

How to get started with Audio Ethics, Inc.

Project Services Agreement (PSA)

The PSA puts you under contract with the Audio Ethics to get the design process moving forward. It makes it official for all others working with the church that Audio Ethics, Inc. will be providing the information that will be used during the construction process. This lets the architect, electrical engineer and general contractor know that it is okay to share information with us about the project and that the information that we generate about the structure for weight loads, electrical requirements, HVAC systems as well as finishes, are to be used in the construction documents.

The PSA lets all other trades know whom the church has selected to design and implement the worship technology for the church. The architect and engineers can now get the answers they need to finish their designs.

The worship and communications systems for the church need to be designed and engineered before CD's (Construction Documents) are completed.

Design Phase

It is at this time that we, with your help, complete the Technology Master Plan for your campus. During this time that we will interview the Pastoral staff and other people that the church has designated to have input on the various technology systems.

In this phase we encourage imagination and thinking beyond what has been possible for your ministry up to this point. We talk about what is possible and what can be achieved using modern communication tools and technology.

Now we need to select a design level:

1. Spoken Word System
2. Music Quality System
3. Concert Level System Design
4. Contract Rider Ready System Design

At this time we start working on designs and developing budgets. We will separate these different aspects of the design, the lighting, the video projection, the video production (editing broadcast and web cast) and the sound. During this time we will define the acoustic requirements that are required to facilitate your worship style and needs.

Phase Development

Most churches will need to implement a phased plan to achieve their goals. We will prioritize the technology systems next. This will allow us to break down the implementation of the various systems according to their importance or need.

To determine the first phase we ask the questions, “What do you want to have on the first Sunday? What are the key elements that define your ministry and what kind of impact do you want to have on that great day of celebration?”

Cost is an important factor to consider. For example, there will never be a time when the structure or electrical work will be cheaper than during construction. Now is the time to put in the infrastructure that will be needed for all of the future technology phases that are to come.

Rigging is also a factor that has a cost associated with installation of technology. Most of the time it is less expensive to go ahead and implement the portions of the technology that require rigging in the first phase.

Taking this design approach will save money. It lays out a plan that can be followed so that the church does not spend money twice to achieve the desired goal.

Systems Sign Off Time

We now have an agreement on the actual gear list and budget for the first phase of the project. There are itemized gear lists and costs, and we can make sure that the products will be available when they are needed. In this global market that we live in just about every system has components from around the world, the manufacturing and delivery of these goods can now be scheduled.

This is also the time that the decision is made on who has the authority to make changes in the budget or gear lists for the church. This is important because one thing that makes a church different from all other types of construction is that a construction project for a church has hundreds and sometime thousands of owners. Everyone wants to feel like they have input and can make changes as the project starts to come to fruition. This is one aspect of working with churches that can cause a great deal of confusion on a job site. It is not good to have multiple people making changes as you go along; in fact it is very expensive and can be avoided by communicating with each other before a decision is made to change something in the design.

Installation Phase

Now the fun starts, you are moving dirt and pouring concrete. Things are starting to become permanent. The ball is rolling and will pick up speed as time moves forward.

The first thing to happen during construction, as far as the technology goes, is the conduit. The under ground conduit is placed and checked. The back boxes or concrete pour boxes will be installed and the floor will be poured. Sometimes depending on construction schedules and types, the platform concrete is poured at this time as well. Then a lot of work has to occur before anything else can happen on the technology side of construction.

After the walls and roof are in place and the general contractor is relatively confident of some security and a dry building, the electrical contractor will get going in a big way. This is when the first piece of technology will be delivered to the job site, the lighting dimmer rack.

All of this has taken about six to eight months depending on extenuating circumstances. Now, schedules start becoming less dependent on weather and uncontrollable things and can be more defined. At this time the wiring and low voltage control wire will be pulled and steel-rigging points will be mounted and secured.

As we come down to the last three months of the project we can get started implementing the hard components. This should not happen

until the job site is secure and dry. Some portions of the technology systems cannot be unboxed until the environment is relatively dust free or it will void the manufacturers warranties. One sign to look for is when the carpet goes in. That is when the hard-core technology installation will start. It is at this time when most pieces of technology can be terminated and connected.

The first line test and electrical tests are now ready to start. The fine-tuning of the systems cannot happen around any of the other trades. The chairs or pews and carpet as well as wall finishes have to be complete before the various systems can be tuned and commissioned.

Testing and tuning

Systems are tested, problems are found and fixed as well as all systems finalized. The sanctuary has to be completed and turned over for tuning with all trades complete and the room finished, especially the vacuuming.

All systems will be tried and proven at this time. The final tuning will not happen until musicians are brought in to start final mic checks and line tests. Now the system is ready for sound check and final lighting focus and final video tweaks. Cameras are tested and balanced, editing systems and web cast systems are checked.

Training

We start training as we are finishing the final tuning and bringing musicians in. We will schedule training with your team so that they have some private time with our trainers before musicians and Pastors are brought in.

A valuable aspect of the training is the line check and sound check. A lot can be learned at this time about the new system and how to set it up. It is good for the church technicians, as well as potential technicians, to be at the first line checks and sound checks.

The first rehearsal can now take place. This is also a very valuable time of training. I highly recommend your top people be shoulder to shoulder with our trainers at this time.

The First Service

We will be with you for your first service to demonstrate how the various systems should be operated. This is also a continuation of the training as there is nothing better than actually being there to answer questions after the first service. We are also there to make sure that if any problems occur that we are there for you.

There will be a break in period both for the congregation as well as staff to get used to the new space. During this time service flow might be tweaked as well as many other routines that have been developed over the years.

Advance Training

I recommend that the church invest in another training in about 4 to 5 months into the new worship space. It is at this time that your people have come up with a list of questions that they did not know to ask in the beginning of training. Make a list, because when a trainer comes back in many times the questions are forgotten. Keeping a notebook in the tech-booth to write them down on is helpful.

It is also very good to give your technical staff on going training, once a year, to keep them up to date with the latest techniques and ideas. There are many conferences across the US that this training takes place. Don't be afraid to cross denominational lines, sometimes we can pick up very good techniques for mixing audio, video and lighting from other ministries that are moving out into the new technologies to facilitate worship.

Preventive Maintenance

This will save the church thousands of dollars in gear replacement and repair. Most technology used today in modern designs have processing; cooling fans, belts and filters. Keeping the filters clean on your projectors and other technology will increase the life span. If you have just finished a new project or a remodel, the dust will be settling for months. It is important to check, clean or change the filters after a few months of occupation in the new space. One should not wait longer than six to eight months to perform the first preventive maintenance on your new system.