

Mastering interfaces: why integrated specialist planning drives project success

CMY Brand Solutions – Whitepaper

When the cable doesn't fit the conduit

Architecture and trade-fair/event builds are high-intensity job sites: tight schedules, many trades in parallel, extreme technical density. If you've ever watched an AV team lay cable at night only to learn the next morning that electrical is claiming the same tray for power, you know the core issue:

interfaces.

The biggest challenge isn't the technology itself, but the **hand-offs between responsibilities**. That's where projects either run smoothly-or descend into chaos.

Typical day-to-day conflicts

In practice, interface problems show up on almost every project. Examples:

- **AV and electrical (ELT):** event systems bring peak loads that ELT plans often ignore. Result: outages or improvised retrofits.
 - **Lighting and architecture:** spots or projectors break sightlines, dazzle visitors, or obscure architectural details.
 - **Fire detection (BMA) and show tech:** speakers, screens or trusses block detectors or sprinklers. Standards like **EN 54** collide with staging ambitions.
 - **Stage construction and safety:** rigging or decor constricts escape routes.
- Each conflict costs **money and time**-and almost all of them are avoidable with integrated planning.

The cost of unresolved interfaces

- **Cost blow-outs via change orders:** when trades collide during build, fixes must happen immediately. Open day doesn't move-clients pay whatever it takes.
- **Time loss:** collisions cause delays. Instead of working in parallel, trades wait until conflicts are cleared. Entire phases slip.
- **Quality degradation:** quick fixes are rarely elegant. Rerouted cables, improvised mounts and late changes hurt the result.

Integrated specialist planning as the answer

The core idea: engage **all trades early** and run them in a single, coordinated master plan. That doesn't mean one planner does everything-it means one party moderates, coordinates and resolves conflicts.

Methods that make it work

- **BIM models (Building Information Modeling):** all trades work in one model; clashes (e.g., cable tray vs. sprinkler) are visible on screen.
- **Common data environments (CDEs):** one source of truth keeps plans current.
- **Interface workshops:** regular sessions where all parties clear open questions together.
- **Visual simulations:** lighting, acoustics and egress simulations surface issues early.

Case study: 2,000 m² brand showcase

An international company planned a 2,000 m² trade-fair presence with multiple interactive installations. Initially, trades were planned separately. Early design revealed a growing list of conflicts. Switching to integrated specialist planning delivered:

- **15% cost savings** by avoiding change orders,
- **several days** of build-time gained through true parallel work,
- **notably higher quality** from aligning staging and safety.

Recommendations for clients

- Introduce **interface workshops** early-ideally in concept.
- Appoint a **central coordinator** with cross-trade competence.
- **Document responsibilities**-every interface needs an owner.
- Use **digital tools** consistently-paper plans aren't enough for complex builds.
- **Budget for coordination**-it's always cheaper to solve conflicts at the desk than on site.

Taming the Achilles' heel

Interfaces are the Achilles' heel of complex projects. They're inevitable when multiple trades share tight space-but whether they become a **risk or an advantage** depends on planning.

Integrated specialist planning isn't a nice-to-have; it's the only approach that reliably protects **cost, schedule and quality** over the long term. Ignore it, and you'll pay twice.