

Tips for Specific Types of Vendors

Audio/Visual Requirements

Once you know who your entertainers and speakers are, you can contact them to find out what audio/visual needs they have. For example, most speakers use some form of **visual aid** when delivering their speech and some will want their presentation taped.

Many venues offer some A/V service, either in-house or through an affiliated company. Make sure you understand exactly what is available, and compare it with **your requirements**. Be sure to consider what kind of hi-tech equipment you may need, including Internet access.

Some venues require you to work with their own companies, while others will allow you to bring in your own equipment or hire an outside company to handle it. You'll want to discuss this in advance to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

Make sure you have **good technical support** planned for the day of the event. We've all been to meetings where the moderator couldn't get the VCR to work, or the Power-Point display went blank due to a computer malfunction. Plan a technical run-through to test the setup and function of all equipment as part of your dress rehearsal to avoid any embarrassment.

Photographers

No matter what type of event you are planning, having a photographer record the high-lights is a nice touch. It is also practical as well. If the event is a recurring one, it will be easier to entice previous attendees to return by reminding them through pictures of how much **fun** the event was. Photos from earlier events provide great material for promoting future events on websites and in newspapers, magazines and posters.

TIP: You can also add these photos to your personal portfolio to promote yourself.

Use the same criteria when hiring a photographer as you would with any other supplier. Ask to see examples of previous work and ask for references.

Be sure to specify in the contract exactly **how long** the photographer will be at the event and **how many** rolls of film will be shot for the agreed-upon price. Clearly outline the type of photos you are after (beautiful venue shots, people only, or a mix) and advise the photographer that some of the shots will be used for future promotions.

A photographer should be booked at least **10 months** in advance — or more, if the event takes place during the busy wedding season.

Printers

Almost every event will require some form of print products, from programs, invitations, nametags, poster-sized agendas, day-at-a-glance agendas to promotional materials and handouts. The requirements for the event you are planning are dictated by the event itself. For instance, are there multi-day activities? If so, personal day-at-a-glance agendas (or daily event agendas) are a nice touch for attendees. Does the event require attendees to use a ticket to gain entry?

Each element of a printing process will have an estimated **deadline**. Work with your chosen printer to determine the deadlines. A rough estimate is 1 to 8 weeks if the process runs smoothly. Discuss delivery schedules well in advance, and allow a good month for design and printing of materials if possible. Build this time into your planning schedule to avoid last-minute mailings and missed deadlines.

Most printers can also recommend good **graphic designers**, and some even have them in-house. This is a great option, especially if you're pressed for time, but always ask for and receive a written quote on all printed pieces.

Designing Invitations Yourself

Some event planners enjoy designing the invitations and other printed materials themselves. Doing so allows you the opportunity to show off your creative side and will also be cheaper than hiring a designer. Once the initial software package has been paid for, you will be able to use it over and over again and updates to the package should be relatively inexpensive.

Software such as **Hallmark Card Studio 2005 Deluxe** turns out Hallmark-quality greetings, invitations, banners etc. in minutes.

Hallmark Card Studio 2005 Deluxe

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0001H5W9G/>

There are many more choices of software available. Check with your favorite software supplier or office supplies store or ask around to see what other professionals are using. If you do decide to design and print your own invitations, and perhaps smaller items like name tags, keep in mind that your printed goods should have a consistent look, feel and color.

Coordination with the Suppliers

Prior to the event, ask for one contact at each supplier and touch base with them. Sometimes it's helpful to hold a **vendor meeting**, especially when planning a large event, in order to discuss delivery logistics and any possible interference or conflicts. It just won't do to have your caterer's truck blocked by the sound van in the delivery bay, so coordinating the schedule is a must!

Make sure all vendors have your cell phone and office numbers, and enter their numbers into your phone book for easy reference.

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