



AUDIO/VISUAL ESSENTIALS

Making the most of technology for your AV needs

So much of camp life happens outside in the woods, on the water or on the trails. But those moments that happen inside a chapel or meeting space are supported by audio and visual elements that help reinforce a lesson, highlight an experience or engage campers differently.

We sought the insight and wisdom of a few people in the AV world to gather tools and tips to help you take advantage of technology to make your audio/visual offerings pop. ►



Photo courtesy of Word of Life Fellowship

Free, open-source options like OpenLP, OpenSong or Praisenter can be feature-rich, offering the option to import lyrics into a new worship set rather than typing them out.

Creating Captivating Videos

Ideas for finding the right tools

■ by Justin DeZurik

A friend and I were having a conversation the other day. He's a carpenter and said he couldn't get to sleep because he couldn't stop thinking about an article he read about thermal bridging in steel studs. We laughed, and I confessed that I have video editing dreams once in a while, and it's not rare to be kept up at night thinking about things like what lens I should be looking into purchasing next. Whether or not video editing and lenses invade your thoughts and sleep, if it's part of your role, here are a few ideas to help you excel at communicating with video.

Video Equipment

It's important to balance the priority of the story or message you want to communicate through video with the amount of time and money you can invest in video production. If you have the means to invest in good equipment, consider what is needed to improve the quality of your work, and think about it as a long-term investment. Think about the challenges you'll face at your camp regarding lighting and audio and explore options for equipment that can help you overcome those challenges.

For example, I was asked to get a camera for each of our summer camps, and I knew that it gets very dark in chapel. Higher frame-rate footage would open up impressive options for our high-action activities. As a result, I ended up getting two Sony a6500s, on which I can crank the ISO up to about 5000 without grain becoming intolerable, and I can get 120 fps 1080p, which I love.

An easy and cheap way to have great sounding voiceovers is to spend about \$20 on a Savage lapel mic and about \$6 on a TRS to TRRS 3.5mm adapter. You can set your subject up with your smartphone and tools to capture ideal audio.

Editing Software

While I know video editing can be done well on a PC, I edit on a MacBook Pro with Final Cut Pro. Apple recently (*finally*) added a three-way color corrector and Hue/Saturation Curves to FCPX. So if color correction is a concern you have, you can dodge a monthly subscription to Adobe's Creative Cloud and go that route with some ease. If you would rather not pay anything but still want to have a ton of options available to you for editing, there is also Blackmagic's DaVinci Resolve.

Organizing Content

Part of thinking long-term is finding a way that works best for you to keep track of where all your important clips are. Last summer I made the mistake of not tagging anything but camper footage, and that resulted in having to work hard to find enough footage of staff and volunteers to fill up the promo videos I needed to make.

Can you think of a few clips that show what your camp is really about? Give them keywords, or at least move them to a clearly labeled, safe place. This will save you time and allow you to more easily use more of the content you've recorded. ■



Photo courtesy of Word of Life Fellowship

Projecting Excellence

Tips for picking the right worship software

■ by Trevor Williams

We've all experienced the pains of presentations — the switch from one PowerPoint to another, revealing a cluttered desktop amid an awkward silence. The agonizing wait for that embedded video file to open. The misspelled lyrics that can't be changed until the next day.

Often, the biggest challenge is picking a software program to display content like song lyrics, sermon outlines and Scripture passages to an audience, all with minimal disruption.

Many start with Microsoft PowerPoint or Apple Keynote, the options embedded with their Windows or Mac computers, respectively. Some even go with the cloud-based Google Slides, which is part of the free Google Docs suite of applications.

Those may work for words on a page, but introduce any dynamic elements like a second screen or any video, and it quickly makes sense to upgrade to more capable software, says Dave Prensner of production company Media Solutions in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Weighing the Cost

Even free, open-source options like OpenLP, OpenSong or Praisenter can be feature-rich, offering the option to import lyrics into a new worship set rather than typing them out. (Some programs even enable compliance with CCLI copyright and licensing rules.) Scripture integration works the same way — pick a Bible reference and watch it appear on a slide instantly.

But even organizations with small budgets will find paid options like EasyWorship, ZionWorks, MediaShout, Proclaim and ProPresenter much easier to use; they're built with churches in mind and come with customer support, says Prensner.

And the economics often work out more quickly than expected, as good software can cut hardware costs. Paired with video and broadcast applications like ProVideoPlayer, Blackmagic or Playback Pro, one device can become a hub that transmits live video or recorded files across multiple screens or separate buildings.

"You very quickly build up an equipment list versus having this one piece of software that can do it all on this one computer that you probably already have sitting there," says Prensner.

The Value of Integration

When you find software that allows for integration with other products, you gain substantial productivity by saving time. For example, with the right audio setup, Faithlife's Proclaim integrates with iTunes to create sermon podcasts automatically. MediaShout can pull in hymn notes from outside programs. EasyWorship offers a remote app that allows worship leaders to control the

schedule from the stage with an iPad. All offer built-in graphic and motion backgrounds, or media files and visualizations to use or purchase.

Beyond these advantages, more intuitive software makes training easier — an essential point for churches and camps with transient or volunteer staff. Prensner finds ProPresenter, the preferred option for most of his clients, to be exceptionally simple.

"You can throw any volunteer on it and give them 30 seconds to a minute in training and they can display some slides for you," he says.

Using ProPresenter, program directors also link up with Planning Center, a church management software, and the software will automatically begin building slides based on the list of songs and Scriptures it finds there.

"I'm only kind of exaggerating, but that integration literally changed my life," says Nancy Riley, service programming director of Watkinsville First Baptist Church (Watkinsville, Georgia).

Watkinsville picked ProPresenter when it migrated away from hymnals 10 years ago, back when Riley was the piano player.

The software has grown with the church. The 1,000-person congregation now uses it for everything that involves a presentation: baby dedications, Sunday services, youth worship and more. There's even been an occasion when they've packed up their iMacs to run retreats off-site.

That's all possible through a \$799 campus license that allows any computer on the grounds to use the program, even on different presentations simultaneously. Single licenses are also available for half the price. Some other programs may woo customers with a lower monthly subscription fee, but Riley has had no incentive to change.

"We've been using ProPresenter as long as we've been putting words on the screen."

Connecting the Pieces

For all the value of software, however, it can be vital to have a solid baseline of network connectivity, says Dempsey Burtraw of ONI Networking, an IT company in Zephyr Cove, Nevada. Many cloud-based options require Wi-Fi service, though smaller campuses might be able to get by with a wired connection.

Nearby Zephyr Point camp and conference center has multiple buildings and cabins spread across its sprawling Lake Tahoe site. ONI is helping streamline its wireless network offering, which would lay the groundwork for ProPresenter or another option, Burtraw says.

"Once that's done we should ... be able to utilize a presentation software like that." ►

“You have to care about the person in the seat and everything they will hear and feel. If sound is a distraction, if it’s too loud or too soft, if there are technical difficulties, all they care about is getting out of there.” —Jesse Ralph, Legacy Productions

Sound Advice

Tips for elevating your audio experience

■ by Sheila Dolinger

It’s important to remember that sound can make or break your campers’ worship experience. Jesse Ralph of Legacy Productions in Monument, Colorado, has been in the audio business for 20 years, and he puts it this way, “When it comes to sound, you have to care about the person in the seat and everything they will hear and feel. If sound is a distraction, if it’s too loud or too soft, if there are technical difficulties, all they care about is getting out of there.”

Whether it’s a lack of time, expertise or budget that’s holding you back, you can still elevate your audio game. Here are a few tips:

Start with a consultation

Spending an hour on the phone with a professional audio engineer will give invaluable insight into the best way to spend your money. Be prepared with a description of your space and specific needs. They’ll talk you through your potential problems and discuss solutions. Legacy Productions offers a one-hour phone consultation for free or a local visit consultation for about \$250. (Other companies may offer site consultations for anywhere between \$250 – \$750.) It’s an investment that will save you big bucks in the long run.

Invest in the necessities

A proper mixing console is your first order of business. An excellent digital mixing board will meet your needs for a long time and can run anywhere from \$1,000 to \$7,000. Good brands include Yamaha and Allen & Heath.

Quality speakers should be your next purchase, and you can choose from non-powered or powered. Non-powered speakers run about \$500 to \$1,500 per speaker cabinet. They do not have an amp in the back, so you will need to purchase that separately. The powered option (\$600 – \$2,000 per speaker cabinet) has an

amp in the back, which gives you multiple uses for interior and outside sound. Some good brands to look for in both types are Meyer Sound, D&B, AudioTechnic and DAS Audio.

As budget allows, a wireless microphone system is also extremely valuable to have. A good audio engineer or sound consultant should be able to advise you on the best system for your needs.

Test, test and test some more

Don’t ever wait until the last minute to test your set-up. Testing is the most important piece of the puzzle. Start early and do a thorough sound check where you perform necessary maintenance, check the batteries in your wireless mics, test the levels and identify any potential for feedback or other problems.

Ralph adds, “Sound is that channel that will allow your campers to hear the speaker that will change their lives, the worship song that will move their heart or the pastor that will forever impact them with the Gospel. Don’t overlook the importance of audio.”

Now that’s sound advice.

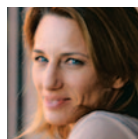
If you’d like to reach out to Jesse Ralph and Legacy Productions, you can contact him at 720-273-7768 or Jesse@legacysound.biz. ■



Justin DeZurik is the media/communications manager at Trout Lake Camps (Pine River, Minnesota). He loves the excitement of camp ministry and the surprises that come up doing media work in the North Woods of Minnesota. He can most often be found working on video projects, hiking, eating Mexican food or poring over Google Maps looking for his next road trip.



Trevor Williams is managing editor of Global Atlanta, an online international business news service. He also helped write Chuck Holton’s *Making Men*, a book outlining five biblical facets of manhood. He enjoys reading, traveling overseas and studying other cultures. He lives in Atlanta with his wife, Katy, and son, Graham.



With 20 years of experience as a content director and brand journalist, Sheila Dolinger writes on a variety of topics from her home in Atlanta. When she isn’t busy embarrassing her teenage kids on social media, she mentors underserved youth through her own creative writing program.