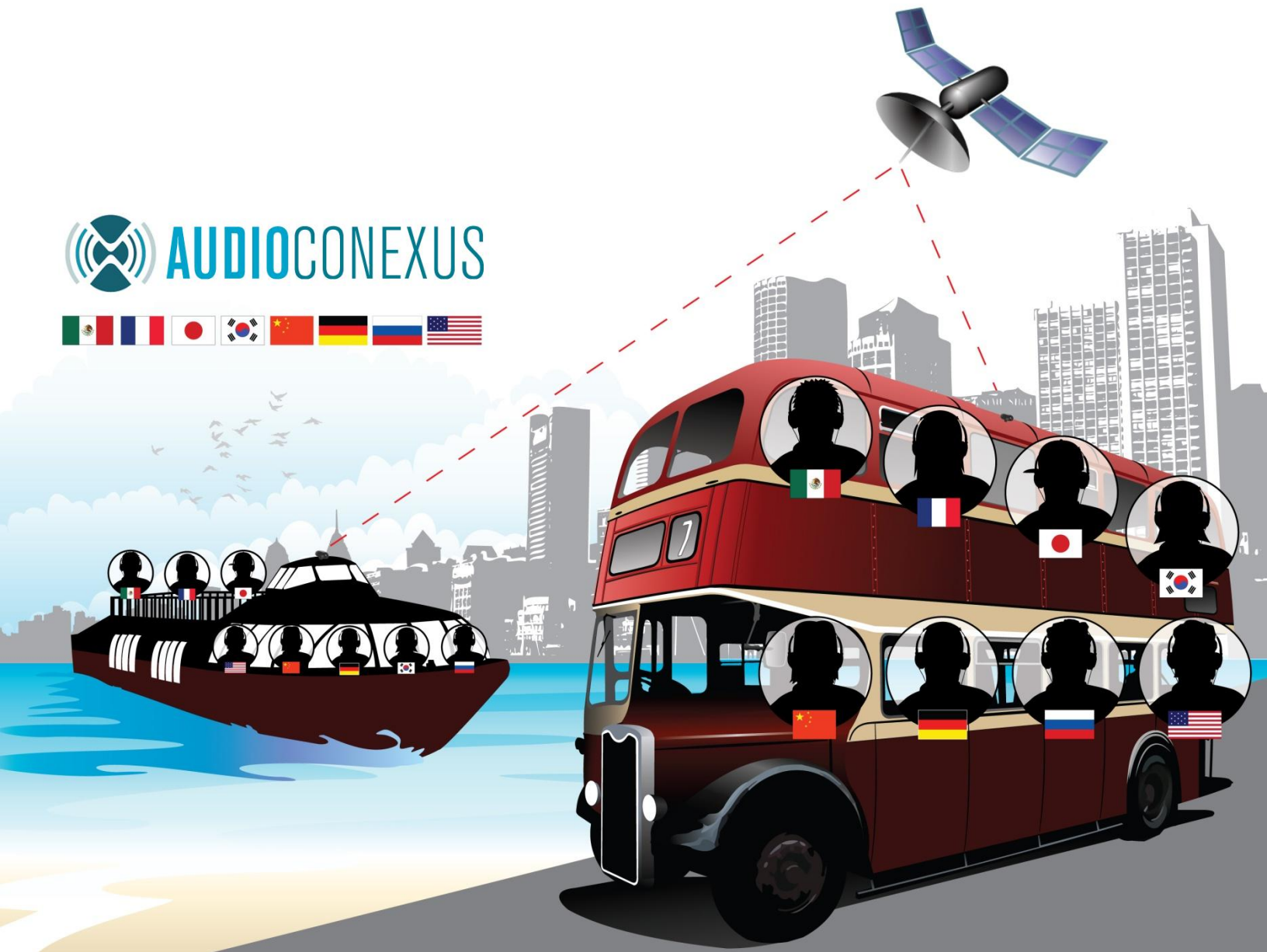


Multilingual Commentary Systems

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY *WORKBOOK*



In this special report, we want to share with you where many businesses fail at successful GPS commentary integration and why getting it right is essential.

Our intention here is to help you understand what you need to know right now – **before you buy**. And we'll walk you through the deliverables of a successful commentary system implementation so you can become *the authority* on GPS tour systems.

If you've downloaded this Workbook, chances are, you're looking for some helpful guidance. In the following pages, we'll explain what you need to know and help you understand what's involved in putting this all together.

After many installations with sightseeing companies all over the world, we've come to realize there's a reason why so many companies are struggling with their hardware and software. Or they're disappointed with their commentary.

Here it is:

The problem is people are not asking the right questions before they buy.

We've got the solution. If you're serious about understanding what you need to know before you buy, this Workbook is for you.

If you're going to skim the pages and scroll right down to our Questions Checklist, you're going to miss the real opportunity here. If you're looking for a comprehensive understanding of what you need to know – then read on.

You Need More Than Good Content

One of the least understood aspects of creating and implementing a GPS-guided audio tour, is the behind the scenes **architectural design** that is at the heart of every successful project.

We've heard about "failed tours" from too many tour operators. In most cases, the failure was not in the hardware they had purchased – but in the lack of a proper commentary integration methodology. What this means is – hardware, software, and commentary all working together in unison for the best possible passenger experience.

Let us give you a few examples of why projects fail:

Any company merely selling a "hardware solution" does not understand what is required for effective commentary integration. Therefore, "real world tour scenarios" are not taken into consideration.

Unfortunately, there are manufacturers with no real world implementation experience that just want to ship systems built without the features necessary for successful on-site implementations.

And you can't expect script writers or sound production companies to have the expertise or experience to create commentary that fits seamlessly into a GPS-guided audio tour. They simply don't understand how the Creative side meshes with the Hardware side. Within this domain, there are very specific "do's" and "don'ts".

So what are the right questions to ask? Before we get to these questions, we're going to highlight the components that make up a successful project.

All Hardware Systems Are Not Created Equal

Multilingual commentary systems are not created equal. Some systems are feature rich – while others offer limited features and functions. While features and functions may not seem

important right now, they can make or break a successful implementation. Let us tell you why using a few examples.

One important consideration for “urban-oriented” tours is “GPS-drift”. GPS-drift happens in high urban canyons (think New York City), when GPS signals bounce off buildings - “drifting” up to two blocks away. How does a company selling hardware manage this? The short answer is – more than likely, they don’t.

(However, they may after reading this Workbook – which is good for everybody. ☺)

Our point is, you need to be aware of a variety of conditions your tour will encounter - including: drivers, routes, traffic, and alternative routes. For example:

- How will your tour sound when your bus is stuck in traffic?
- What happens when your drivers – drive fast?
- How can you develop a tour that always sounds ideal, regardless of extenuating circumstances?

A GPS-guided audio tour requires more than just great content and dependable hardware. It also requires two levels of integration between the two. There is, in fact, an architecture that is essential.

So before we tie this all together, let’s review what you need to know. These are the project components you require for a successful tour architecture and design:

- Hardware
- Software
- Script Writing
- Foreign Language Translation (multi-language tours)
- Sound Production
- Commentary Integration
- Installation
- Testing

- Training

So let's begin with making the right hardware choice.

Hardware

There are currently two choices for commentary systems and each has its unique advantages. Here we'll describe your options and provide clarity on the differences between the two.

Hard-wired Commentary Systems

A hard-wired commentary system is exactly how it sounds. What it means is, each seat on your bus, boat or train is wired to an audio controller. This is how it works:

Each passenger has a control at his or her seat to select a channel, such as channel "1" for an English tour and channel "2" for a Spanish tour. These controllers are similar to the ones you'd find on a plane. Passengers "plug in" listening accessories such as headsets or ear buds to *listen* to your tours. The number of tours you can provide (at the same time) depends on how many channels your system supports.

Standard commentary systems range from 8 - 22 channels – which means 8 – 22 languages and or topics can be played at the same time (simultaneously).

How these systems work varies from vendor to vendor in terms of functions and features and how the interdependent parts work together.

The components of a hard-wired system include:

- Head End System (Commentary System)
- GPS Receiver
- Hubs
- Audio Controllers
- Listening Accessories

- Cables
- Driver Control Panel (Some vendors offer a manual interface to the system)
- Terminators
- Software

GPS commentary systems play your tour commentaries automatically, by triggering audio at specific geographic locations. Manual operation, the ability to play, pause and stop audio commentaries as required, is available in most systems. Information such as GPS data and audio files are set and stored on your commentary system using software.

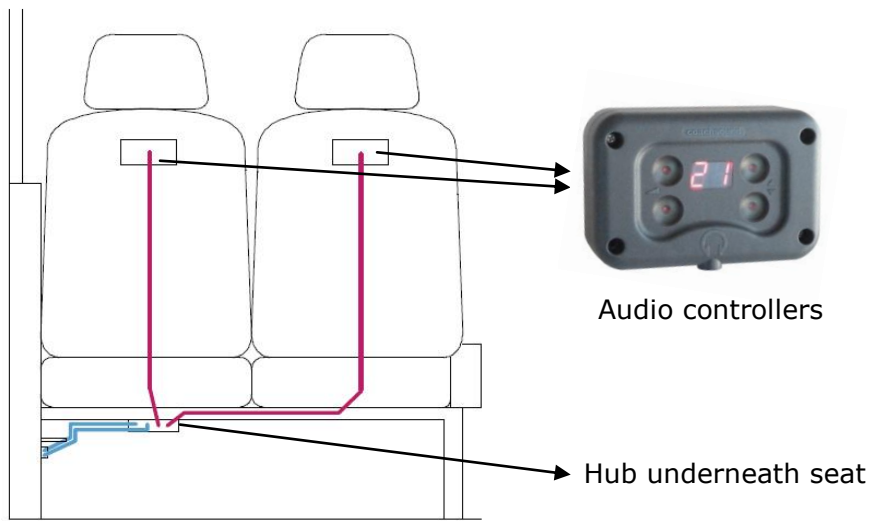
So how does your system *trigger* commentary?

A GPS receiver (mounted on a roof) is used to track a vessel or vehicle on its route, providing location data to a commentary system every one second. This data is used to “trigger” commentary at precisely the right moment.

A Driver’s Control Panel is used as a manual interface to your commentary system. A control panel is typically mounted on a dashboard so that it is accessible to drivers or captains. Every control panel is different in terms of the features it offers, depending on the manufacturer. However, it is widely used to play commentary manually. Manual commentary is often used for safety announcements and filler commentary. (For example, filler commentary can be played when a bus is idle in heavy traffic).

Filler Commentary describes a segment of audio that is not location specific. This includes general sightseeing commentary such as “*little know facts about San Francisco.*” This commentary can be played anywhere on a route – *or off it.*

To make this all work, cables are run from a commentary system to the first hub, or first pair of seats with audio controllers. From the first hub, a cable is connected to the next hub, in a daisy chain – to the last seat, with each hub supporting two audio controllers. These audio controllers are mounted on the backs of seats or on side walls.



Using the illustration above, you can visualize each seat with its own audio controller. Industry standard CAT-5 cables are used to connect two audio controllers to a hub. A hub is mounted on a wall or underneath a seat. (*Note: Some manufacturers provide proprietary cables so you'll need to investigate costs of replacement cables*).

The last hub is fitted with a "terminator". A terminator is used to terminate audio signals at the very last hub. This stops audio signals from bouncing back down a cable causing interference on passenger controllers.

Manufacturers of systems offer different solutions so it's important to compare the options.

Wireless Commentary Systems

Wireless commentary systems facilitate automated, GPS triggered, and simultaneous multilingual pre-recorded commentary to *receivers*. Designed specifically for mobile applications where portability and flexibility are essential in fleet management, wireless tour solutions remove the operational and visitor restrictions affiliated with hard-wired solutions.

A receiver's multi-channel design enables visitors to select the tour and language of their choice and allows a visitor to move around freely during their entire journey. An easy to use language selection switch and volume control knob is located on top of the receiver.

Transmitters deliver Radio Frequency ("RF") signals to receivers using RF shielded cables and antennas, mounted in the best locations for optimum performance.

To reduce the number of wireless receivers required on-site, many sightseeing operators choose to play one language over a Public Address System.

Wireless commentary systems sold on the market today vary in the number of channels they provide. When comparing systems, you need to evaluate how many audio channels you'll require. Standard commentary systems offer 4 – 10 channels – which will allow you to play 2 – 10 languages (or topics) the same time.



How these systems work differs from vendor to vendor.

The components of a wireless system include:

- Head End System (Commentary System)
- GPS Receiver
- Transmitters
- Receivers
- Listening Accessories
- Cables
- Driver Control Panel (Some vendors offer a manual interface to the system)
- Antennas
- Software

Hard-wired or Wireless? Which System is Right For You?

Wireless means passengers use wireless receivers and headsets to listen to your tours. They're not restricted to their seats like hard-wired systems.

So why choose one over the other?

Hop on, hop off sightseeing tours provide a good example of why hard-wired solutions should be used. You can't distribute and collect wireless receivers and headsets if your guests are constantly getting on and off your buses.

For boat and coach tours, wireless systems are ideal. Wireless commentary provides greater flexibility for your operation and your guests. On the operations side, you can easily move a commentary system from bus to bus as operational demands dictate. Also, you may not know which buses are providing sightseeing tours until the very day. This is another reason wireless makes more sense for some operators.

Wireless also means that commentary systems aren't out of commission when a vehicle comes in for maintenance or has a technical problem.

Wireless systems are great for all modes of transportation but are particularly good for boat tours, where passengers are more likely to be moving around during a tour.

Creating Audio Tours

Most hardware manufacturers have opted out of tour commentary development because "creative services" are outside of their core business.

This is why they offer one of two options:

1. Develop your commentary yourself (script writing and sound production).
2. Recommend a sound production studio that can "produce" your tours with professional narration. (And with music and sound effects)

There are several considerations when embarking on the development of audio tour commentary. This includes:

- Your Brand
- Tour Route Logistics (and Management)

- Script Writing – Stories
- Foreign Language Translation
- Sound Production – Professional Narration, Music and Sound Effects
- Software (Creating your tours)
- Installation – Commentary Integration and Testing

Let's begin by talking about your brand.

Your Brand

What Audio-Branding Means For Your Business

Stories punctuated with music and sound effects create memorable images that stay with us. When this describes your audio tour experience, your brand is being effectively communicated. We call this audio-branding.

Audio-Branding may be the last thing you think of when it comes to marketing your passenger experience. But as a tour operator, the tour experience you offer communicates who you are and what you represent. Most companies are not thinking about your brand. But this is a key consideration when writing (and producing) your tours. Here, we'll explain why?

How To Deliver Tours That Sell

Branding occurs when you connect with customers by delivering on YOUR promise of excellence - by providing memorable tour experiences.

Branding helps set you apart from your competitors. This is especially important in the sightseeing industry where it can be hard for people to distinguish between product features and benefits.

Take for example, a city sightseeing tour. When visitors of a city get ready to take a sightseeing tour, most search websites or blogs to look for favourably reviewed

tours. When you've audio branded your tour, the reviews are more likely to reflect the memorable quality of your tour, and sway perspective customers to take your tour.

Your tour, after all, is distinctive.

This is especially important for international tour operators and foreign language travelers. Since they typically have few choices when it comes to sightseeing tours in their native tongue, they typically buy whatever is available with little loyalty or expectation for your brand.

Inject Life Into Your Brand By Providing Better Tours

Studies have shown audio-branding works. Martin Lindstrom of the Brand Sense agency states, "**there's a 65% chance of a mood change when we hear a positive sound.**" Your listeners don't just listen to your tour, they connect with your experience on a deeper emotional level.

That's why creating experiences that are authentic, engaging, entertaining and educational is very important. **Every tour is unique.** When you are creating your audio tours, you are doing something vital for your brand.

There is no doubt that the right audio tour can make a big impact on the success of your tours. That's why you need to be thinking about **who you are** and **what you want to share**. This needs to be a part of a process for creating – and producing your tours.

Now that you have a better understanding of why this is important for your brand, we'd like to discuss the "Creative" aspects of your project. Most people do it the wrong way... and are really disappointed when it doesn't turn out the way they thought it would. We've been on pre-recorded tours on buses and boats where the commentary is flat – and sometimes bad – or boring. This is something you want to avoid. Because **the passenger experience is everything** – and your closest connection to your customers.

So when creating your experience – let us help you gain some clarity on script writing and why it’s so important.

Script Writing

We get many questions about script writing. And we’re sure you’re thinking about how you approach this? Or you may even be thinking that the script you have now is good enough and the work is (mostly) done. In some cases – this may be true.

But we can tell you from experience – most of the time – scripts need polishing or need to be rewritten all together.

This is because script writing for audio tours is a specialized discipline. ***How so?***

When we think of writing, we often think of writing for books, magazines, newspapers, blogs, and short stories. This is generally referred to as “creative writing”. This style of writing is meant to be read silently – not heard. Creative writing relies on description to “paint the picture” of what’s going on, or what’s important. Script writing for tours requires less descriptive words, because the audience “gets the picture” with the additional benefit of professional voice talents and sound designers.

Audio tour scripts consist of stories that are designed to be accompanied by music and sound effects. We call it: “writing for the ear”.

“Writing for the ear” is different than writing for the mind’s eye.

The audio tour script is designed to be integrated with music and sound effects, in order to create a moving, emotional experience.

A good script can mean the difference between a great tour and a tour that falls flat. Writers who have the expertise and the experience know how to tell fun, entertaining, and

educational stories that sustain the interest of your audience. But even the best voice-over talent, music, or sound effects are useless, without a good audio tour script.

People don't respond well to the mere recitation of facts and figures. However, they always connect with well-told stories. You need to count on a great story that captures the imagination of your audience. After all – this is an investment **in your brand**, and in your **passenger experience**.

Writing With Clarity For A Memorable Experience

Audio tour scripts are written using very simple, easy to understand words, that communicate messages that are crystal clear. A well written audio tour script sounds to the listener like they're in the middle of a great conversation.

Imagine sitting with a good friend at a bar, sharing a story about your recent travels. You wouldn't talk with them in a formal tone, or use poly-syllabic words to describe what is was like to "zip-line" through a rainforest canopy. **Neither do we.**

It's not uncommon for an audio tour to use short sentences, or even sentence fragments to describe what the audience is seeing all around them. Remember – it's conversational. Just like your conversation with a friend, audio tours offer the opportunity for your guests to "bond" with professional narrators. Great narratives require great writers who know how to tell captivating stories - the essence of a great audio tour experience.

That's why script writing has to be an internal priority so you *get it right*.

"Sound" Writing

Audio tour writers create scripts with a sound-scape in mind.

So what's a sound-scape? When writing an audio tour, seasoned writers are already thinking about a fully enhanced audio experience, supporting the narrative with thematic and atmospheric music, secondary voices, sound effects, and sound-scape ambience. These

aspects of the tour, namely the “sound”, have the power to produce emotional responses, and set the mood to be experienced by your visitors.

You want to ensure that your writer has this experience.

Script Writing. The Creative Process of Branding

When our writers create a script, they take into consideration three integrated and intrinsically connected components.

- **Tour Theme** (the creative approach to take in developing your guided audio tour experiences);
- **Storyline / Logistics** (the continuity or thread of story elements which unfold within your guided experience as per the specifics of your Tour route); and,
- **Production Enhancement** (how they give expression to the story elements for English and multi-language audio.)

This means your audience will not just enjoy your tour, they'll know what you're about and what you represent. This is important because creating your audio tour should also create product differentiation. **Since it's your unique tour, it should sound unique to you.**

Investing in Your Script

Even if the script reads well on paper – it will not necessarily “perform” well when placed in front of professional voice talent, narrators, and actors.

If you're considering an audio tour, we recommend making the investment in a professional writer who has a portfolio of sound productions. It's best to select a writer that is well versed in writing for the ear, as we have defined it. This will help to elevate your audio tour to something great.

Foreign Language Translation

Getting foreign language translation right is important for three reasons:

1. You can't do literal translations of your English script, or your project will fail.
2. You need to write for the particular culture of the language.
3. You need storytellers that translate and adapt – not translators that aren't storytellers.

Why Translation Firms Don't Work

When creating audio tours for more than one language, we have a well honed process in place to deliver high-quality tours that are fun and entertaining.

This is something you need to consider when translating your scripts into different languages. **Here's how we do it and why:**

Foreign language translation is completed using experienced storytellers and professional voice talents. Our foreign language translation methodology requires that two translators work together on every language translation for Quality Assurance.

You don't want to be in a sound production studio with poorly translated scripts. This will cost you more time – and more money.

During this process, our translators are not doing literal translations of the script. This is because it takes less time to say something in English than in most other languages. Our foreign language storytellers capture the essence of stories, add meaning and context, while taking into consideration audience and cultural sensitivity.

Why You Need To Write For Language and Culture

When we write for language and culture, we avoid things like slang, wordplay and puns. This is because they won't be understood, or worse, may offend.

Our focus is to make foreign language tours fun and entertaining, easy to understand, clear and familiar.

After our foreign language script translations are done, we then vet our translated scripts through our voice talents. We take this additional step for Quality of Experience.

When translating your script into multi-language tours, you need to ensure that what's heard by your passengers – is just as memorable as your original script.

Timing is Essential For GPS Tours

Timing is essential for GPS tours. That's why creating a Timing Template as a guideline for writers is essential to writing your script.

This timing guideline results from an assessment of high and low traffic scenarios, tidal changes, alternative routes, tour stops, safety, announcements, and discrete ad placements to name a few.

You also want to make sure that your tour commentaries begin and end at the same time (in all languages). This is why a timing template becomes a fundamental tool when developing your audio tour script.

Storytellers Provide Better Foreign Language Translation

Since it often takes more time to say the same thing in another language, a literal translation of English will not work. This is because literal foreign language translations of an English script will create audio segments that vary widely in lengths of time.

When it comes to providing GPS tour entertainment you always need to be thinking about your next point of interest. That's why we developed a team of foreign language storytellers. This is because professional storytellers capture the essence of the story being told, in the allotted time. And they tell stories the way your foreign language guests want to hear them. What this means is, we take culture into consideration during the translation process and so should you. What we say in English may not translate well in Japanese, or in fact, may be culturally insensitive.

When writing foreign language tours, write for language and culture.

We hope this helps you to better understand the importance of foreign language translation, and why getting it right is equally important.

Now that we've covered off script writing and foreign language translation, we'd like to share something that gets us really excited. Taking your script into a sound production studio.

Sound Design and Production

So Why is Sound an Important Factor in the Creative Process?

It's what lifts the sails – and gives your tours life.

Your goal, from writing, translation, to sound design and mixing, is to captivate the imaginations of your passengers.

So what do you need to look for when considering sound production studios?

There are several aspects to making this happen. Let's start with narration.

Professional Narration

Important to the storytelling process will be your choice of narrative voice. When it comes to delivering your tour, it's important that you work with the pros. Narration is a key component of delivering a great tour – not only do you want great voice(s), you want to get the inflections and tone right. You also want professional recording equipment, with no ambient noise, with crystal clear sound.

During your Creative and Branding process, and after your script is completed, you should be asking for voice talent samples. You're looking for voices that will fit perfectly into your tour.

One of the considerations you'll have is male or female voice talents – or both? Our recommendation is to have a single authoritative narrator voice rather than two, when your tour is less than an hour. This is because you want to provide continuity, a consistent voice that has the opportunity to build warm relationships with your passengers. The personality of the narrator you select should be avuncular, friendly, personable, with a smile in their voice.

When choosing a voice talent, you also want someone who has the ability to bring the subtleties of your script to life. Some voice talents were born for 60 second spots – but fall down when asked to bridge a 45 minute tour.

If your tour is more than an hour – then you can introduce another narrator. Here's an example of how two narrators worked together to create passenger experiences on the canals of Amsterdam. Blue Boat Company wanted to provide an intimate, light hearted experience of Amsterdam – to share inside stories of Amsterdam's history told by old-time Amsterdammers.

To achieve this vision, we wrote a script for Ron and Nel, a married couple of many years, who share "*their* Amsterdam" with passengers. A quirky pair, Ron and Nel play off each other, finishing each other's thoughts and recounting some of their most treasured memories – along the way. The tour has been well received by passengers – with satisfaction ratings going way up. This is because Ron and Nel are sharing personal experiences – that passengers wouldn't otherwise experience on a general sightseeing tour.

Ron and Nel have also taken on a life of their own – becoming central to Blue Boat branding. While these are fictitious characters, Ron and Nel now occupy Twitter, FaceBook and other social media forums. As discussed earlier – this is why branding is an important consideration during the Creative process. This is because your tours are a part of a focused strategy – attract new customers; create differentiation in your market.

The Importance of Music

All of our enhanced audio tours include music because music evokes images and emotional responses. Stories and music are key to captivating people's imaginations. That's why you shouldn't underestimate the power of music and what it can do for your tours.

Selecting the right music is essential. For AlohaBus, a double decker, hop on hop off sightseeing company, it was really important to them that they capture the "Aloha spirit" through narration – *and music*. So we worked with famous Hawaiian voice talents in Oahu and selected music to highlight the Polynesian experience. It's this authenticity that immerses passengers in their culture – and passenger feedback has been amazing.

Sound Effects

So why do we recommend enhancing your tours with sound effects? Sound effects help us to tell stories. We use sound effects to complete the experience – and to enhance it. There is a long history of sound effects in cinema and in television.

Can you imagine watching Star Wars without the sound of the lightsaber? Sound effects are used for enhancement or can be created. Used at the right time, they're vital to the way we tell stories. They can be anything from a creaking door to the sound of a raven's call – which can set the tone and the mood for the experience.

We're always careful not to overdo it, placing sounds at just the right moment – so people can experience different times and places.

If you're planning on producing audio tours with music, it doesn't cost a lot more to add sound effects. After all, if it's enhanced tours you're looking for, sound effects will complete the experience – and provide better tours for your passengers.

Spoken Word Only Versus Enhanced Sound Productions

We've produced many different tours for our customers. Sometimes, the question of what gets produced comes down to your budget.

With that said, we're always recommending fully enhanced experiences for your customers. This is because **your tour will be remembered** – not the device people used to hear it.

The best way we can illustrate this point is by providing you with the difference between spoken word only and an enhanced segment – with music and sound effects.

While we produce both options – the proof is in the pudding. Click here to listen to [a spoken word only sound production versus fully enhanced audio](#). You'll be taken to our website.

Mixing and Editing

When our professional narrators are recording your tour, we're already researching music and sound effects. This is a process. We're looking at the entire tour from a thematic and branding perspective, as well as looking for music that evokes the kinds of emotional responses we want from particular narratives.

Where the magic happens is in the mixing and editing. Sound editors are the unsung heroes of sound production. They are focused on polishing the audio tour to enhance the experience – everything involved in post-production services. This includes editing dialogue, rerecording if necessary, to best capture the qualities of voice narration and sound design.

Sound design is the process of enhancing the experience with additional sound effects, voice editing, and music editing. And finally – mixing. This means finely adjusting levels to create a seamless and harmonious experience from start to finish – using state-of-the-art equipment and software.

Commentary Integration

As we mentioned at the beginning of this report: "One of the least understood aspects of creating and implementing a GPS-guided audio tour, is the behind the scenes **architectural design** that is at the heart of every successful project."

You want to work with a company that has a well honed creative process and commentary integration methodology. This methodology needs to focus on your tour development, from prior to arriving on-site; right through to going live with your tour(s). This includes a tour design architecture (an on-site assessment and understating of your location); and a customized approach to script writing and sound production. Once the content has been produced and approved, a second on-site visit specifically to install the newly created content into the hardware is required.

This means the company you choose should be testing the entire system on-site. They should also be organizing training sessions with your staff, so YOU feel completely comfortable with all aspects of your new system. Before anyone leaves your site - your team needs to be empowered to self manage your software and hardware.

This eliminates the biggest problem that we see and hear about: companies that sell hardware and software, but do not develop the seamless integration of the content into the hardware. This failure to effectively manage the implementation link, leads to failed projects and unsatisfied customers.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the seamless integration of content into hardware. Because each tour has unique circumstances, an "off-the-shelf" architecture for the integration is not possible.

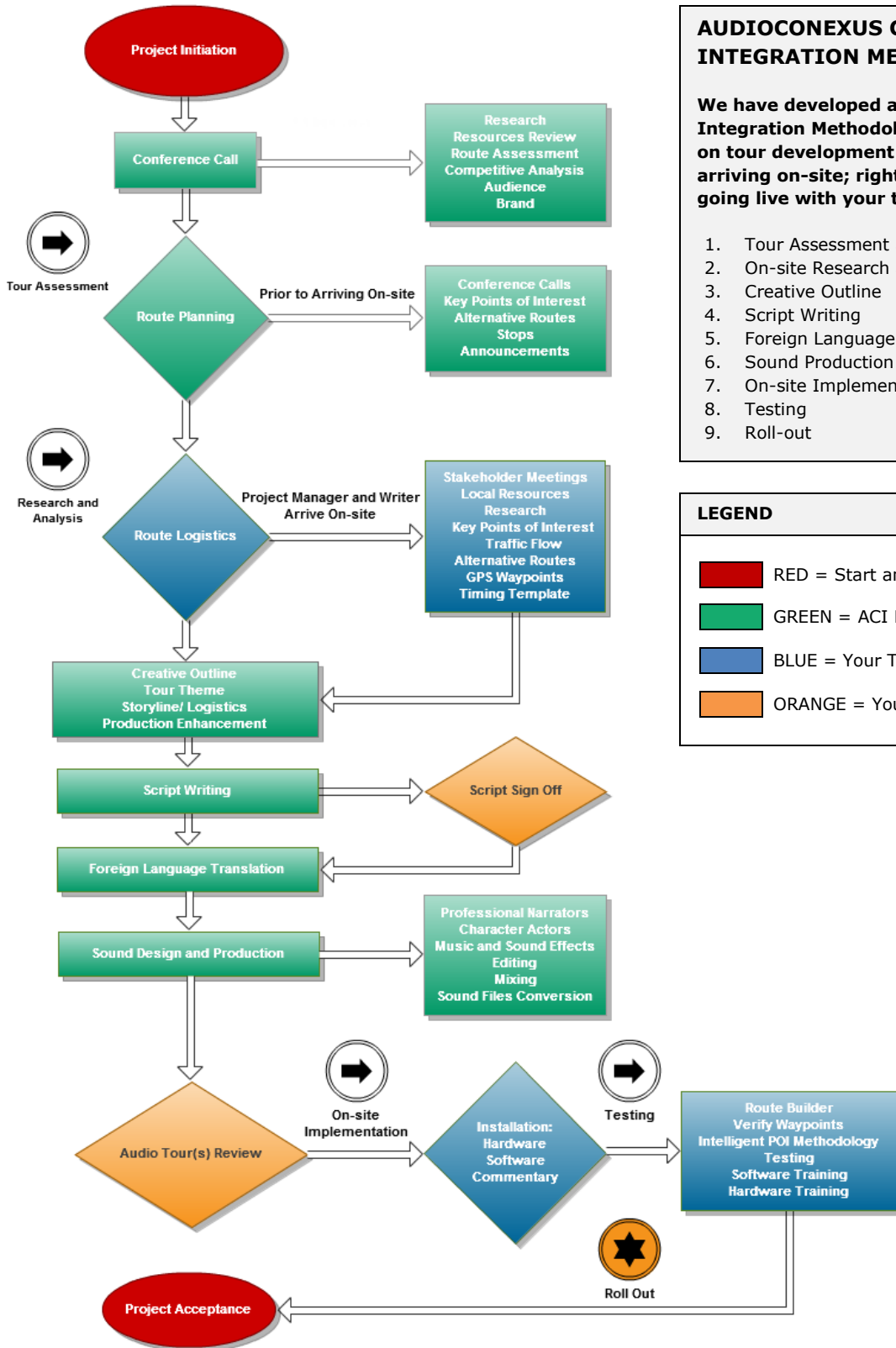
This is what you should be looking for – a team that arrives on-site who is capable of creating the architecture necessary to script and produce effective content, that, once programmed into the hardware, creates a tour that has taken all your logistics into consideration. **This is your best insurance against a "failed tour"**.

To give you a better representation of what to look for, see a graphic representation of how our Commentary Integration Methodology works on the next page (simplified for illustration purposes).

AUDIOCONEXUS COMMENTARY INTEGRATION METHODOLOGY

We have developed a Commentary Integration Methodology that focuses on tour development from prior us arriving on-site; right through to going live with your tour(s).

1. Tour Assessment and Brand
2. On-site Research and Analysis
3. Creative Outline
4. Script Writing
5. Foreign Language Translation
6. Sound Production
7. On-site Implementation
8. Testing
9. Roll-out



LEGEND

- RED = Start and Finish of Process
- GREEN = ACI Project Management
- BLUE = Your Team Involvement
- ORANGE = Your Approvals

Summary

AudioConexus is a special company, a company of people proud of their work and excited about their future. Above all, it is a company defined by the character and integrity of its people. As we work to serve our customers, our dedication to strong technology and compelling passenger experiences is supported by our core values, to act with uncompromising honesty and integrity in everything we do.

As we continue to see strong growth, we are sincerely grateful for the way we have been embraced by customers worldwide. Our creative and innovative approach is at the center of our service.

Purchasing commentary systems is an investment in your business; and in your passenger experiences. This includes hardware, software and an understanding of how commentary is developed, written and produced (in English and in foreign languages).

It's our priority to be an informative, insightful and enjoyable resource. At AudioConexus, we're helping people and companies achieve their goals by enabling a competitive transformation of their tour products, their service offerings and their market position. Equally important, however, is the ability to protect your investment and strengthen your business.

That's why we created this workbook and "Your Questions Checklist" which is also available as a separate workbook (with room for your notes) on our website.

I hope this workbook has helped you to gain clarity so YOU can become a trusted authority on commentary systems in your organization. To help you, we've included these questions on the next page.

Thank you for reading this – and for your commitment to getting it right. If you have questions, let me know, and we'll do my best to expand on these topics whenever possible (for everyone).

Wishing You Much Success,



Jonathan Stanley, President and CEO, AudioConexus Inc.

Your Questions Checklist

Hard-wired Commentary System Questions

- What are the key features of the commentary system?
- How many channels does the commentary system support?
- How is the system connected (together) specifically? (System, cables, connectors, hubs, audio controllers)
- How does the system connect to a Public Address System? How easy is it to play any language over the PA System as required?
- Does the system support microphone inputs for live guided commentary?
- Does the system support VOX override capabilities for safety and emergency announcements?
- What other external audio sources can be connected to the system?
- Can music be played on a separate audio channel or between commentary segments?
- Does the commentary system provide manual play, pause and stop features?
- What other features are available from the Driver/Captain Control Panel?
- What are the power requirements for the system?
- How many audio controllers can be connected to a single cable loom on 12Volts? 24Volts?
- What is the storage media and how is it supported?
- What is the software and how easy it is to use?
- How is commentary updated on the system?
- Can we self-manage the system without the need for technical staff?
- How easy is it to add additional Points of Interest (GPS triggers)?
- What features are supported for GPS triggering commentary on a route?
- How is this technology applied for other sightseeing operators? How are they using it?
- What's involved in a typical installation and how are we involved?
- What do you have in terms of manuals for support?

- What is your warranty policy and how quick is your turnaround time for parts?
- What are your cables and where do we order them if they need to be replaced?
- What training is provided on-site?

If you're considering a wireless solution, here are some additional questions you need to ask.

Wireless Commentary System Questions

- What frequencies do you operate in?
- Are these frequencies compliant with our country's regulatory body for wireless communications?
- Is your commentary system portable? Can it move from bus to bus, and if so, how?
- How are wireless receivers charged?
- How many hours will wireless receivers last on a full charge?
- What are your charging recommendations?
- What type of batteries are used? How often do they need to be replaced?
- Is the receiver charger case portable?
- What listening accessories do you recommend?
- How do we address ADA Compliance? (applies to United States)
- What are your recommendations for the distribution and collection of devices?
- How is this technology applied by other sightseeing operators? How are they using it?
- What's involved in a typical installation and how are we involved?
- What training is provided on-site?

Software

- What is the software and how do we access it?
- What Operating Systems are supported? Windows XP, Vista, 7?

- How do we create a tour route?
- How do we add a new GPS waypoint and segments of commentary?
- How do we add new languages or topics using the software?
- How easy is it to move a GPS waypoint?
- Does your software support multiple routes?
- How are multiple routes managed by the system and the Driver/Captain Control Panel?
- What is the cost of software? Are there any ongoing costs?
- What are the features of the software?
- How does the software handle high and low traffic scenarios?
- How does the software manage variable speeds of vehicles and vessels?
- What happens when a bus moves into a GPS trigger while existing commentary is playing?
- How is commentary GPS triggered? We provide several scenarios for GPS triggering commentary based on the outcome we are planning to achieve - ask how the system triggers audio? Are there settings to change the way commentary is triggered?

Usability

- How easy is the software to use? Can you provide an example?
- What training is required and how much time will it take?
- What support do you offer for training?
- How does the software interface with the commentary system?
- How is our route managed?
- How do drivers select a route? (Multiple routes stored on the system)
- What is the hardware interface to the system? And what equipment is required?
- How does the system manage changes to the route?
- What other software tools does your software work with for managing GPS, commentary and route maps?

Passenger Experience

- How does the software support the passenger experience in terms of usability?
- What features are available regarding passenger alerts?
- What are the features of the audio controllers?
- How is music introduced and managed as either a separate music channel or between audio commentaries or both?
- What listening accessories do you recommended?
- How is live commentary delivered by a step-on guide?
- What are the safety override capabilities of the system?

Commentary

- What kinds of sightseeing operations have you worked with? Buses, Boats, Trains?
- What experience do your writers have? How do they write? (You're looking for the ears - not they eyes)
- Please explain your script writing process.
- Please provide examples of scripts you've written for other sightseeing companies.
- How is research conducted?
- What resources do you require from us?
- Can you provide commentary samples?
- What is your Creative Development Methodology? And how is it applied?
- What kind of "on the ground" operational experience does your company have for creating GPS tours? Please provide examples.
- What are your goals for script writing and sound production and why?
- What are some of the challenges you've encountered in the field and how did you overcome them?
- How collaborative is your process? What are the approval points?
- What have you produced in terms of multilingual commentary?
- How do you translate our script for foreign language tours?

- How are you culturally sensitive during this translation process?
- What is your access to voice talent? And how are they selected?
- Who owns the commentary when it's completed?
- How are music license rights transferred?
- What resources are required from our side? When are our resources required? How much time do we need to dedicate to this project?
- How much time will you spend on-site with us? And what do you require?