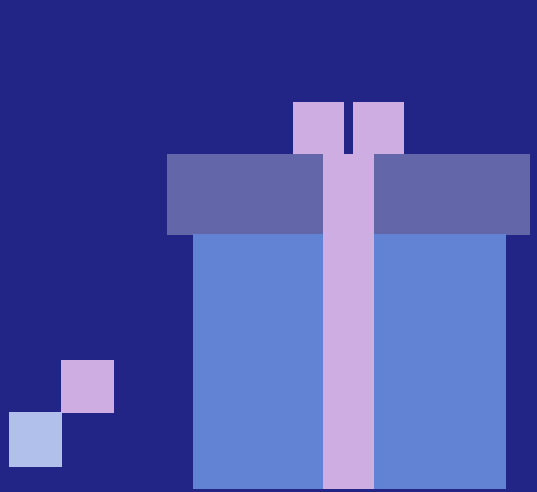
Lumix

LUMIX · 2027 PLANNING GUIDE

The unwrapped event budget

12 costs nobody puts in the quote. **48 questions to ask**, a worked example for each, and a checklist to use before you sign.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Most overspend isn't in the quote. It's in the terms.

Venue and supplier quotes are built to compare well on the headline number. The real cost of an event shows up in service charges, minimums, release dates and overtime. This guide takes the 12 that catch teams out most often and gives you the questions to ask before they reach the invoice.

1

Read your four

Start with the costs marked for your role, then skim the rest. Most events hit all twelve.

2

Ask before you sign

Each page has four questions. Send them with your brief, or ask them on the venue call.

3

Check the paperwork

Use the "where it hides" wording to scan quotes and contracts for the small print.

4

Tick the checklist

Page 16 is a one-page check to share with procurement and finance before you commit.

WHAT'S INSIDE

FOR PROCUREMENT

01 Service charge p4

04 The attrition clause p7

07 Cancellation tiers p10

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FOR EVENT MANAGERS

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FOR MARKETING LEADERS

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WHEN EACH COST BITES

From brief to invoice: where the 12 show up

Some costs are set the moment you sign. Others only appear on the day or on the final invoice. Ask about each one at the stage where you can still change it.

Brief

Set goals and scope

- 06 Duplicate supplier contracts
- 09 Events with no measured return
- 12 Your team's sourcing hours

Compare quotes

Like for like, every cost included

- 01 Service charge
- 10 VAT on venue hire
- 02 In-house AV minimums

Contract

Terms, tiers and release dates

- 04 The attrition clause
- 05 Catering minimum spend
- 07 Cancellation tiers
- 08 Power and rigging fees

Final numbers

A week or two before

- 03 Delegate no-shows
- 05 Catering minimum spend

On the day

Build, show and de-rig

- 11 Overtime and early access
- 08 Power and rigging fees

Invoice and review

Check every line, report the return

- 01 Service charge
- 09 Events with no measured return

01

COST 1 OF 12

Service charge

FOR PROCUREMENT | BITES: ON THE INVOICE

Many venues add a service charge to food and drink, and sometimes to the whole bill. It's usually a percentage, and headline quotes often leave it to the small print.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- "Prices exclude service"
- "A discretionary service charge will be added"
- A single percentage at the foot of the catering page, not on each line

WORKED EXAMPLE

A dinner is quoted at £18,000 for food and drink. The terms add 12.5% service to catering and to room hire. That's £2,250 on the food alone, plus more on the room, and none of it was in the comparison spreadsheet.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. Is service included in this quote, and at what rate?
2. Which lines does it apply to: catering only, or room hire and AV too?
3. Is it charged on guaranteed numbers or on what was actually served?
4. Is it discretionary, and can we agree a fixed figure now?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

The rate, the lines it covers and how it's calculated written into the contract, and every competing quote compared with service included.

02

COST 2 OF 12

In-house AV minimums

FOR EVENT MANAGERS | BITES: BEFORE YOU BRIEF PRODUCTION

Some venues have an exclusive in-house AV partner. Bring your own production company and you may pay a facility fee to connect to the venue's systems, or have to pay for their technician anyway.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- "Exclusive AV supplier"
- "External AV subject to a facility fee"
- "Venue technician required for all events"

WORKED EXAMPLE

Your production partner quotes for a two-day conference. Three weeks out, the venue confirms a facility fee for external AV, a mandatory in-house technician on both days and a charge for the house sound system. Part of the kit is now paid for twice.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. Is there an exclusive or preferred AV supplier?
2. If we bring our own, what facility, connection or power fees apply?
3. Do we have to use or pay for a venue technician, and for which hours?
4. Which house AV is included in the room hire?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

A written list of the house AV included, every external-supplier fee shown in the quote, and your production quote checked against the venue's tech spec before you sign.

03

COST 3 OF 12

Delegate no-shows

FOR MARKETING LEADERS | BITES: AT FINAL NUMBERS

Catering is usually charged on the numbers you guarantee a week or two before the event, not on the people who turn up. Free-to-attend events often lose more delegates on the day, so it's easy to over-guarantee.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- "Final numbers required X working days prior"
- "Charged on guaranteed or actual numbers, whichever is greater"
- "Numbers may not be reduced after confirmation"

WORKED EXAMPLE

You guarantee lunch for 300 at £45 a head. On the day, 240 people come. You still pay for 300: £2,700 for 60 lunches nobody ate, before refreshments and service.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. When are final numbers due, and can they change after that?
2. How far can numbers fall below the contract without a charge?
3. Are we charged on guaranteed or actual numbers?
4. Can catering for later breaks be scaled back on the day?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

A realistic drop allowance in the contract, and final numbers set from registrations and past attendance, not the original target.

04

COST 4 OF 12

The attrition clause

FOR PROCUREMENT | BITES: AT EACH RELEASE DATE

When you contract a block of bedrooms, the attrition clause sets how many you must pay for, even if delegates don't book them. The same idea can apply to meeting space and catering.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- "Attrition" or "pick-up"
- "Release dates"
- "Rooms not taken will be charged at the contracted rate"

WORKED EXAMPLE

You hold 120 rooms for two nights at £180, liable for 80% of the block. Delegates book 70. You pay for 96 rooms a night: 26 empty rooms for two nights, £9,360.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. What share of the block are we liable for?
2. What are the release dates, and how much can we release at each?
3. If the venue resells unused rooms, will we be credited?
4. Do delegate bookings made outside our block count towards it?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Staged release dates in your project plan, resale credit written in, and a block sized from past pick-up rather than total registrations.

05

COST 5 OF 12

Catering minimum spend

FOR EVENT MANAGERS | BITES: WHEN NUMBERS DROP

Some venues set a minimum spend on food and drink for a room or a date. Spend less and you pay the difference anyway, often shown as room hire.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- "Minimum food and beverage spend of £X"
- "Room hire waived subject to minimum spend"
- "Any shortfall will be charged as room hire"

WORKED EXAMPLE

A room is "free" with a £15,000 catering minimum. Numbers fall and the menu comes to £11,500. The £3,500 shortfall appears on the invoice as room hire.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. Is there a minimum spend, and is it before or after VAT and service?
2. What counts towards it: drinks, AV, bedrooms?
3. If numbers fall, can we upgrade the menu instead of paying a shortfall?
4. Does the minimum come down if we take less space?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

The minimum, what counts towards it and the shortfall rule all in the contract, so you can upgrade rather than pay for nothing.

06

COST 6 OF 12

Duplicate supplier contracts

FOR MARKETING LEADERS | BITES: ACROSS THE YEAR

When different teams book venues, AV and catering separately, you end up with separate contracts, separate terms and no combined buying power.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- Not in any single quote
- Several AV companies or venues used for similar events
- Different cancellation and payment terms for the same kind of booking

WORKED EXAMPLE

Marketing, Sales and HR each run a spring event and each book their own AV company. Three sets of terms, three deposits, and nobody can see total spend or ask for a better rate.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. Who else in the business booked this type of supplier this year?
2. Can we see total event spend by supplier category?
3. Are there preferred suppliers or agreed terms we should use?
4. Would combining briefs get us better terms?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

One view of event spend across teams, and preferred suppliers on terms agreed once.

07

COST 7 OF 12

Cancellation tiers

FOR PROCUREMENT | BITES: AS THE DATE GETS CLOSER

Cancellation charges usually rise in steps as the event gets closer, and can reach the full contract value. Cutting numbers or space, or postponing, can trigger the same charges.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- “Cancellation schedule”
- “Partial cancellation” or “reduction in numbers”
- “Charges based on total estimated revenue”

WORKED EXAMPLE

An event is postponed four months out. The contract treats postponement as cancellation, so half the estimated revenue is due on top of the deposit already paid.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. What do we owe at each date if we cancel?
2. Does reducing numbers or space count as partial cancellation?
3. Is postponing treated differently from cancelling?
4. Is the charge on room hire only or total estimated spend, and is resale credited?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

A clear tiered schedule, a postponement option and resale credit in the contract, with each date in your project plan.

08

COST 8 OF 12

Power and rigging fees

FOR EVENT MANAGERS | BITES: AT THE TECH SPEC

Hanging screens, lighting and banners, and running extra power to the stage or stands, are often priced separately from room hire, and may need the venue's approved rigger and safety sign-off.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- "Rigging points charged per point"
- "Power charged as per tech spec"
- "All rigging by venue-approved contractor"

WORKED EXAMPLE

The stage design flies screens either side and lighting overhead. The venue charges per rigging point, requires its own rigger and adds a separate power supply for the LED wall. None of it is in the room hire quote.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. Which rigging points are available, and what does each cost?
2. Do we have to use the venue's rigger?
3. What power is included, and what does extra power cost?
4. Are safety checks and sign-off included?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Your production plan priced against the venue's real tech spec before you sign, with every rigging and power charge in the quote.

09

COST 9 OF 12

Events with no measured return

FOR MARKETING LEADERS | BITES: AT BUDGET REVIEW

Without agreed goals and tracking, it's hard to show what an event delivered, which makes it an easy line to cut next year.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- Not in the quote: look at the brief
- No objectives or targets
- No plan for attendee data or follow-up

WORKED EXAMPLE

A customer event costs £80,000. Six months later finance asks what it delivered. Registrations were tracked, but nobody tagged opportunities or followed up attendees, so there's no answer.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. What does success look like, in numbers, before we book?
2. How will we capture attendee data and pass it to sales?
3. Who owns follow-up, and by when?
4. How will we report cost per attendee and pipeline influenced?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Goals in the brief, tracking set up before invitations go out, and a report afterwards that sets cost against outcomes.

10

COST 10 OF 12

VAT on venue hire

FOR PROCUREMENT | BITES: WHEN YOU COMPARE QUOTES

Quotes aren't always clear about whether VAT is included, and lines can be treated differently. Compare an ex-VAT quote with an inc-VAT one and the wrong supplier looks cheaper.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- A mix of "+VAT" and "inc. VAT" lines
- VAT shown only as a total at the bottom
- Overseas venues with different rates and reclaim rules

WORKED EXAMPLE

Venue A quotes £40,000 including VAT. Venue B quotes £36,000 plus VAT. B looks £4,000 cheaper, but at 20% it's £43,200: £3,200 more than A.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. Is every line shown including or excluding VAT?
2. Are any lines treated differently for VAT?
3. For overseas venues, what's the rate, and can we reclaim it?
4. Can we have the quote in a standard format to compare like for like?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Every quote in the same format, VAT shown line by line, and finance clear on what can be reclaimed.

11

COST 11 OF 12

Overtime and early access

FOR EVENT MANAGERS | BITES: ON THE DAY

Build days, early load-in, late finishes and de-rig can each carry their own charge, from extra room hire to staff, security and cleaning overtime.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- “Access from 8am”
- “Event to finish by 11pm”
- “Build and de-rig charged at a percentage of the daily rate”

WORKED EXAMPLE

The room is booked 8am to 6pm. Production needs to load in at 6am and the drinks reception runs until 11pm. That’s early access, an evening extension, staff overtime and security, each billed separately.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. Which access times are included for build, event and de-rig?
2. What’s the hourly rate outside them?
3. Are staff, security or cleaning overtime extra?
4. Do we need a late licence, and who pays for it?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Your full run of show, from first load-in to last van out, matched to the access times in the contract.

12

COST 12 OF 12

Your team's sourcing hours

FOR MARKETING LEADERS | BITES: ALL YEAR ROUND

The cost that never reaches an invoice: the hours spent writing briefs, chasing quotes, comparing proposals in different formats and managing suppliers.

WHERE IT HIDES IN THE PAPERWORK

- Nowhere on paper
- It sits in calendars and inboxes
- Senior time spent on admin, not the event

WORKED EXAMPLE

One conference: five venues, three AV companies, two caterers, every quote in its own format. Weeks of back-and-forth before anyone can compare like for like.

Illustrative figures.

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

1. How many hours did the last event take to source, and whose hours were they?
2. How many quotes did we chase, and how many were comparable?
3. What else could that time have gone on?
4. Could one brief go to several vetted suppliers at once?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

One brief, quotes you can compare, and your team's time spent on the event, not the admin.

BEFORE YOU SIGN

The 12-point check

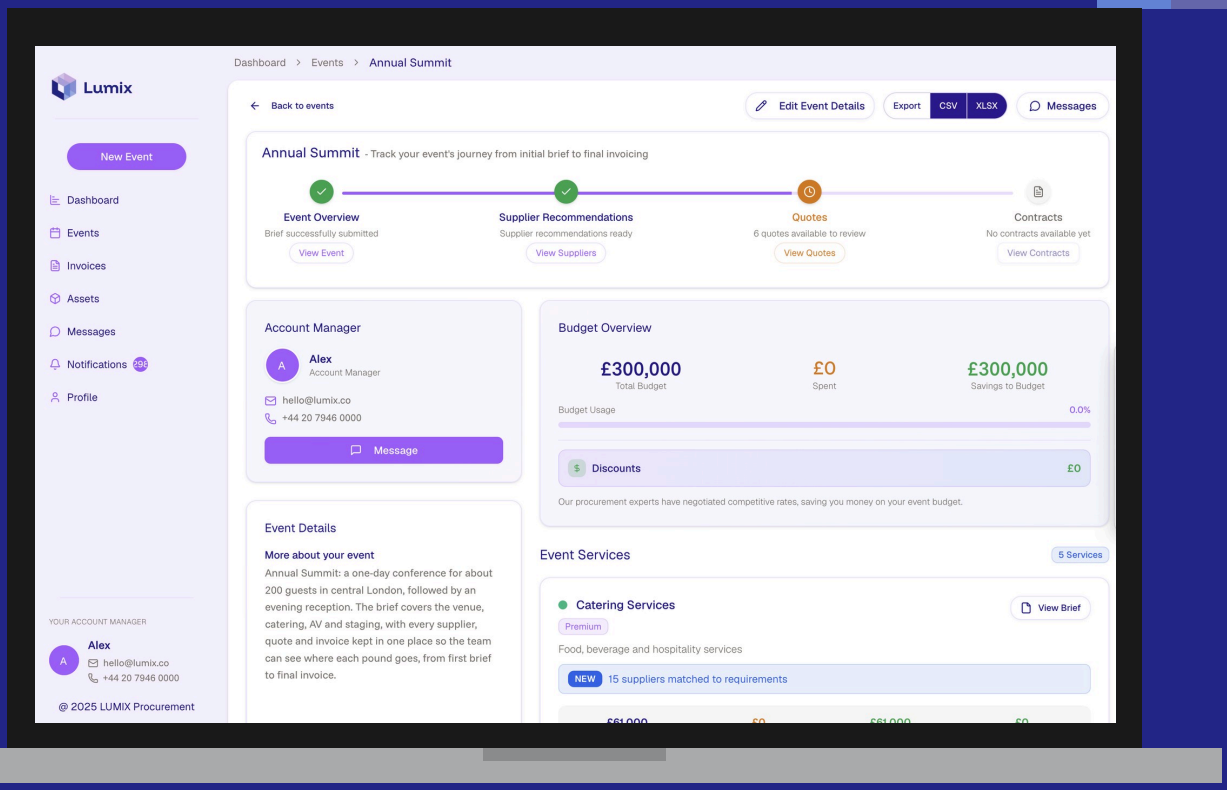
Print this, or share it with procurement and finance. Tick each line once you have the answer in writing, and note who owns it.

		COST AND FIRST QUESTION	OWNER
☐	01	**Service charge:** Is service included in this quote, and at what rate?	
☐	02	**In-house AV minimums:** Is there an exclusive or preferred AV supplier?	
☐	03	**Delegate no-shows:** When are final numbers due, and can they change after that?	
☐	04	**The attrition clause:** What share of the block are we liable for?	
☐	05	**Catering minimum spend:** Is there a minimum spend, and is it before or after VAT and service?	
☐	06	**Duplicate supplier contracts:** Who else in the business booked this type of supplier this year?	
☐	07	**Cancellation tiers:** What do we owe at each date if we cancel?	
☐	08	**Power and rigging fees:** Which rigging points are available, and what does each cost?	
☐	09	**Events with no measured return:** What does success look like, in numbers, before we book?	
☐	10	**VAT on venue hire:** Is every line shown including or excluding VAT?	
☐	11	**Overtime and early access:** Which access times are included for build, event and de-rig?	
☐	12	**Your team's sourcing hours:** How many hours did the last event take to source, and whose hours were they?	

Lumix

Get 2027 boxed off.

Lumix is an end-to-end platform for buying, managing and paying for event services. Send us your 2027 brief and **we'll do the legwork**.



One pre-vetted supplier network

Every supplier in one place, so quotes are easier to compare.

Fixed-cost contracts

Costs agreed up front, so fewer surprises on the final invoice.

Real-time spend and ROI analytics

Track spend as it happens and show what the event delivered.

Book a demo at lumix.co