
Is Sound Quality Important In A House Of Worship? And If So How Do You Achieve It?

By Curt Taipale

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Abstract:

As religious leaders look to enhance the experience in their houses of worship, more and more often they consider quality sound as important factor in this mission. They know quality sound can help retain their existing congregation and can turn visitors into members. Yet, without the right knowledge, many houses of worship end up purchasing three sound systems before they get the one they truly want. Following the right steps can help ensure you get the system that's right for your congregation the first time.

“... a quality sound system is NOT a cost. It is an investment in the future of your house of worship, And a tool that equips and enables your leadership to more effectively minister to your congregation”

Curt Taipale

The first step to consider is whether or not to hire a professional. While some planning committees may balk at the price of hiring such an individual, it is important to think about the long-term benefits. For one thing, hiring a trained professional will help you avoid spending money down the line replacing a sound system that did not deliver the necessary quality or features. Having to install and then replace a sound system costs far more money than spending the extra money to do it right the first time. In addition, such a professional can help ensure that the system is adaptable and expandable to fit future needs that the ministry might not have considered.

In designing a system for a building that has not yet been built, it is very important to think about involving a sound consultant early in the process. This allows them to develop a working relationship with the architect. Often, this can lead to overall savings as the audio consultant can steer the architect around some common mistakes before they become part of the building design.

The next step in the process is to think about what the expectations are for the new sound system and what the budget is. It is often the case that the available budget and the expectations of the system do not line up. This is the time for the planning committee to make some tough decisions, and having a sound professional can be very helpful in this part of the process. On a new construction project, a reasonable rule of thumb is to set aside at least 15% of the construction budget for the cost of the sound, video and theatrical lighting systems. Trimming this budget, by definition, trims the equipment list, and many lesson the sound quality if not handled properly.

A seasoned sound system designer has the expertise necessary to trim features, not quality. They know how to make strategic adjustments to the equipment choices that will have the least impact on the sound quality of the finished system. For example, rather than downgrade the quality of the main loudspeakers, a sound system professional might advise using an existing sound mixing

console for some time and replacing it later on, where a main loudspeaker might be more difficult to replace in the future. In this way, a sound system professional can help bring budgets and expectations in line.

Another important issue to take into account in planning is the timeline from ordering to installation. Depending on the complexity of the design requirements and the workload of the designer, the project may take anywhere from three to six weeks just to complete the design phase, and then another several weeks for the installation. It is important to realize this and to allow enough room in the timeline to make sure that the system will be ready when it is needed.

It is also important to remember that the process does not end when the installation is complete. Most houses of worship depend on their volunteer sound operators to deliver a polished, high quality mix at every service. Yet many of these volunteers do not have the necessary training to do so. Thankfully, today there are ample opportunities to train sound team volunteers. This is certainly something to consider channeling funds into annually from the operating budget in order to get the most out of the new sound system.

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