A Presentation Skills Company

Lights, Camera, Action!

When organizing a large presentation event such as a press conference, shareholder meeting, or corporate function, you need to manage and control the environment through location, audio/visual equipment, seating, lighting, and the presenters. All of these elements can help create *emotion* — the most critical component of your event.

LOCATION

Choose a location that visually and acoustically helps create the mood you want to achieve. When video cameras are used, for example in press situations and large conferences, location becomes particularly crucial. You want a backdrop that is visually interesting but not distracting from the presenter. Also, pay attention to convenience and accessibility.
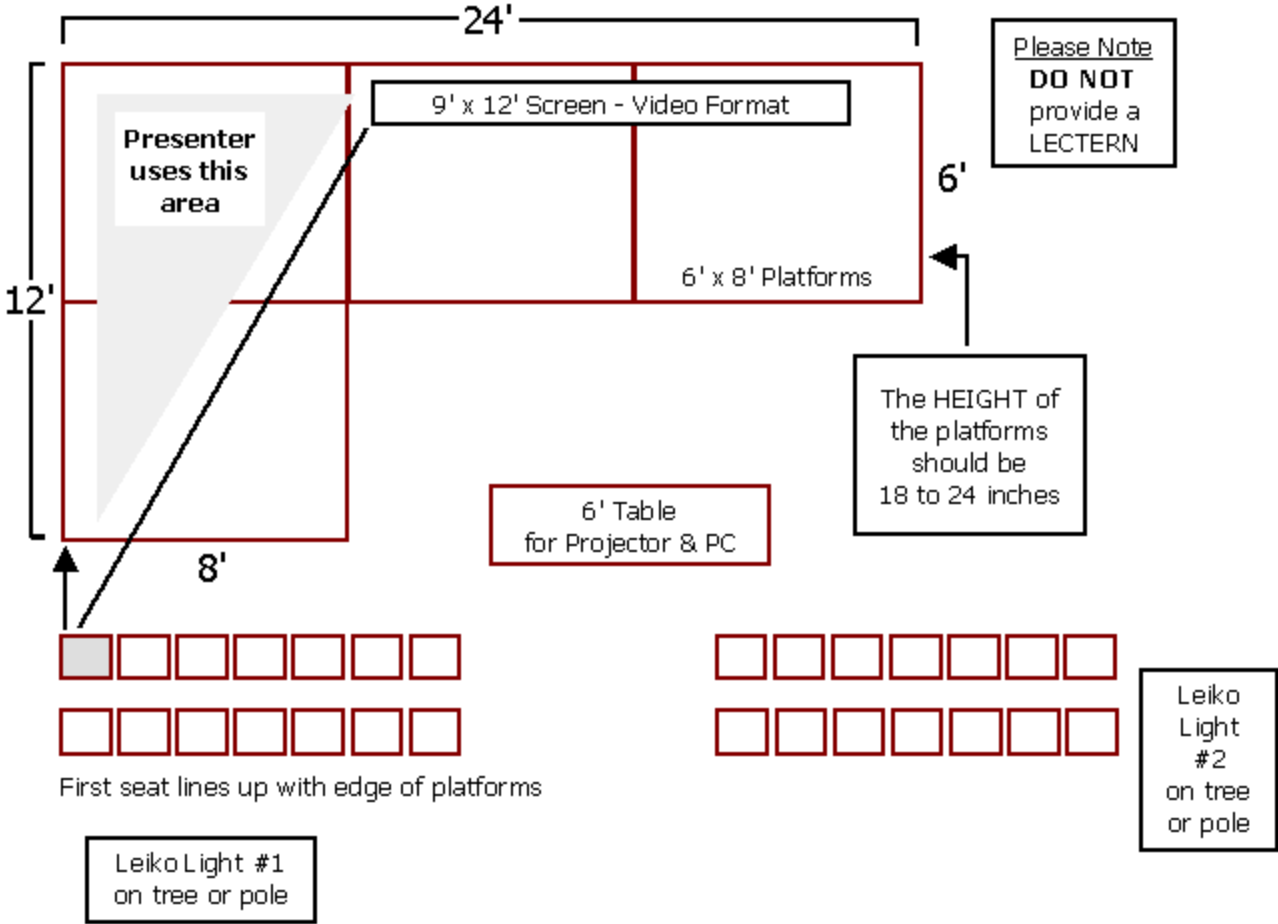
PRESENTERS

The presenters have the most emotional influence over the event. Make sure they practice their presentations and are prepared for questions. Multiple presenters must learn to transition from one to the other smoothly, giving the audience a sense of relationship. When using video, presenters must be aware of camera angles and framing. And finally, make sure speakers are not "upstaged" by the background, clothing, accessories, or those highly-reflective, plastic name badges.

ROOM LAYOUT

Sometimes, audience seating has to be changed to accommodate a better sight line and staging area. Other times, the sight line may force the presenter into a smaller area. If available, use stage platforms (risers) to give the presenter greater visibility.

The diagram on the next page will assist you when arranging room set-ups for large events. The objective is to make sure there is enough room for the presenter to move without blocking the view of the person seated in the first seat (as indicated).

MediaNet Room Layout

Details on Room Layout

Use this diagram as a guide to positioning platforms, lighting and chairs to accommodate the audience. The objective is to make sure there is room for the presenters to move without blocking the view of the person seated in the first seat, as indicated.

The seating shown is *theatre-style*, typically used for half-day events. *Classroom-style* (with tables) should be used for full-day events.

SEATING ISSUES

In the diagram, the position of the *first seat* (shaded box) supports a proper sight line to the edge of the screen as shown by the thick diagonal line. Crossing that line would block the view of the person in that first seat. Keep the first seat lined up with the edge of the platforms, as indicated by the arrow. The seating shown is balanced, but if more chairs are needed, place them to the side *opposite* the presenter. For classroom-style seating, 6-foot or 8-foot tables are typically used. Align the outside edge of the first table with the edge of the platforms, similar to the position of the "first seat" shown in the diagram.

LIGHTING

Lighting is the most crucial element. You can establish a sense of drama and importance by creating an *unequal* distribution of light. The screen should be lit only with the light of the projector. The presentation area (behind the sight line) should have the most light, so that attention is focused on the presenter. The audience needs some light for note taking.

The lighting should focus on the area where the presenter will stand (indicated by the shaded triangle). By positioning Light #1 behind the last row of the audience and Light #2 along the outside, about halfway to the front, *"cross-lighting"* is possible. Mount each light high on a "tree" (pole) and connect a *dimmer* to adjust the light intensity.

Stage lighting (two LEIKO lights positioned on opposite sides of room, as indicated) works best to fill the presentation area with light. Stage lighting is required for audiences of 100 or more. A dimmer switch or cross-fader should accompany the lighting system to control intensity on the presenters.

❑ **Alternative lighting** can be used in place of stage lights. 35mm slide projectors or even standard overhead projectors can be used to cast light directly into the space where the presenter will be.

❑ **Incandescent lighting** (lights that dim) can be controlled by loosening bulbs to eliminate any light on the screen, while others can be dimmed to allow light on the presenters and audience.

❑ **Fluorescent lighting** washes out the screen and should be avoided. If fluorescent lighting is the only option, turn off as many lights as possible around the screen.

In smaller venues, such as a *conference room*, incandescent lighting works best. Avoid fluorescent lights whenever possible, since they generally do not dim. Always create an *unequal* distribution of light. This will keep the audience's eyes on the presenter and minimize other distractions in the room such as wall hangings, plants, and clocks.

DISPLAY SCREEN

A *video format* **screen**, wider than it is tall, is ideal for electronic presentations. For large audiences of 100 or more, a 9' X 12' screen is recommended. For wide-screen formats (16:9, 3:1) a wide-angle projector will be needed. For optimal viewing use a flat, *matte-white*, non-glare screen — preferably one that is *keystone correcting*, although current projectors can handle the keystone correction automatically.

Optionally, the display screen can have a full *dress kit* (side curtains, bottom skirt and top valance). Place the screen on top of any platforms being used, if ceiling height permits.

SOUND

Projected **sound** is important for groups of 100 or more. A *wireless lavaliere* microphone (one that clips to the tie or lapel) allows the most mobility for the presenter. The microphone, or "mic" as it is commonly called, should always be clipped in the center --- not on the lapel --- because most lavaliere microphones pick up sound from only one direction to eliminate background noise. So, if the microphone is on your lapel, when you turn your head away, you'll be less audible.

Uni-directional (vs. omni-directional) mics are best when you don't want anything but the voice from ONE direction picked up by the mic, and this is typical for standard presentations.

If you plan to use a wireless mic for a full-day event, change the battery at lunchtime to ensure quality sound for the rest of the day.

PROJECTION EQUIPMENT

Electronic projection requires an extension cord, power strip and, typically a six-foot table. The *table* in front is for the PC, the projector and any other A/V items.

On electronic projectors, *screen resolutions* range from 1280 x 1024 (SXGA), to 1024 x 768 (XGA), to 800 X 600 (SVGA). Nearly all computers out there are now at least XGA resolution, as are tablets and mobile devices. For computers, the resolution of the electronic projector should match the screen resolution of the PC, in order for the visual to display through the projector and appear on the PC screen at the same time. This offers the presenter a visual prompt at all times and limits the number of glances back to the projected image.

STAGE PLATFORMS

Platforms, or *risers*, give presenters greater visibility. Make sure the ceiling height is 18 feet or higher and free from obstructions, such as low-hanging chandeliers. The platforms in the diagram are 6' x 8', but some locations provide 4' x 8' platforms. The goal is to create an "L" shape, as shown on the diagram, rather than just trying to match the number of platforms indicated. For example, four or five 6' x 8' platforms should be enough to create the layout.

LIMITS OF THE LECTERN

A **lectern** (sometimes referred to as a podium) is *not* preferred. Lecterns restrict body movement, and should be used only if necessary.

If a lectern must be used, make sure the lectern is angled 45-degrees to the audience, adjusted for heights of different speakers, and used sparingly by the presenters.

The microphones found on lecterns tend to be omni-directional (nondirectional), which means they pick up nearby sounds, including your voice. That's why you may hear pages turning or thumping sounds when the hands hit the lectern as you speak into the mic.

If you are picking up sound from vibration while at a lectern, try taping another microphone to the existing microphone on the lectern. Then, turn the lectern mic off and use the other similar-type microphone instead. Any vibration caused by your hands, such as tapping on the sides of the lectern, will be muffled or completely eliminated.