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PROJECTION

AUDIO VISUAL

CONTROL

# ***NAVIGATING THE AUDIO VISUAL QUOTE MINEFIELD***

*An advice sheet from APi Communications*

SOUND

RELIABILITY

INDUCTION LOOPS

BESPOKE SOLUTIONS



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Let's face it, when you are presented with a stack of quotes from companies trying to sell you your new sound, projection or full audio visual system, you may feel like you need another expert just to help you decipher what is on offer.

These are some of the ways customers try to navigate through this issue:

### **OPTION 1**

*'We gave them all a list of equipment that we need, it ought to be simple.'*

### **PROBLEM**

This leaves too much to interpretation of how it will go together, and assumes that you thought of everything. You have no comeback with the supplier if there is something missing.

### **OPTION 2**

*'But don't we just go with the cheapest option, they are all much the same aren't they?'*

### **PROBLEM**

There is a vast range of equipment out there, with prices and quality to match. If it all comes down to price, suppliers will be tempted to pick inferior equipment anxious to win the deal, rather than tried and tested equipment that will stand the test of time.

### **OPTION 3**

*'Why don't we just pick one quote and take the prices off their list of equipment, then the other potential suppliers can quote from that list.'*

### **PROBLEM**

The same as option 1 except the blame for getting it wrong afterwards now rests on the supplier who put the original list together, they may not have done the job right in the first place.

## APi Communications' Advice

- Write a specification in your own words; be specific and say exactly what you are going to use it for, who will be using it, make a list of your key functions and needs.
- If you have any preferences, record these too, e.g. 'We would like a central screen rather than one off to the side; we don't want too many wires, so can everything be wireless?'
- You are more likely to get what you need by suggesting the functions you need, then you can hold suppliers to account if these aren't delivered.
- Don't worry about technical language, in fact the simpler your explanations, the easier they are to interpret.
- One suggestion is to have a list of statements in the specification eg. 'It must be capable of...'  
or 'we need to be able to....'
- You can also have a list of essential things, and desirable things and ask for the quote to reflect the bare minimum and also the 'dream system'. After all, if you are going to go through this process you want to get the best system which will serve your growing organisation for a long time.
- Go and have a look at similar projects, or at least ask the customer how the installation went. Or more importantly, what it is like to live with the system?

What would they have done differently if they were starting again?

Go onto suppliers websites and look at their testimonials to see what type of project they've done and what their customers said about it.

Ask for more information:

- how it is going to work, will it be easy to use,
- is there training on offer,
- how long is the warranty,
- what breakdown response times are anticipated?
- Some companies offer lease payment terms to spread the cost as an alternative to a one off payment.

Get a performance guarantee in writing that states the system will be compliant with the specification you have produced. In this way you have set the operational needs and boundaries if the supplier agrees that their specification complies then you don't need to understand the fine detail to be confident that a quote when accepted will produce a satisfactory result.

## Action Points

1. Gather together interested parties
2. Agree on the functions required, you may seek advice from a potential supplier in this process.
3. Write your statement of needs/specification.
4. Send it to your suppliers and ask for comments if you like, state that any responses must state compliance to your specification.
5. Invite suppliers for a site survey and find out what they are like, 'How you sell is how you serve' is a good maxim.
6. Wait for the quotes to arrive.
7. Ask for references and photos of past projects, visit a site or two.
8. Ask any additional questions of your preferred suppliers.
9. Make your choice.

In some situations a new audio visual system can open up lots of opportunities for your organisation. Going for a system which is capable of delivering a lot more than your current one may be scary, but if you take the time to get it right it will serve many different groups of users without technical headaches or breakdowns. In some cases it can add to revenue and is therefore a good business decision take time to do the maths.

By following the above pointers, you should feel confident in obtaining quotes for a new audio visual system and be positive when you make the decision on who to appoint.

If you would like APi Communications to assist in putting together a specification for a new audio visual system, or provide a quotation, then contact us on 01392 677668 or send us an email at [info@apicomcommunications.co.uk](mailto:info@apicomcommunications.co.uk)

