

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Event pros bring their designs to life with timesaving, productivity-enhancing software programs

BY KELLY WARDLE

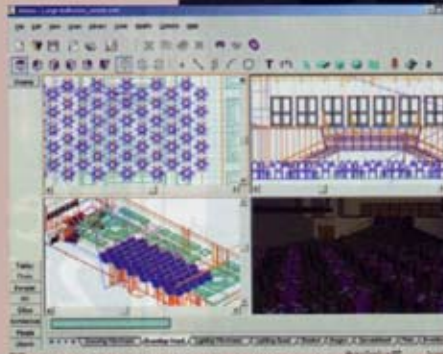
In this month's "Tech Tips," event producers weigh in on the software programs they use to present their design ideas to clients—and the programs that keep them organized once they're on the job.

TIP: Harness the potential of three-dimensional imaging to create eye-catching proposals.

"Most people in this business understand ideas best by seeing them, and that's done with a picture or a floor plan rendering," says Heather Keenan, president of Key Events in San Francisco, where the team uses the Vivien Virtual Event Designer program from Cast Software. The program integrates features such as realistic room renderings with report and order generation and a built-in database for inventory tracking.

"Not only can we do something simple with a venue floor plan—such as see how many tables can fit in a room and see what that is going to look like—but we can also get more sophisticated and design a backdrop for a stage, then make it 3-D so that when we show it to the client, they can see exactly what we're talking about," Keenan says. "We also love it because we can import and export CAD files, so if we've asked a lighting designer to do a lighting plot, we can import that into Vivien and actually input it into the floor plan or design," she notes. "It allows us to be very communicative with all of our vendors."

While Keenan loves the results she can



Room designer: A 3-D venue rendering and screen grab from Cast Software's Vivien.

achieve with Vivien, she cautions that the program takes some time to learn. "Don't think you're going to install it and start producing proposals with it the next day," she warns. "It takes a good three or four months for users to get a handle on it because it has so many features, and it's such a sophisticated program."