

12 Signs

Your “Good Enough”
Audio Visual Partner Is
Costing You Time, Money,
and Confidence

Introduction

When you're already balancing agendas, stakeholders, and shrinking budgets, changing event production partners can feel like one headache too many, even if your current team is only "fine."

But like minor tremors before a major earthquake, those small signs of mediocrity can build into a major disruption—especially when it hits during a high-stakes event.

In **12 Signs Your "Good Enough" Audio Visual Partner Is Costing You Time, Money, and Confidence**, we unpack the subtle—and not so subtle—signals that your "good enough" partner is quietly undermining how well your meetings and events perform.

Read on and discover where weaknesses put you at risk. Then know what to ask a prospective new event production team so it can step in smoothly, minimize stress, and elevate every show you run.



Vague Scope and Missing Audio Visual Specifications

The primary risk to an event's project budget and timeline stems from a lack of technical clarity. To ensure seamless execution and avoid day-of surprises, you must address critical gaps in the current planning phase.

Look out for:



- ☐ No detailed equipment list (models, quantities, placement) tied to each room or segment.
- ☐ Scope language like "standard AV package" without defining screens, mics, playback, power, labor, or rehearsal time.
- ☐ No clear assumptions about session formats, changeovers, or concurrent breakouts.

Ask for:



- ☐ A day-by-day, room-by-room scope that lists exact gear (model or equivalent), quantities, and locations.
- ☐ A written description of how each session type will be supported (keynote, panels, breakouts, workshops, hybrid, poster sessions).
- ☐ A detailed assumptions document that covers the maximum concurrent sessions, changeovers, rehearsal needs, and any expected last-minute additions.

Fuzzy Audio Visual Pricing and Hidden Fees

A primary concern is the absence of a comprehensive cost schedule, which leaves the production vulnerable to unquantified expenses. To avoid “sticker shock” on the final invoice, you’ll need to clarify possible hidden variables and missing line items in the vendor’s pricing structure.

Look out for:



- ☐ One-line “audio visual” pricing with no breakout of gear, labor, freight, and show management.
- ☐ No mention of overtime rules, weekend/holiday premiums, rush fees, or credit card surcharges.
- ☐ Service charges, venue commissions, or required in-house fees not spelled out in writing.

Ask for:



- ☐ An itemized quote that separates equipment, labor, freight, tax, venue fees, and show management/producer fees.
- ☐ Written overtime, weekend/holiday, and rush-rate policies, plus how they will notify you before triggering them.
- ☐ Clear disclosure of any commissions, service fees, in-house markups, and mandatory venue charges.

Weak Show Leadership and a Thin Audio Visual Team

Who's in charge? And who owns the outcome? In audio visual production, good gear needs a strong team behind it. An event's technical success is vulnerable when management roles are fuzzy, and the staffing model can't reliably deliver consistent expertise and coverage.

Look out for:



- ☐ No named show caller/producer or technical director responsible for end-to-end execution.
- ☐ Staffing ratios that look light for number of rooms, session complexity, or show hours.
- ☐ Overreliance on freelancers with no indication of who is core crew vs. "if available."

Ask for:



- ☐ A named show caller/producer and technical director, with short bios and similar-event examples.
- ☐ A staffing plan that shows roles, crew counts per room, and hours on-site for each day.
- ☐ A clear list of core staff vs. freelance positions and who is guaranteed vs. "as available."

No Redundancy or Audio Visual Contingency Planning

When it comes to live events, “hope” is not a technical strategy. To guarantee an uninterrupted experience for both onsite and remote audiences, move beyond a “best-case scenario” mindset. Look for where problems might emerge by addressing specific gaps in redundancy.

Look out for:



- ☐ No backup for key gear (projectors, switchers, recorders, mics, internet, show computers).
- ☐ No documented plan for power failure, presenter no-shows, last-minute hybrid/streaming needs, or weather impacts.
- ☐ Shrugging off risk questions with “we’ll figure it out on show site.”

Ask for:



- ☐ A redundancy plan specifying which elements are N+1 (backup projector, backup switcher, spare mics, backup playback).
- ☐ A written risk and contingency outline for power issues, internet failure, key gear failure, and presenter/content problems.
- ☐ Clarity on where costs for backups and contingencies appear in the budget and how they scale with show size.

Poor Venue and Infrastructure Review

When a vendor treats the venue as an afterthought, the physical reality of the space often clashes with what's presented in the renders. Here are a few ways to introduce and alleviate potential site-specific red flags.

Look out for:



- ☐ Vendor hasn't done (or refuses to do) a site visit for complex programs.
- ☐ No documented understanding of rigging limitations, ceiling heights, power locations, load-in paths, or noise conflicts.
- ☐ No plan for audience sightlines, stage size, access, or ADA requirements.

Ask for:



- ☐ A site-visit commitment (virtual or in-person) for complex or high-value events, with a pre- and post-visit checklist.
- ☐ A brief venue tech summary covering rigging, power, load-in path, noise/sound bleed risks, ceiling heights, and stage options.
- ☐ A diagram showing stage layout, screens, seating, and sightlines for your main spaces.

Audio Visual Goals and Audience Left Out of the Conversation

Beware the “gear-first” vendor. Bells-and-whistles equipment descriptions can muddle the water to the point of losing sight of why the meeting is happening in the first place. Listening for “what the gear can do” can uncover the following:

Look out for:



- ☐ Proposal focused on “cool tech” rather than business outcomes, message clarity, or attendee experience.
- ☐ No discussion of content strategy, run-of-show flow, or how audio visual supports specific KPIs (engagement, sales influence, education).
- ☐ Scenic and technology choices that don’t match the brand, culture, or attendee demographics.

Ask for:



- ☐ A discovery session focused on event goals, success metrics, audience profile, and content style before they draft the proposal.
- ☐ A short creative/technical treatment that explains how scenic, lighting, audio, and video choices support your business outcomes.
- ☐ Options at different investment levels (good/better/best) tied to specific experience and KPI improvements.

Sloppy Communication and a Weak Audio Visual Process

Technical expertise cannot compensate for a lack of organizational discipline. Pay attention to the “soft skills” that determine whether a project will be a collaboration or a constant rescue mission.

Look out for:



- ☐ Slow responses, missed details from previous calls, or constantly changing answers.
- ☐ No standard tools: no production schedule, version-controlled run-of-show, cue sheets, or changelog.
- ☐ Everything handled in ad hoc emails instead of a clear contact tree and meeting cadence.

Ask for:



- ☐ A communication plan: primary contact, escalation path, response-time expectations, and standing meeting cadence.
- ☐ Sample documents (production schedule, run-of-show, cue sheets, content-tracking sheet) showing how they manage details.
- ☐ A change-control process, including how scope changes are documented, approved, and priced.

Budget Overpromising and Under-Scoping

Does that look too good to be true? The adage usually rings true. The following points highlight a “race to the bottom” that often results in a technical disaster on-site. To ensure the offer is sustainable and not a low-ball bid, challenge the vendor to confirm it’s tethered to the project’s actual audio visual requirements.

Look out for:



- ☐ A bid that is dramatically lower than others without a clear explanation of what’s different.
- ☐ “We can do it all” with no conversation about tradeoffs, value engineering, or must-have vs. nice-to-have.
- ☐ No contingency line or guidance on realistic AV spend for your format, venue, and expectations.

Ask for:



- ☐ A side-by-side explanation of what’s included and excluded, especially if their bid is significantly lower than others.
- ☐ A prioritized list of must-haves vs. nice-to-have elements, with clear pricing so you can scale up or down.
- ☐ A recommended contingency percentage and examples of typical overages for events like yours.

Ambiguous Audio Visual Labor Plans and Timelines

Schedules that fit perfectly in a spreadsheet have the potential to fall apart the moment a truck is ten minutes late or a speaker wants to check their slides. Here are a few ways to introduce—and avoid—logistical and labor issues.

Look out for:



- ☐ Load-in and strike times that ignore venue rules, union requirements, or realistic setup needs.
- ☐ No buffer for rehearsals, content checks, or speaker tech checks.
- ☐ Crew hours that assume no breaks, no overtime, and no overlap between rooms or days.

Ask for:



- ☐ A detailed labor schedule that includes setup, rehearsals, show, and strike, with realistic hours and buffers.
- ☐ A load-in/load-out plan aligned with venue rules, dock access, security screening, and union requirements where applicable.
- ☐ A rehearsal and tech-check plan for keynotes, panels, and complex segments, including who must attend.

Ownership Gaps and Unclear Audio Visual Responsibilities

An accountability vacuum can occur when details fall through the production cracks. Here are a few ways to seek out and short-circuit potential logistical and labor issues.

Look out for:



- ☐ No clarity on who owns content collection, playback builds, translation, or recording delivery.
- ☐ Ambiguous responsibilities between venue, in-house AV, and third-party production.
- ☐ No single point of contact empowered to make technical decisions during the show.

Ask for:



- ☐ A responsibilities matrix showing who owns content collection, formatting, playback, translation, captioning, and recording delivery.
- ☐ Clear definitions of what the venue, in-house AV, and third-party production each handle.
- ☐ A named on-site decision-maker empowered to solve technical and show-calling issues in real time.

Limited Experience with Your Audio Visual Format or Scale

Experience matters, and the only way to get it is by doing. But you don't want a production partner "learning on your dime."

Look out for:



- ☐ Few (or no) case studies for similar audience size, show length, or complexity.
- ☐ No references from corporate or association clients at your scale.
- ☐ Vendor seems uncomfortable with hybrid, broadcast-style shows, or regulatory/compliance needs where relevant.

Ask for:



- ☐ At least two or three case studies for events that match your size, format (in-person/hybrid/virtual), and industry, if possible.
- ☐ References from corporate or association clients with similar governance, compliance, or board expectations.
- ☐ A walk-through of how they'd approach your specific format (e.g., multi-track conference, investor day, awards gala).

Missing Risk, Legal, and Data Protections

Liability is real. The “fine print” protects your organization when things go wrong, or when the event is over and you need your data. Look out for and fill in potential missing items.

Look out for:



- ☐ No evidence of appropriate insurance, safety policies, or compliance with venue and corporate requirements.
- ☐ Vague terms around cancellations, force majeure, and rescheduling; penalties heavily one-sided.
- ☐ No clarity on ownership and delivery of recordings, slides, event data, or AI/recording usage rights.

Ask for:



- ☐ Contractual language that should sufficiently cover these essential legal safeguards: proof of insurance, safety policies, and any required certifications that align with your organization and venue.
- ☐ Clear contract language for cancellation, postponement, and force majeure that balances risk fairly.
- ☐ Explicit terms for ownership and permitted use of recordings, slides, AI/translation tools, and attendee data, including delivery timelines and formats.



Get Your Next Event Right

Don't wait for a painful on-site failure to upgrade your audio visual support. Share this guide with your team and mark the signs you're seeing. Then book a quick consultation with us to map out a safer, more strategic plan and flawless execution for an upcoming event.

Contact:

Mark Collins

Director of Business Development

847-224-0616

MarkCollins@StageRightInc.com

BOOK A CONSULTATION

