

ESSENTIAL GUIDE



STOP WASTING MILLIONS ON AUDIOVISUAL PROJECTS

Learn How to Deliver
Successful AV & ICT
Projects in 7 Easy Steps



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SUMMARY

When I first started out as a designer of audiovisual (AV) and ICT systems, I would get so excited by the technology, and would design solutions using the latest and greatest hardware and software.

However, I was too inexperienced to realise there was much more to it than just the technology.

Fast forward to now as an owner of a successful consulting business with more than 250 projects under my belt, I can say that I truly understand what makes a technology project successful and how it should be delivered.

In this Essential Guide, I look at seven key steps to delivering successful AV and ICT projects, plus I'll share some of the valuable insights I've gained throughout the years.

Some of the things we'll cover include:

- What the core focus should be for every technology project and why
- How to develop a brief of requirements • How to estimate costs before you have a design.
- The value of an independent expert to help you assess technology options.
- What to focus on when developing your concept designs
- The importance of integration and coordination of your technology designs.
- The importance of a detailed set of design documents .
- How to select the best vendor for your project .
- How to manage the vendor during the implementation phase.
- The value of an independent expert to test and inspect the final installations .
- How to conduct user training in order to maximise uptake of the new technology.
- The key selection criteria for a long-term service and maintenance partner.





NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INDEPENDENT ADVICE

1

You could do your own research.

Do you have the time? Do you know what to look for and how to properly evaluate the options?

2

You could seek recommendations from different manufacturers & vendors.

Will they skew their advice to suit their own needs, not yours?

3

You could work with an independent expert such as an AV/ICT consultant.



WHAT OUTCOMES SHOULD THE PROJECT DELIVER?

Are you excited about implementing a new AV or ICT solution in your organisation? Do you already have some design ideas and products in mind? Fantastic! However, let's put that enthusiasm to one side for the moment because your first priority is to ask some hard questions. Technology aside, what are the core objectives of the project? Are there existing issues that need addressing? Are there specific outcomes that need to be achieved? What are these outcomes and why are they important? What would it mean to the organisation to achieve these outcomes? The more specific the answers to these questions, the more likely you'll deliver a successful technology project. And that's only if you actually need an AV or ICT solution.

"Technology aside, what are the core objectives of the project?"

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Dig deep to uncover the true requirements of the solution. Consult with an independent expert to help you evaluate the most appropriate solution. Document a high-level technology functional brief and cost estimate.

This is the path I would choose. A professional consultant can look at your goals and objectives and immediately save you time by introducing you to a short list of the most appropriate options. Their advice will be free of any bias, plus they'll help you make the best choice for your needs. If you have the time, it's a good idea to trial one or two of the short-listed options in a pilot or proof of concept. I've often done this with clients and used the feedback from different user groups within the organisation to tweak the final technology selections. Finally, take the time to document the performance and functionality requirements of your preferred technology solution in a high level brief. Your consultant can also give you advice on what the solution is likely to cost in a competitive market, helping you to align the solution with your budget.

WHO ARE WE DESIGNING FOR?

When it comes to your AV/ICT solution, who are the most important people involved in the project? Is it you or your team? The designers? The installers? The trainers? The CEO? Yes, all of these people are important contributors to the project, however none of them are as important as 'Mary and Bob'. That's right - 'Mary and Bob' are the people who will actually use the solution after it's been installed. That's why I always make an effort to spend time getting to know 'Mary and Bob' on every project. What's their current situation? What's their desired situation? When do they need to use technology? How can technology help them perform their work more effectively? From my experience, the better you understand what 'Mary and Bob' actually need, the more successful the project will be.

"The better you understand what the end users actually need from the solution, the more successful the project will be."

THINK SIMPLE

Regardless of the size of your AV or ICT project, you should always have the word 'simplicity' front of mind. In fact, the simpler the design and the user experience, the better. Because at the end of the day, people just want the technology to work. Technology should always be an enabler for people to perform their jobs more productively and more efficiently. And by focusing on simplicity in conceptual design, the detailed design stage is invariably much easier. At konnectus, our solutions are often dependent on other systems and designs that have nothing to do with technology. That's because we're part of a wider team that may include engineers, builders, interior designers, lighting designers, furniture suppliers, change management consultants, and many others. Ideally you want the technology designs to be seamlessly integrated and coordinated with the other designs and built environments. Therefore, it's important to start the conversation early with the other stakeholders in the concept design phase so as to make the detailed design phase simpler for everyone.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Focus on what 'Mary and Bob' actually need from the solution.
- Keep it simple.
- Take an early, proactive approach to consulting with other design stakeholders.





CAPTURING THE FULL SCOPE OF WORK

You should now have a set of concept designs and accurate cost estimates. You may have also made some adjustments to the original high-level performance and functional brief. At this point in time, some question the need for a detailed design and decide to skip this step, leaving the design to be finalised during installation. Big mistake! When you skip step 3 and ask vendors to quote based on the concept designs and high level brief, you risk vendors making assumptions and mistakes. The detailed design process takes time and a vendor will not design before preparing their quote. Consequently, the quote may need to be adjusted during the implementation stage as the design evolves. And you can bet that it's going to be higher than the original quote! These price variations are hard for you to question and there's no way to cap them, resulting in a loss of control over your project.

“The better you understand what the end users actually need from the solution, the more successful the project will be.”

LEAVE NO ROOM FOR ERROR

A professional AV/ICT consultant will produce a fully documented end-to-end set of detailed designs that can be given to a vendor for the complete build and accurate pricing. For example at konnectus, we produce a specification document that outlines the full scope of design works and methodology. This is supplemented with highly detailed drawings that may include floor plans, ceiling plans, elevations, furniture integration, equipment rack layouts, or signal line schematics with routing tables. We also document user workflows and user interface designs for each system. Finally, we provide a spreadsheet that itemises all the equipment (hardware and software) with quantities and labour allowances for every system. By documenting the designs to this level of detail, there's no room for error and potential vendors have all the information they need for accurate quoting. Following on from Step 2, it's crucial to coordinate and integrate with the other dependent systems and designs. This should be done with great attention to detail in this phase of the project. Mistakes or omissions made now will surface during the implementation phase, which can often be expensive.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Don't skip the detailed design stage - it's critical in keeping control over your project costs.
- Ensure your detailed specification document aligns with the original technology functional brief and cost estimates.
- Integrate and coordinate with other dependent systems and designs to avoid costly surprises.

HOW DO WE FIND THE RIGHT PARTNER?

After completing the first three steps, you'll have a comprehensive set of designs that are aligned with your core project objectives. Now it's time to choose a vendor to supply and install the systems for you. This is where many people simply get some quotes in and choose the best price. However as with many things in life, basing your decision on price alone isn't wise.

"Selecting a vendor based on price alone is a very risky decision."



VENDOR SELECTION CRITERIA

For me, potential vendors should be assessed on five criteria: price, compliance with design, proposed team, methodology and approach, and support and maintenance. Let's look at each one individually:

1. Price - If you followed Step 3, you would have specified all the software and hardware, making it easy to compare prices between different vendors. Look closely at the labour allowances. Obviously, you don't want to pay too much but if they're too low, the vendor may be "low balling" you now to win the job. Then they'll often look for variations later to make up the margins.

2. Compliance with design - Again, if you followed Step 3, compliance with design should be straight forward. However, if you skipped Step 3 and only have a loose brief or concept design, then you need an expert to help you evaluate each vendor..

3. Proposed team - In my experience, the vendor's team will make or break the successful implementation of the project. I always insist on seeing a proposed team from each vendor, including details of their experience and qualifications of each team member. If you're not 100% happy with the proposed team, you can (and should) request a stronger one.

4. Methodology and approach - When I consider the smoothest projects I've been involved with, I can identify an obvious pattern. The vendors that demonstrated a clear understanding of the project and provided an organised program with accurate timeframes and milestones were always the best ones to work with.

5. Support and maintenance - The fact is AV and ICT systems require ongoing maintenance and support. I'll cover this in more detail in Step 7, however it's usually the case that the vendor who installs the system is the best party to help support and maintain it. That's why you should evaluate potential vendors on their ability to become your long-term support partner.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Avoid basing your decision on price alone - there are many other factors to consider.
- Carefully assess the proposed team on their experience and qualifications.
- Evaluate each vendor on their ability to become your long-term trusted partner.

GETTING YOUR SYSTEM BUILT AND COMMISSIONED

Now it's time for your beautifully designed AV or ICT system to be built and commissioned. Hopefully by following the first four steps, you've selected a collaborative, competent and trustworthy vendor to bring the design to life. However, your vendor will still need to be managed closely and held accountable to ensure milestones are met and the systems are installed professionally and defect-free. Assuming you followed Step 3 in this guide and have a detailed set of documented designs, your next priority is to obtain an even more detailed "For Construction" or "Shop" set of documentation from the vendor prior to them starting the work. These will be highly technical documents, which the vendor's team will reference as they complete the build and commissioning. Your independent expert should check these vendor documents against the designs to ensure there are no gaps or misinterpretations.

"It's important to check the vendor's technical documents against the designs to ensure there are no gaps or misinterpretations."

RIGOROUS TESTING

Be prepared for the fact that the vendor will not install and commission your system perfectly the first time. There are always defects - that's just the nature of these types of projects. In fact, I can't recall a single project in more than 15 years where this has not been the case. So how can you check for this and have some reassurance that the systems will be 100% defect-free? That's where your independent expert comes in. For example at konnectus, we conduct extremely thorough and rigorous independent testing procedures both during and at the end of every project. There are many components to working AV and ICT systems and all should be tested. What's more, a record of what was tested and the results should be documented. Also be aware that the process of defect rectification will normally require multiple follow-up inspections and testing sessions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Manage your vendor closely and hold them accountable for project timeframes.
- Ask the vendor to produce detailed "For Construction" technical documentation before commencing work to ensure there are no gaps or misinterpretations.
- Engage an independent expert to test and inspect the installed systems.

STEP 6

USER TRAINING

MAKE IT RELEVANT. MAKE IT ENGAGING.

Unfortunately, I've witnessed many user training sessions where the audience is completely disengaged. That's because the so-called "trainers" simply do a quick run through on how to press a few buttons and reference the user manual for a newly installed AV or ICT system. What a waste of time! In order to get the most out of your new technology investment, you need to train people using real life scenarios they can relate to. Below are some examples of how the konnectus team has delivered meaningful and relevant training to our customers.

"Training must be customised and highly relevant to the people that will actually use the new technology."

REAL WORLD SCENARIOS

Recently, we designed and managed the installation of two operation control centres for a large mining company - one in Brisbane and one in Pune, India. We took the time to fully understand the specific workflows in each centre, which meant we could customise the training sessions to simulate those exact scenarios. As a result, the operations team was able to use the new AV and ICT solutions immediately in their day-to-day duties. In another example, one of the big four accounting firms built a new customer experience centre in Sydney. It was to be used by staff from different divisions of the business to work with clients in a dynamic and collaborative way. Konnectus built and commissioned the technology solution and provided specific training over a period of months to staff and their customers. We showed them how to use the new hardware and software systems to get the most out of their sessions, and this translated into stronger customer partnerships and significant increases in revenue. And finally, a leading insurance company recently transformed its workspaces across Australia, with the aim of encouraging staff to communicate more using video conferencing technology. However, previous experiences using video conferencing had not been positive because staff found it unreliable and hard to operate. The konnectus team delivered systems that were extremely reliable and simple to use, making it easy for the staff and the company to adopt the new technology.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Consider using a professional trainer rather than a "technical" person.
- Train people using real life scenarios they can relate to.
- Ask your vendor to provide advanced technical training to a small group of support staff.

WHO WILL PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT FOR YOUR NEW SYSTEM?

In Step 4, I touched on the importance of selecting a vendor that can also provide ongoing support and maintenance for your new AV or ICT solution. Let's look at this in more detail. There are essentially two key things to focus on. Firstly, be clear on your service and maintenance requirements, and distinguish between what can be handled internally versus what an external vendor will need to provide. Secondly, use the right selection criteria when assessing potential vendors. Many of the larger organisations konnectus works with have internal support teams that can be tasked with providing first and sometimes second level support. First level support is typically basic, non-technical troubleshooting such as a loose cable or a simple user error. Second level support is more complicated, however it can usually be handled internally with training around common troubleshooting procedures. Before entering into an agreement with an external vendor for support, I recommend you assess opportunities for some support to be handled internally. It can save you money in the long run.

"Identify any opportunities for support to be handled internally - it can save you money in the long run."

SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENTS

Support and maintenance agreements with external vendors can range from simple (e.g. phone support) to highly complex (e.g. a command and control centre for a transportation hub). Regular preventative maintenance is always a good idea as this keeps your systems running at optimal performance. More sophisticated systems and agreements may also feature live monitoring that can provide immediate alerts of current or forecasted issues. Reactive support is the other component of most agreements. This addresses response times for phone or on-site support, and should also assign priorities to different events or support issues. Just as you followed a process to select the best vendor in Step 4, a similar approach should be taken to select the right support partner now. Carefully assess the vendor's processes and workflows to ensure they align with your specific requirements. And if you're handling some support internally, make sure the vendor's support system can be linked with your internal system for tracking and reporting purposes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Assess which support services can be handled internally to help save you money.
- Document a clear and specific brief of requirements from your support partner.
- Ensure your vendor's processes and workflows align with your internal systems and processes.

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CONCLUSION

STEP 8

Well, that's it - the seven steps to delivering successful audiovisual and ICT projects. By following the steps outlined in this Essential Guide, you can be confident of installing the right AV or ICT solution for your organisation, as opposed to one that you're told you should install. At konnectus, we live and breathe AV and ICT solutions and have built our business around the steps laid out in this Essential Guide.

As such, these are the konnectus Guarantees:

1 Step 1 - Needs Assessment

We guarantee to uncover your true requirements and match them with the most suitable technology solution for your organisation.

2 Step 2 - Conceptual Design

We guarantee to design a reliable technology system that's tailored for use by 'Mary and Bob'.

3 Step 3 - Detailed Design

We guarantee to document all designs in full detail and ensure the technology solutions are seamlessly integrated with all dependent designs and systems.

4 Step 7 - Service and Maintenance

We guarantee you will be partnered with the best vendor based on value, quality, capability and support.

Step 4 - Vendor Selection **5**

We guarantee your new system will be defect-free and meet all your functional requirements as documented in the detailed designs

Step 5 - Implementation **6**

We guarantee to empower your people to use the new technology with maximum effect for your organisation.

Step 6 - User Training. **7**

We guarantee to set you up with the optimal service and maintenance plan, and with the ideal long term service partner for your organisation.

Schedule a free, no obligation discovery session with us today.

