AV BUDGET CONTROL & COST-SAVING CHECKLIST

A practical, no-nonsense checklist to identify cost-saving opportunities while maintaining production quality. Designed for meeting planners, event producers, and clients who want to stay Show Ready without blowing the budget.

Lock In Your Schedule Early

- Finalize your agenda 4–6 weeks out to avoid last-minute labor additions.
- Specify load-in/load-out, rehearsal times, show times, and breaks clearly.
- Request early facility access to avoid premium labor charges.
- Check if working with groups before/after your event can create shared savings.
- Communicate with adjacent groups to identify collaborative opportunities.

Proactive Labor Management

- Understand union rules and minimums in advance.
- Build an efficient staffing plan with your provider.
- Schedule around meal breaks to avoid penalties.
- Plan for regular-time move-ins and move-outs.
- Review meeting schedules to avoid unnecessary overtime for techs.
- Compare using a presentation management system vs. in-room operators.
- Consider experienced local labor to save on travel.
- Discuss crew sizes, coverage, and associated risks of reductions.

Mind Your Rehearsals

- Confirm speaker availability and tech needs early.
- Combine rehearsals to avoid multiple crew calls.
- Schedule rehearsals during regular hours to avoid overtime costs.

Standardize Gear Across Rooms

- Use consistent equipment across breakout rooms.
- Avoid over-customization unless it adds real attendee value.
- Track additions for proper departmental billing.

Utilize Your Space Efficiently
- Schedule AV-equipped rooms for multiple uses.
- Avoid one-time setups requiring unnecessary setups/teardowns.
- Use your general session room for large sessions where possible.

Focus on Impact Over Flash
- Prioritize high-impact moments: keynotes, openers, sponsor content.
- Reduce tech in low-attendance sessions.
- Keep extras in the general session room where they have the most value.

Identify In-House and Facility Add-On Fees
- Confirm vendor decisions with your CSM to identify hidden fees.
- Use your vendor's experience to surface restrictions early.
- Engage hotel/CVB reps to negotiate solutions.
- Have your provider collaborate with in-house teams for win-win outcomes.

Bundle Services to Avoid 'Gotcha' Pricing
- Request "all-in" pricing for your project scope.
- Ensure transparency and sign-off on all additions.
- Require clear explanations for any added costs.

Use a Production Checklist
- Request a pre-production schedule to identify issues early.
- Use a scope of work checklist and timeline for tracking.
- Communicate changes and backup plans regularly.
- Get budget updates after major scope changes.

Leverage Sponsorships
- Identify sponsorable areas that add value while reducing your cost.
- Collaborate with your sales team to expand sponsorship opportunities.
- Use sponsorships to offset AV costs while adding event impact.
- Consider large monitors, LED walls, and digital signage as revenue generators.
- Offer activation spaces to sponsors for additional support.

Maintain Consistent Vendor Relationships
- Build multi-show relationships with vendors for efficiencies.
- Long-term vendor partnerships typically yield better pricing.
- Avoid wasting time re-onboarding new vendors repeatedly.

Recordings & Streaming

- Record slides and audio only instead of full video if appropriate.
- Consider delayed post-event sharing instead of live streaming.
- Evaluate which rooms truly require recording or streaming.

Equipment Strategies

- Ground-supported setups may be more cost-effective than rigging.
- Use in-house AV for small breakouts when quality permits.
- Share microphones when appropriate.
- Limit camera coverage to essential angles.

Content Management

- Evaluate the cost-benefit of using a content management system vs. in-room tech support.

Items Not to Sacrifice

- Wired lavaliers over wireless where necessary for reliability.
- Proper projector brightness.
- High-quality audio.
- Clear screen sightlines.
- Audience interactivity.
- Crew size to the point of safety and quality.
- Quality vendors over simply choosing the lowest bid.