# Steps to plan clear audio for a corporate event

## Why audio matters at a corporate event

Speakers, presentations, panel discussions, and even background music all depend on one thing: the audience being able to hear clearly. Poor sound can drain the energy from a room, make a keynote speaker hard to follow, and leave attendees frustrated. Getting the audio right requires more than just turning up the volume. It involves careful planning, the right choice of event sound equipment, and attention to the venue itself.

Corporate events vary widely: a boardroom meeting with a dozen people, a conference hall with hundreds, or an outdoor gala dinner. Each setting has its own acoustic challenges. The goal is to make every word intelligible without blasting the front rows or leaving the back rows straining. This article walks through the practical steps to plan and execute clear audio, from initial assessment to the final soundcheck.

## Start with the space and the audience

Before thinking about microphones or speakers, spend time understanding the venue. How big is the room? What are the surfaces like? Hard surfaces such as glass, concrete, and wood reflect sound, creating echoes and muddiness. Carpet, curtains, and upholstered seating absorb sound, making a space feel quieter and more intimate. A room with lots of glass and hard floors will need different treatment than a carpeted ballroom.

Next, consider the audience layout. Will people be seated in rows facing a stage, at round tables, or scattered in a networking area? The placement of the audience determines where speakers need to project sound and where microphones should be positioned. A seated theatre-style setup allows for clear front-facing sound, while cabaret-style tables mean sound must travel around obstacles. Outdoor events bring their own problems: wind noise, no walls to contain audio, and often competing sounds from nearby traffic or other event spaces.

## Choose the right microphones for the situation

Microphones are the starting point of any audio chain. A wrong choice here can make even expensive speakers sound poor. For corporate events, the main categories are wireless handheld, lapel (lavalier), headset, and gooseneck microphones for lecterns.

Wireless handheld microphones work well for Q&A sessions, panelists passing a mic around, or presenters who want to hold something. They are robust and familiar to most speakers. Lapel microphones clip onto clothing and free the presenter’s hands, which is ideal for keynote speakers who gesture or move. However, they pick up rustling from clothing and can be less

forgiving with placement. Headset microphones offer consistent sound because they stay at a fixed distance from the mouth, making them a good choice for active presenters or outdoor events where wind could be an issue.

For a panel discussion, consider using multiple lapel or headset mics so each person has their own. Passing one mic between four people creates awkward pauses and often results in missed words. For a lectern, a gooseneck microphone is standard, but make sure it is positioned so the speaker does not have to lean in or shout. The rule of thumb is to keep the microphone within six to twelve inches of the speaker's mouth, and to test it with the actual speaker before the event.

## Select a PA system that fits the room

The PA system comprises speakers, amplifiers, and the mixing console. Its job is to make the sound from the microphones audible to every person in the room. The most common mistake is choosing speakers that are too large or too small. Too large, and you risk feedback and poor coverage; too small, and the sound becomes distorted when pushed to higher volume levels.

A typical corporate event in a medium-sized conference room might use a pair of powered speakers on stands, placed at the front of the room and angled slightly inward. For larger halls, a line array system hung from the ceiling or from rigging provides even coverage. For very small meetings, a single portable PA unit may suffice. The key is to match the speaker coverage to the seating area. Sound should reach the back wall without being deafening in the front row.

Subwoofers add low-end punch for music but are not essential for speech. In fact, too much bass can make a presenter's voice sound muddy. If the event is mostly speeches and presentations, a system that focuses on midrange clarity will serve better than a full concert rig.

## Plan the mixing console and audio engineering

A mixing console is the brain of the audio system. It allows an audio engineer to adjust volume levels, equalisation, and effects for each input. For a simple event with two microphones and a laptop for playback, a small digital mixer with a few channels will do. For a multi-presenter event with video playback, multiple wireless microphones, and a band, a larger console with more channels and processing power is needed.

Digital mixers are now common even for small events. They allow the engineer to save and recall settings, which is helpful if the same event repeats across multiple days. They also allow remote control via a tablet, so the engineer can walk around the room and hear what the

audience hears. This is far better than mixing from a fixed position at the back of the room, where the sound may be different.

An experienced audio engineer is worth the investment. They can set up the system quickly, identify potential feedback points, and adjust on the fly. They also handle the soundcheck, which is a critical step often rushed or skipped. A proper soundcheck involves testing each microphone with the actual presenter, at the expected speaking volume, and walking the room to confirm even coverage.

## Manage speaker levels and feedback

Feedback is that high-pitched squeal that happens when a microphone picks up sound from its own speaker and amplifies it in a loop. It can ruin a presentation and make the audience wince. Feedback is usually caused by the microphone being too close to a speaker, the volume being too high, or the microphone being pointed at the speaker. To prevent it, position speakers in front of the microphones, not behind them. Also, use directional microphones that pick up sound mostly from the front and reject sound from the sides and rear.

During the event, the engineer should monitor levels continuously. A presenter who suddenly speaks louder or moves closer to a speaker can cause feedback. The engineer can reduce the level on that channel slightly or use a graphic equaliser to cut the specific frequency that is feeding back. Many digital mixers have automatic feedback suppression, which can be a helpful safety net.

## Conduct a thorough soundcheck

The soundcheck is not just for the engineer. The event organiser or a designated person should attend it to confirm that the audio matches expectations. Walk to every part of the seating area and listen. Is the sound clear at the back? Is there any distortion in the front rows? Can you hear the presenter’s natural voice, or does it sound boxy or thin?

Also test any video or audio playback. Laptops, phones, and media players can have different output levels. A common issue is that a video plays music or a clip that is much louder than the spoken word, startling the audience. The engineer can adjust the input gain or use a compressor to even out those peaks. Check that any wireless microphones do not drop out as the presenter moves around. If the system uses multiple wireless units, ensure they are on different frequencies to avoid interference.

## Prepare for the unexpected

No matter how well you plan, things can go wrong. A microphone battery can die, a presenter can forget to unmute, or a speaker cable can get pulled out. Have backups ready: spare

batteries for every wireless mic, a spare handheld microphone, and an extra XLR cable. If the event uses a laptop for slides, have the laptop's audio output tested and know where the mute button is.

It is also wise to have a simple contingency for the audio system itself. If the main mixer fails, can you route audio through a backup mixer? If the speakers go down, do you have a small portable speaker that can cover the room at lower volume? These are rare scenarios, but having a plan reduces panic.

For corporate events that rely heavily on remote participation, such as hybrid events with online audiences, the audio engineer must also manage the audio feed to the streaming platform. That feed needs its own balance: too quiet, and remote attendees hear nothing; too loud, and it distorts. A separate mix for the stream, often called a broadcast mix, is best.

## Working with a professional provider

Many organisations choose to hire a technical provider rather than buying and storing event sound equipment. A good provider brings not only the gear but also the expertise to set it up for the specific space. When working with a provider like Teambo, you can expect a consultation that covers the room layout, the number of microphones needed, and the type of content being presented. The provider handles the configuration, the soundcheck, and the operation during the event, freeing the organiser to focus on the content and the guests.

The key is to involve them early. If you wait until the day before the event, the provider may have limited time to adapt to the venue's acoustics or to your specific needs. A site visit a week ahead allows for thorough planning and avoids last-minute surprises. Teambo can assess the room, recommend the appropriate speaker placement, and coordinate with the venue's in-house team if needed.

## Final checks on the day

On the event day, arrive early. Check that all equipment is in place and powered on. Confirm that all wireless microphones are charging and that spare batteries are accessible. Walk the room again with the engineer and listen to a short test. If any changes have been made to the room layout since the site visit - new tables, different seating, a stage extension - adjust the speaker positions and microphone placement accordingly.

Before the first speaker goes on, do a quick line check with the mixing console. Ensure that every input has signal and that there is no hum or buzz from the electrical system. If you are using a laptop, have the presenter or their assistant test the audio output with the actual content they plan to use. A video that plays fine on headphones may sound completely different through the PA system.

Clear audio at a corporate event is the result of careful planning, the right equipment choices, and a skilled engineer. It is not an afterthought. By following these steps - assessing the venue, selecting appropriate microphones, choosing a suitable PA system, conducting a proper soundcheck, and preparing for contingencies - you give your event the best chance of sounding professional and polished.