

How to Break “Out of the Box” with Innovative Digital Projection

By Rich McPherson



Every growing congregation offers new opportunities to use sound, video and animation to create awe-inspiring services and events. As your house of worship's attendance has grown, you've probably already experimented with larger video screens and more powerful audio systems. But technologies like these are just the beginning.

If you thought projection systems were just for classrooms, movie theaters and big sporting events, you might be surprised to learn how much more powerful and flexible – not to mention affordable – projection technology has become over the past few years.

Today's houses of worship use projectors not only on the walls of large sanctuaries, but also to turn classrooms, meeting spaces, and even floors and ceilings, into colorful canvases of digital images and video.

Let's take a closer look at how cutting-edge congregations are using projection systems to transform interior spaces throughout their houses of worship. You'll probably find that many of these ideas spark your own imagination, too.

Edge blending and cinema-quality projection make every room a colorful canvas.

You don't have to invest in a huge flat screen display to transform your sanctuary into a showcase for dazzling video imagery. An ever-growing number of houses of worship are using simple white walls as canvases for digital video – while many also project animated imagery across their walls, stages, and even floors and ceilings. All it takes is a standard projector, calibrated to fit your sanctuary's unique size and shape.

And sanctuaries are only one of many locations waiting to be brought to life with projection. If you've been using standard pull-down projection screens for weddings, memorials and celebrations in your classrooms and meeting rooms, now's a perfect time to take those events to the next level. A projector can transform every surface of those rooms into a backdrop for panoramic visuals, inspiring your congregation and visitors to fully immerse themselves in the communal experience.

When it comes to mapping digital video across large, multi-textured surfaces, you'll find it's worthwhile to invest in a projector with built-in edge blending technology. Edge blending can seamlessly combine several projected images into a single panoramic view – even when those images come from different projectors and are mapped onto completely different kinds of surfaces (such as walls, stages and even corners).

And for the full cinematic experience, you may also want to invest in a projector that delivers a digital cinema-quality image. A cinema-quality projector delivers exactly the same brilliant colors and sharp definition you'd expect at a movie theater – at a cost hardly more than that of a standard presentation projector. Give a cinema-quality projector a test run, and you'll find that it provides stunningly deep, warm colors.

Laser projectors and short throw lenses make every surface a digital masterpiece. So far, we've just been talking about projecting on walls and other vertical surfaces. But the potential of projection extends far beyond. Many houses of worship have even turned their floors and ceilings into projection spaces – inviting worshippers to follow an animated path toward the next stage of today's service or to gaze up in wonder at a vault of colorful imagery and text.

If you plan to point some of your projectors up at the ceiling or down at the floor, you'll find it's easiest to work with laser-based projectors. In contrast to lamp-based projectors, which may flicker and lose light when pointed straight up or down, laser-based projectors maintain steady, brilliant images, no matter what angle they're projecting from.

When experimenting with projection in narrow spaces like hallways, meanwhile, you'll find it's helpful to use a projector with an ultra short throw lens, which is designed to deliver maximum image size, resolution and color depth even in a tight space. You'll probably want to mount your short throw projector just above the ceiling line, pointing downward across the wall.

And finally, you'll want to give some thought to the length of time each projector will need to stay up and running throughout the day. If you'll only be using a projector (or set of projectors) for a few hours during a service or other event, both LCD and DLP projectors are ideal. But if you'll need to keep it running for hours or even days on end, it's worth investing in a DLP projector, which can hold out for tens of thousands of hours of use.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution to choosing the right projector. The right choice for your house of worship depends on the size and shape of the areas where you plan to use each projector – as well as the number of hours you'll need to run it and the type of imagery you'll be projecting with it. Put together a list of your “must-haves” before scheduling a conversation with your projector expert, and you're sure to get some recommendations that'll help you break “out of the box” and delight your congregation.

About the Author

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