

How Well Do You Know Your AV?

By Bianca Lopez

Good AV sense is crucial behind the scenes for productivity in hospitality spaces. Test your AV literacy to see what areas you need to brush up on, then fill in the blanks with the HFTP Research Center's new Hospitality AV Dictionary.



Although basic audiovisual (AV) technology skills are not akin to rocket science, many hoteliers find their team members struggling in this area. Having basic AV literacy does not mean understanding every element of the complicated rigging and engineering that we see at large events — there are specialized technicians for that. Rather, it pertains to the effective use and maintenance of essential, day-to-day amenities such as projectors, in-room TVs, and digital signage. It goes hand in hand with digital literacy, or the ability to effectively find and use information from sources like your computer or smartphone. If digital literacy is driving a car, then AV literacy is knowing how to look under the hood.

Why AV Literacy?

Effective audiovisual technology in hospitality businesses is crucial for customer satisfaction. Data collected from online customer reviews indicates that many guests tend to be hypervigilant of the presence and quality of AV services, and while most reviews that mention AV terms are favorable, guests are also quick to notice and comment when something goes wrong. Good AV sense is also crucial behind the scenes for productivity in hospitality industry offices and headquarters.

The demand for AV literacy is clearly there, so what exactly is it

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about audiovisual technology that can leave employees feeling unprepared when something minor goes wrong, or make simple configuration tasks seem like a chore? Maybe it's not AV — it's us. Today, computer proficiency in programs such as those in the Microsoft Office Suite is a prerequisite for virtually all office jobs. In fact, many young people are already beginning to use these tools as early as elementary school. The same is not true of AV technology, except for people who study it specifically. A student giving a speech accompanied by a digital slideshow will probably be graded on the content and aesthetics of their presentation, but whether or not they know how to connect the computer to the projector by themselves is unlikely to affect their grade. There are precious few resources designed specifically to teach basic AV skills to the average hospitality professional. As a cumulative result, there are a lot of very intelligent businesspeople who do not think to tighten the screws on their VGA cable before submitting a help request in response to a blurry desktop screen (*a faux pas that I myself once committed*).

Outsourcing the important AV tasks is a reasonable solution for many businesses. Hotels with room

in the budget can partner with an AV vendor to handle both daily and event-specific support services. Alternatively, those who want to keep everything in-house may opt to hire a full-time technician. Specialized AV support technicians are behind the scenes everywhere in the hospitality industry (they have even been called the “roadies” of the event world). But even with the convenience of having these seasoned pros on board, management-level hospitality professionals who are responsible for purchasing AV kits and services, still need to have a strong understanding of the technologies in question. This is for making smart purchasing decisions, understanding price quotes and getting the most out of communication with their AV partners.

For other hotel operators and management companies, it is not always feasible to hire a full-time staff member or outside company to be on call when you and your guests need them. Many businesses in this position have to get creative and self-educate to accomplish pressing AV tasks; any one team member may find themselves helping in the purchase, configuration or operation of AV equipment at some point in their careers, no matter their official title.

AV literacy is not a hospitality industry-specific problem, it is a global one. In a 2012 academic study published by the Spanish Universidad de Huelva, researchers stated that “education on audiovisual communication remains an unexplored issue... in most areas of the world, except for countries such as Australia or Canada. The lack of a precise and agreed definition on what being competent in this field [means] is especially remarkable.”

The hospitality industry is always on the lookout for the next big tech development. It is this hunger for innovation that has caused hotels to invest more technology, and brings thousands of curious stakeholders and innovators from all over the world to HITEC every year. Regardless of whether you work on the management side, the IT department or event planning, you can benefit from honing your basic AV knowledge and skills, and likely already have the background tech knowledge to do so. Few factors can sour a vacation or business event faster than “technical difficulties,” but equipping yourself and your team members with tech-focused problem-solving skills and knowledge can help prevent these situations from arising in the first place. ✨

COMING SOON

HOSPITALITY AV DICTIONARY

The HFTP Americas Research Center is in the process of completing a comprehensive, hospitality-focused AV guide. The resource, available to the industry, features definitions and other instructional content pertaining to common AV equipment used in a hospitality space.

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What's Your AV IQ

Test your AV literacy by taking the quiz below.

1. **DVI and VGA cables look very similar, but have one major difference:**
 - a) DVI only works for computers
 - b) VGA is digital
 - c) VGA has pins that pass video signals, and DVI does not have pins
 - d) DVI is digital
2. **OLED televisions display _____, and QLED televisions display _____.**
 - a) Deeper black tones, stronger brightness
 - b) Stronger brightness, deeper black tones
 - c) Deeper black tones AND stronger brightness, deeper black tones only
 - d) Stronger brightness only, deeper black tones AND stronger brightness
3. **Which of the following types of microphones is NOT suitable for a presentation where the speaker plans on moving around the stage?**
 - a) Lavalier
 - b) Lapel
 - c) Gooseneck
 - d) Headset
4. **Several devices are connected to a HDTV via an HDMI switcher. The screen is displaying a message that says "ERROR: NON-HDCP OUTPUT." Why is this happening?**
 - a) You are on the wrong source channel
 - b) The TV is not HDCP-compliant
 - c) One or more of the devices plugged into the switcher is not HDCP-compliant
 - d) B and C are both possible explanations
5. **"Analog" visual signals produce _____ images**
 - a) Higher quality
 - b) Lower quality
 - c) More color-saturated
 - d) Black and white
6. **A gobo is one of the most common types of _____**
 - a) Spot fixtures
 - b) Backlighting
 - c) Speakers
 - d) Microphones
7. **You have been asked to find a new projector for your business. Price is not an issue. You have narrowed your choice down to three options with different resolutions: 1280x720, 1280x800, and 1920x1080. The projector is mostly used for viewing internet content, but sometimes it is also used to display HD video material. Which is the best option?**
 - a) 1280x720
 - b) 1280x800
 - c) 1920x1080
 - d) The internet content will look the same on all three
 - e) None of these can show internet content without scaling



Answers: d, a, c, b, b, a, b

Check your answers below, then see how your A/V skills measure up:

- **If you got all seven questions right:**
You are a seasoned AV pro.
- **If you got four to six questions right:**
You are ahead of the curve, but can sharpen your skills by staying updated about the latest trends in AV technology.
- **If you got one to three questions right:**
Your AV knowledge is about average.
- **If you did not answer any of the questions correctly:**
Do not fret. HFTP's Hospitality AV Dictionary is coming soon, and can help hospitality professionals of all AV skill levels get up to speed in order to keep up with the changing needs of the hospitality industry. Stay tuned.