any of them your competitors?

For help in developing a request for proposal, please see the RFP PDF on the TEK-Tips page.