

The Art of Hospitality



BY MEGAN ZELLER

In the AV space, talk of the hospitality industry is certainly a facet of our conversations. For me, as a business development professional focused on hospitality and gaming, it is my all-day, every-day. Over the years, I have worked on both sides of the spectrum—internally for sports venues and externally through AV sales targeting these industries—and in both situations, a common thread always came through: the importance of superb communication and creating a comfortable, welcoming environment.

Working exclusively in hospitality segments, I've been able to easily translate my industry experience into the audiovisual space. To me, hospitality should be a part of everything we do in the AV world—it translates to always working to find a solution for our customers. In this sense, understanding the art of hospitality is key to success in the audiovisual industry.

Everything is Service Driven

Despite the fact that our business relies on technology, it is important to remember that integration projects are built out of outstanding communication. This truly invaluable piece of the puzzle is one of the key reasons we see continued business: exceptional service. Everything is service driven in hospitality—from how guests feel about their experiences to how we work with hotels, casinos, restaurants, and more, to create AV integrations that enhance these experiences. And, these both rely heavily on relationships. Smiling, getting to know people, being available, responsive, and adaptable are keys to success in both the hospitality industry and the AV world. If you do not answer a need, customers will question if someone else can.

Doing Whatever it Takes

It's a tough lesson, but a very true one—do whatever it takes. In a hotel setting, this may mean complementary upgrades or food and beverage vouchers, but it can mean something completely different in AV. From driving a system cross-country for a demo (personal experience, it was faster than shipping) to carrying products onto flights to ensure their arrival, we find a way to get people what they need. True hospitality means putting others' needs above your own and always finding a solution. Showing people you care may seem like an intangible value-add for a brand, but "getting back what you give" is just as valuable a mantra in business as it is in your personal relationships. And, to really be successful, business and personal life absolutely overlap. It is a lifestyle and a mindset, not just a job—being passionate and actually caring about what you do. That is what fuels you to do whatever it takes.

Personalization and Customization

We work hand in hand with our customers to get it right from the moment we meet. In hospitality, this means putting yourself in the customer's shoes and ensuring every detail, down to the placement of a fork, is correct. Within the audiovisual world, there's a lot that goes into finding the right solutions.

Beyond physically getting a product somewhere, every step of our process involves catering to the client. You have to work with them to create the right systems and need to be involved with the build right from the beginning, whether that means working with architects, manufacturers, end users, or more. If a customer wants me onsite to do a walkthrough during construction, I put on a hard hat and walk side by side with the architect or general contractor—no request is too big or too small.

Never Let Them See You Sweat

At the end of the day, successful hospitality involves what, operationally, is a necessity in hotels: availability, adaptability, and always looking out for the safety and happiness of your guest. Any new project that is out of the ordinary can be overwhelming, but there is no reason to sweat it. Showing fear and apprehension in a situation gives pause to anyone you are communicating with. Rather, always try remain calm and appear to be in control. Customers will know they can trust you for any request and this will result in repeat business.

Keeping these simple concepts in mind will showcase your friendly and welcoming nature—the definition of hospitality—and, therefore, allow you to be more successful in your career in the AV industry. No matter how far technology advances, an integration is the result of people effectively working together, listening, and adapting to develop and implement a solution.

Megan Zeller is an AV professional focused on creating flawless customer experiences by drawing on her knowledge of motorsports hospitality. She is currently business development manager at Peerless-AV.

Key Traits of AV & Hospitality

- * Exceptional Service
- * Superior Listening Skills
- * Adaptability
- * Detail-Oriented
- * Positive Mindset

