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THE ALEX SCHLOESSER COLUMN

Making Quick Decisions: What To Focus On When You Set Up A System



One of the things that I have encountered every day of my professional life, is the need for quick decisions. This might sound trivial, but when you get onto the jobsite, you will have to decide, how to go about your job and there are a million ways to do that. This is important, because we all work under very constrained conditions all the time. So how do I go about it?

1. **Never bring exactly what you need.** I will always have extra or spare gear if possible, so that I have a chance to react to any unforeseen requests. This will also allow me to shine, when I am prepared for the unexpected. I will also never run a system at nominal levels, if possible.
2. **Prepare well:** Planning and preparing the job is about 70 % of your work, because you will go through many of the problems that might occur and then have solutions for this already. Be proactive and take ownership of this.
3. **Timing is everything.** I watch my clock and the crew clock all the time. If the setup time is limited, then I will not measure long or not measure at all, but still make sure that all my gear is functional and in perfect working condition before it "goes up". If I end up with more time later, I can still use this, once the basic setup is good.
4. **Communicate well and clear.** I will let people know how I want to go about my job and get more opinions and communicate with other departments. When your communication is clear, then you avoid a lot of trouble later.
5. **Prioritize what you do.** If everything goes as planned, I will have sufficient time to tune and measure and to relax, but then nothing ever goes as planned. Most important is to get the gear up and be ready when the doors are opening. This will drive my decisions during a working day. Worst case this means no catering for me.
6. **Check everything and then check it again!** My experience from past work is: "Assumption is the mother

of failure!". Assuming, that the power socket works well might kill your gear. Assuming, that what came off the truck is working fine, might cost you your job. I could write a book about Murphy's law and so could you.

7. **Bring your toolbox.** There are a few tools, that everyone should have with them all the time: AC/DC Voltmeter, Pink Noise Generator, fresh batteries, Leatherman, Swissknife or similar. Electrical tape and Sharpie. This is all in my personal toolbox.
8. **Work clean and label properly.** We have all seen the "Spaghetti Salad" Pictures of larger jobs and troubleshooting will be next to impossible or get extremely time consuming, if you don't know which is which. I label and prepare as much as I can prior to the job and make sure everything is clearly identifiable for all crew members.

As we go forward with this column I would like to discuss more sophisticated topics, but at a lot of productions, I see things from the list above ignored. This makes me think, that I need to remind myself and my colleagues of this all the time.

If you want Alex to touch on a particular topic you can get in touch with him at alex@asaudio.de

