
Controlling and Enhancing the Tent Environment

This overview is intended to set out elements that are controllable and measure the degree of control you can expect in a specified cost range. Enhancing a tent environment is strictly a function of budget, creativity and an art form. It is impractical to expect a light-weight tent system to be compatible with a high end controlled environment.

The attached sheet will help you categorize items and cost factors for future projects.

Sidewalls establish the tent enclosure. On one end of the spectrum, they are merely hanging curtains and on the other end, a drum tight panel locked into the legs and anchored at the bottom. As the sidewalls tighten up, you can apply heating or air conditioning (AC) to control the temperature of the internal environment. Sight lines can be provided for guests to "look out" through windows or even clear walls as dictated by the event.

Doors define the entrances in a tent system. They add an element of permanence and present a finished look in tent décor. A good door system with proper closures and tightened sidewalls will help control the internal temperature.

Floors control the internal tent environment and enhance the space. There are four levels to tent flooring.

Rollout floor products are simple and easy to use. They come ready-made and are suitable for events with or without additional covers, such as turf or carpet.

Frame the floor with dimensional lumber and cover it with plywood for a solid surface.

Covered surfaces and raised platform can be used to build the floor.

The covering is the finishing touch to all floors. This is where color and texture can be introduced to your event. i.e. Carpet, turf, tile or other specialty products. Turf is a good option for short-term events while carpet is ideal for party themes or setting demands for larger tent applications. Padding can be added to provide a plush and comfortable feel.

Temperature Control covers a wide range between cold to hot. The most important aspect of heating or cooling your tented environment is to know your weather conditions for the time of the year and location you are staging the event. You may obtain weather patterns for a particular month by researching historical data from the National Weather Service.

Heating a tent is reasonably simple and low costing when propane powered heaters can be used. When electric heat is required, there is more exposure and generally requires additional power from a generator.

Air Conditioning is more difficult and can cost many times more than the tent rental itself. A/C consumes more power and will require generated power sources. Always use competent rental contractors and never cut the supply short to save the budget. This is the shortest route to disaster!

Tent lining can effectively transform any interior of a tent into a new level of decorative finesse. Easy to install systems are now available for rent, and liners may just be the best "dollar" spent in your budget

Swagging or *Bunting* strips of fabric in attractive patterns can enhance the *First Impression* of your tented event.

Pre-built liner systems are modular and can quickly cover a ceiling and change the look inside a tent, but only at a fraction of the labor of hand swagging or draping.

Start by lining the ceiling to remove the visual clutter. Next, cover the legs and finally line the walls and add accent color panels until every inch of the interior is covered.

When budgets are generous, hand drape the entire interior of a tent structure to create a soft yet stunning atmosphere. Be sure that you have an artist with creative experience that can handle the job.

Colorful accents can be added once the tent is completely lined, i.e. swags, gathered valances or custom colors within the liner itself.

Lighting is often one of the most under-estimated ways to improve tent environment. Lighting ranges from practical applications to very dramatic and can budget in a wide scope. Remember to consult a lighting specialist when it is the primary element of your décor package.

Systems such as globe lights, chandeliers, floor lamps and planter lamp are pre-built and can be used with dimmers or rheostats to create an elegant, adjustable light quality. Twinkle lights and their larger versions create a warm glow with visually interesting break up pattern. Lighting instruments with specific abilities such as PAR's, Ellipsoidals and Fresnels take the atmosphere to the next level by introducing color variety with the use of gels, texture or decoration with the use of pattern gobos.

Mood is a result of light quality and complexity. With a little understanding, gobos and color choices influence the occupants' reaction to the space. Gobos drop into a Leko or other ellipsoidals and can be ordered to display names and logos for specific events or personal touches. Catalogs are available of inexpensive patterns and they add visual variety by texturing the light quality. Colored washes of light (from above or below) cast across the tent or liner fabric and excite or elevate the event to the next level. Subtle use of pin spots or floor lights will produce highlights and shadows that compliment, enlarge or make an intimate environment. The ultimate visual experience combines color, texture and movement with computer programmable color scrollers or DJ lights. These can respond to sound, movement or be pre-programmed to follow event specific requirements.

Here is a quick overview of the many lighting options for décor in a tent environment

Party Lights: Strands of globe lights, chandeliers, floor lamps, planter lights and twinkle light strands. Pre-built systems are designed easily to work easily with tent systems and cost the least.

Stage Lights: High powered lighting products used to splash, shoot and project high intensity color and images. Place color "gels or cells" to a number of stage light fixtures and dramatically change the color of liner or interior of a tent.

Programmed Lights: The final "wow" factor in lighting is programmable light projectors that move and dance to music, while projecting images and shooting color in multiple directions.