

LIGHTING YOUR CONFERENCE – FROM BASICS TO BRILLIANCE

There are many options when it comes to lighting conference, including colours, textures and effects. When making your choices, it's helpful to have a basic understanding of professional lighting products and the language used to describe the various effects. Communicating your vision to a lighting designer becomes much easier with a grasp of some of the terminology, so you're both on common ground. Working together, you can take the look of your conference from basic to brilliant!

WHAT'S A WASH?

A wash is one of those terms that does exactly what it sounds like – a big wash of light across a large area. It's also used for the types of lighting fixtures built for that purpose. Washes can be referred to by the name of the area they're lighting – upstage wash (rear of the stage), downstage wash (front of the stage) or wall washes, which can be created by up-lights positioned around a venue. Downstage washes are usually for making performers and presenters visible, while upstage washes can be one or more colours used to pick out set elements or 'backlight performers, and can change in an instant, giving each section of your conference its own identity.

WASHING WALLS FOR CONFERENCE BRANDING

Wall washes are a great way to create an atmosphere and highlight branding at your conference. Just changing the colour of a wall or room can be enough to make an audience feel like they're somewhere special. If you have graphics or banners, washing them with light will help them pop and stand out. Wall washes can be quite easily done using portable, wirelessly controlled, and sometimes battery powered fixtures. Simply place them around the venue, and the lighting team can control them from wherever their operating position sits, changing colours or brightness whenever it suits your event programme!



LED FOR FLEXIBILITY

LED technology has changed what's possible with colour and light at your conference. Coloured LED lighting fixtures use dedicated red, green, blue, amber and white LEDs and mix their outputs together to produce any colour on demand. They can change the colour they're projecting as many times as required during your event, and fade quickly or slowly between them. Conversely, traditional lighting fixtures (which are basically a heavy-duty version of a lightbulb) can only produce a colour by having a piece of coloured gel inserted onto the front of the light – which a lighting tech would have to change to create a new colour.



BEAM ME UP!

Beams and Spots (or Profiles) are lighting fixtures that are designed to produce tight, controllable beams of light. This is a really exciting effect, and you'll usually see it done with lots of beams moving at once through haze and fog - the kind of effect you'd see at a rock concert! Beam fixtures are designed to produce thin, bright beams of light that dazzle in mid-air, while Spots and Profiles produce broader beams that can highlight a single performer or set element or create moving patterns on the stage. Beam, Spots and Profiles are great to use at your conference to add excitement and emphasis, punctuating proceedings with visually spectacular moments.

POWER AND MOVEMENT

Washes, Beams, Spots and Profiles are now all commonly built as moving head fixtures, which do exactly that – the light source is moved by a motor, enabling it to send light and effects in any direction on your command. Just a few short years ago, moving lights were extremely expensive high-end lighting fixtures only found on the biggest shows. Now the technology is accessible for any kind of event. This means your conference can benefit from having lots of creative looks and lighting effects, created by less equipment, all with less time to set-up.

LESS IS MORE

Moving lights have completely changed the art of conference lighting in the last two decades. Previously, if you wanted a certain piece of stage lit at a certain point in your show, a static light had to be set and focused there, and faded up when it was needed. If you wanted a different part of the stage lit, you had to rig and focus another light. Even a small rig of moving lights can offer a huge variety of looks throughout an event.



They can provide a simple wash, act as spots on talent, create moving geometric shapes on stage during musical numbers, make spectacular spinning beams, project moving brand logos by using custom gobos, and much more, depending on each fixtures' particular capabilities. This means your conference can do more with less, and save time and money.

JUST FOR EFFECT

Your lighting designer will have a set of effects up their sleeve to create standout moments in your conference. One of these is the gobo. A gobo is a glass disc etched with patterns or graphics. When fitted in a light's 'gobo wheel', that pattern or graphic is then projected as light. You can have gobos custom-made to project your own logos, branding and imagery. Other tricks your Lighting Director will employ include prisms, which break light into multiple beams or a texture, and frost, which makes light diffuse and smoky. They might also employ framing shutters, which blinker a light's output to have dramatic straight edges, forming geometric shapes, or lighting an object like a banner without light spilling past its edges.



WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...

Beams and mid-air texture effects are more effective during your conference if there's suitable theatrical haze. Haze (or 'smoke', as in 'smoke machine') is produced by dedicated hazers, which use special 'haze fluid', which is non-toxic and safe to breathe. It's the subtle use of haze that can really make a light show come alive. Hazers are controlled via the lighting desk, and there should be just enough in the venue to make the beams of light visible.

WIRELESS CONTROL SAVES TIME AND MONEY

A big cost in conference lighting is the time and labour cost of running cabling. Most lights need two things run to them; power and control signal. While some portable fixtures for wall up-lighting or highlights can be battery powered, every fixture needs control. That's why there's been a big trend in built-in wireless receivers for lighting fixtures. It started in the lower end and portable market, and is now available on a range of higher end fixtures, though it's still better to use wired control on very complicated and mission critical lights.

VISUALISING SUCCESS

During the design stage of your conference, your lighting designer should be able to sit down with you at a computer and show you a simulation of what the lighting for your event will look like.

This process is called previsualisation. You'll need to be able to get either CAD files of the venue or accurate diagrams and measurements in order for the Lighting Director to be able to accurately plot a design. After discussions on budget, what looks are needed for the show, and the lighting rig to be provided, the Lighting Director will be able to plot a set of basic looks that give you a clear indication of how your event will look. As a bonus, some previsualisation programmes can give the lighting team a head-start on setting up the show, as they can generate files that can be loaded straight into their lighting desks, cutting down on preparation time.



AND NOW, BRILLIANCE!

With a creative and resourceful lighting designer, and a clear idea of your message, even simple lighting can take your conference from sufficient to sophisticated. Adding colour, emphasising and highlighting people and graphics, and having a couple of 'Wow!' moments, is actually really easy, and made easier if you're familiar with what's available and possible. Talk to a Staging Connections Event Manager today about how some bright lights can show off your big ideas!

MORE INFO

Speak to your local Staging Connections representative or get in touch by emailing info@stagingconnections.com or call **1800 209 099** (AU) or **+64 9 259 0025** (NZ).