

# RENT vs. BUY

## AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT

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# Rent vs. Buy Audio Visual Equipment

When does it make sense for your organization to rent audio visual equipment versus purchasing it? Here are the six things to consider when making this decision, as well as what to look for when choosing an AV supplier.

## Time

Does your staff have the time to research, purchase, get trained on, maintain and store your technology? Chances are, if you are like most organizations, you are running “lean and mean.” So consider the time it takes to properly maintain and manage your AV and computer inventory. If you rent, that time is given back to your staff to focus on your core business needs.

## Short-term Use

Do you need this equipment for a day, week or month? Short-term uses such as training, research projects, trade shows, special events, or meetings are great reasons to rent equipment from a local source. In addition, if you need more equipment than originally estimated, a local AV organization can provide you with last-minute equipment.

## Total Cost of Ownership

- With a purchase arrangement you need to consider not only the outlay of the investment to purchase the equipment but also the storage, maintenance, accessories and insurance required to keep the inventory on hand. Purchasing will only make sense if you are presenting on a regular basis and your equipment needs will not change from event to event.
  - If you participate in national meetings or trade shows, then you need to consider the cost of crating, shipping to and from the event, and drayage
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while there. You also need to have a contingency plan for gear if your equipment arrives damaged or is stolen.

- You will also need to have a plan for retiring your old equipment, reselling or disposing of it properly, and replacing it with current technology. Based on the speed of technological advances in the AV industry, the chances are your equipment will become obsolete before it becomes inoperable.

### Equipment Failure

What do you do if the equipment fails? If you own your equipment, you will need to have backup systems, which requires more outlay of funds that are coming out of your operating budget. Most AV rental companies provide spares at little or no cost.

### Keeping up with Technological Demands

Every 18-36 months some new technological enhancement is coming out that is an improvement over the previous generation. Does your organization have the time to continually monitor the technology market to keep up with the latest advances? Will you be in a position financially to purchase emerging technologies as they are developed and released?

### Depreciation and Tax Benefits

Ownership does lend itself to these benefits, but if you depreciate over 3-5 years, the equipment will need to stay within your organization for that period of time. Also, based on the accounting practices used at your company, it may be advantageous to rent, as opposed to having the purchases come out of your capital budget.

### Benefits of Renting

- **Maximum Flexibility:** You will receive the right customized equipment to meet your specifications, including the latest technology options.
  - **Increased efficiency:** You don't have to pull out the manual each time you set up the equipment or tear it down. Certified, trained technicians,
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with experience in live events, and trouble-shooting problems, will set up, monitor and strike AV equipment.

- **Budgetary relief:** You don't have to consider the outlay of cash, finance rates, or a cap-ex hit. All you have to do is pick up the phone and place your order.
- **High Level of Customer Support:** 24/7 telephone tech support to diagnose the problem, and if all else fails, the provision for a back-up system within minutes if the technician is onsite or within a reasonable period of time if the tech is off site.
- **Professionally Tested, Maintained, and Monitored Equipment**
- **Technology advances are brought to you, as opposed to having to find them on your own:** AV companies are working with meeting professionals all the time and monitoring the attendees' needs. They are always looking for ways that emerging technologies can improve events.

Now that you have decided to rent, how do you go about choosing the right audio visual company for your meeting or event? Key items to consider are price, value, service, experience, and the equipment they carry.

During the last few years, a new wave of AV technology has hit the market, intended to improve the event attendee's experience. With all of these choices, as well as decision criteria stated earlier, how do you determine which AV organizations are best equipped to provide you with the right solution when renting audio visual equipment?

Here is a checklist to help you sort through the various organizations that offer AV and choose the right one for your event:

**Look at the Stability of the Organization.** Ideally, you want to work with a company that has been in business for at least 10 years. Here are some other items to consider:

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- Expansive Customer List
- Number of Employees, their roles and responsibilities
- Annual Revenue
- Longevity of the Leadership Team

**Vet Them.** Make sure you choose an AV company that has a proven track record in providing the type of equipment and services you need. Check out the following:

- Take a Tour of the Facility
- Talk to the C-Level Executives
- Ask for References and call them
- Look at Testimonials on their Website or other Social Channels

**Single Source AV Provider.** Give the Audio Visual organization a complete listing of your needs and see if they have the inventory to match them. Ensure the AV Company you contract with will manage and be responsible for any questions or issues that arise on-site during the meeting.

**Look at the Total Support Package.**

- How fast do they return your calls and emails?
- Do they resolve client issues quickly and completely?
- Do they provide project management services?

Their website should contain best practices, blogs, and case studies, as well as other information about the organization.

**Team Player.** The event audio visual rental company needs to work well with the meeting planner, venue, speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors. With this many partners involved in the event experience, it is vital that your AV partner

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communicate well and have a "can do" attitude during the planning and execution process.

**On-site Security System Protocol.** Whether you rent iPads, audience response applications, or wireless network array systems, it is important that the AV firm have a method of keeping track of their equipment and ensure the network is secure for attendees to access the Internet.

**Available on-site Assistance, at a moment's notice.** It is important that AV project managers and technicians be on-site to address any problems, changes, or concerns as they occur.

SmartSource Rentals is the largest Total Technology Solutions provider in the United States with 21 locations to serve you! We can meet all 7 criteria and are most interested in earning your business. Give us a call at 800-888-8686 to learn more about how we can help you be successful with your next event!

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