Tents, Tents, Tents-
Which One is Right for You?

Panelists:

**Tommy Wilson, CERP**, All Occasions Event Rental, Cincinnati

**Bryan Bolt**, TopTec Event Tents, Moore, S.C.

**Sean McCarthy**, McCarthy Tents & Events, Rochester, N.Y.

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Frame Tents

Categories of Frame Tents

- Conventional frame tents (West Coast style and others)
- Keder top frame tents (Hybrid tents)
- Engineered Clearspan Structures
- Any of these styles are available with white or clear tops.

20x20 Conventional Frame Tent
Conventional Frame Tents 6x10 thru 40x80

- Lightweight and versatile. Easy to install and remove.
- Inexpensive to own and maintain. Can be transported in smaller trucks.
- Modular construction. Some systems share parts from 10x through 40x.
- Variety of manufacturers and styles. High peak style, catenary valance, etc.
- Standard wall flap system. Serviceable, but not the best in windy conditions.
- Can be secured by a variety of methods. Staking, ballast, tie off, concrete anchors etc.
- Not the best option for long term installations or high winds.

40x60 Keder Top Frame Tent

- Similar to conventional frame tents with the addition of slide in roof panels.
- Slide in tops will save you wear and tear on your crew and tops. No lacing!
- Keder is a wear item and will need to be replaced periodically.
- Available with or without engineering documentation from most manufacturers.
- Available with an upgraded Keder wall system. This secures the walls on both sides in addition to the top. Most systems can use conventional walls as well.
- More expensive to own, but the tops should last longer with good care.
- Most need to be staked through the leg and require out guys.
- They are a better option for long term installs and higher winds.

Keder Top Frame Tent 6x10 through 50x100

- Inexpensive to own and maintain. Can be transported in smaller trucks.
- Modular construction. Some systems share parts from 10x through 40x.
- Variety of manufacturers and styles. High peak style, catenary valance, etc.
- Standard wall flap system. Serviceable, but not the best in windy conditions.
- Can be secured by a variety of methods. Staking, ballast, tie off, concrete anchors etc.
- Not the best option for long term installations or high winds.
Clearspan structures are made up of 4 channel box beam aluminum. They are secured by the baseplate on each leg with stakes, ballast, or concrete anchors. They do not require out guys. The majority of manufacturers include engineering documentation. Your state may require additional items for permitting. The most expensive to own, but they will last the longest with proper care and maintenance. Coated fabrics are heavier, but the durability is unmatched. Modular construction means you can start with a 50’ width and grow to 66’ or 82’ width using the same beam. They are ideal for long term installs and most inclement weather.

Pole Tents
Categories of Pole Tents

- Conventional Pole Tents
- High Peak Tension Tents
- Sailcloth Tents

20x20 Conventional Pole

Conventional Pole Tents
10x10 thru 100x200

- Basic pole tents. This is where tent rental started years ago with canvas tops.
- Inexpensive to own. Smaller units 10w-40w are easily transported in small trucks.
- Optional modular construction. These tents can be one piece or expandable in length and/or width.
- Variety of manufacturers and types. Ball ring, flying quarter pole, etc.
- Standard wall flap system. Serviceable, but not the best in windy conditions.
- Staking or concrete anchors are the best options for anchoring.
- Not the best option for long term installations or high winds.
- Not advised for 50' width or larger.
80x70 and 60x90 High Peak Tension

Similar to conventional pole tents with the addition of dramatic high peaks. Structural webbing makes them much stronger than conventional pole tents. They feature wider and longer spans between the poles compared to conventional pole tents. More expensive to own. Larger sizes can be difficult to maintain in small facilities. Most have modular construction and some can be expanded in width and length. Most require gang staking, stake bars and ratchet straps. They require a higher amount of tension than conventional pole tents to take and hold their shape. Available with or without engineering documentation from most manufacturers. They are a better option for long term installs and higher winds.

High Peak Tension Tent
10x10 through 120x unlimited

51x111 Tidewater Sailcloth
Sailcloth Tents 20x17 through 81x unlimited

- These tents have no valance and come in round or oval shapes. They are made from sailcloth material or translucent vinyl. Generally they have wooden poles.
- This trend started on the east coast and migrated from there. I believe they are here to stay.
- One of the most beautiful styles, especially when lit at night.
- They are available from several manufacturers in engineered or nonengineered configuration.
- Side walls can be leaky, but they have come a long way in the last few years.
- Staking is the best option for anchoring. They can be used with concrete anchors.
- More expensive to own and maintain. Can be ruined by leaf stains, etc.

Engineered and Nonengineered Tents

- Definitions
- Applications
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Responsibilities
Nonengineered

- Anybody can produce
- Construction materials may change over time
- Minimal anchoring info supplied by manufacturer

Engineered

- Simply means that a structural engineer evaluated the tent system to determine structural integrity at a given wind load and other conditions.

Applications

- Nonengineered – small private events, back of house tents
- Engineered – Public Events with high liability, locations with higher exposure to severe weather
Benefits

- Nonengineered – cost effective
- Engineered - Highest degree of product integrity and higher probability of getting permitting for public events

Challenges

- Nonengineered – product integrity in foul weather conditions
- Engineered – decoding structural documents, training employees

Cover Page
Responsibility
- Nonengineered – know your venue, jurisdiction, exposure and use and study safe anchoring practices and institute severe weather policies and limitations
- Engineered – adhere to guidelines for installations, modify to accommodate environment and have stamped locally if modification is challenging manufacturer specs

Choosing the Right Tent Fabric
That’s Right - You Can CHOOSE
Definitions & Applications

The Big Five

1. Laminated
2. Coated
3. Colored
4. Clear Vinyl
5. Sailcloth

Definitions

Laminated White Vinyl

- Available in Blockout and Translucent
- Very much the standard product used for typical tents, frame and pole
- Standard Blockout is 11-20 oz, Translucent is 12-14 oz
- Average top is 18 oz, Sidewall is 11 oz
- What does laminated mean?
The standard fabric used by manufacturers for conventional tenting
- Used in all the classic pole tents, frame tent tops, and the variety of
  sidewalls
- This is the day to day standard fabric that tent installers will have in
  arsenal for quick up and down setups
- White wedding tents, backyard canopies, festivals, corporate, etc.

Applications

Laminated White Vinyl
Coated White Vinyl

- Available in Blockout and Translucent
- Typically a 23 oz weight, much heavier duty
- Much more common in structure tents
- How is it made? Liquid vinyl is evenly poured onto top and bottom of scrim

Definitions

Coating
- lacquer
- Fabric
Applications

Coated White Vinyl

- The standard product used by manufacturers for structure tenting.
- Also used as architectural fabric for permanent building installs.
- Fabric is used for longevity and ruggedness.
- Seasonal installs.
- All weather installs.
Definitions

Colored Vinyl

- Wide array of different colors available
- Constructed as both Laminate or Coated Vinyl

Applications

Colored Vinyl

- Corporate branding or colors
- Landmarks at a venue site (first aid, ticket office, etc)
- Themed events
- Attention grabbers (FIREFORK SALE!!!)
- They just look cool!
Definitions

Clear Vinyl

- The clear top material is typically an unreinforced clear PVC material
- See-through fabric, available for not only side walls but also entire tent tops, or sections of a tent

Applications

Clear Vinyl

- For those who want to see out
- For those who want to be seen
- Outside points of intrigue, including all aspects of nature, grand openings, etc.
- People who don't want a tent
- A change from the norm
Definitions

Sailcloth Vinyl

- Laminate fabric, typically using custom vinyl and scrim that allows for ultra translucent appearance
- Very lightweight 11 oz vinyl

Applications

Sailcloth Vinyl

- A recent phenomenon
- Weddings
- Higher end events looking for a high end product
Benefits & Challenges

Laminated White Vinyl

- Light can be blocked out or be translucent
- Aesthetically a very classic looking tent
- Easy to move around, not too heavy
- Priced right

- In extreme cold, some laminate vinyls are prone to cracking
- Must handle with care, especially lighter weight laminates. Prone to tearing and pinholes. Pinholes especially problematic with blockout vinyl.
- Cleaning some laminate vinyls can be tough, especially on underside. Laminating process can leave “peaks and valleys” in fabric that catch dirt and mildew.
Benefits & Challenges
Coated White Vinyl

- Light can be blocked out or translucent
- Aesthetically a very flat, clean look
- All weather product, holds up to extreme heat and cold
- Very easy to clean due the coating process, very smooth
- Ideal for long term rentals, coated stands test of time
- I have found coated to be much less prone to mildewing and impacted by other environmental factors
- General wear and tear, it is second to none, rough and rugged, hard to tear, pinholes are rare

- Not many negatives in my opinion
- It is a very heavy product, tough to move around
- Priced at a premium
Benefits & Challenges
Colored White Vinyl

- Ability for customization of any event
- Create point of interest or landmark within a larger site
- Dirt hides a bit more on colored vinyls.
- Have two sided tent, with different colors on top and underside

- Custom colors limit rentability
- Colors fade over time
- Priced at a slight premium
- When adding to old colored inventory, color matching can be tough, especially for repairs/patching
Benefits & Challenges
Clear Vinyl

- Create a bright, sunny (or gloomy) event space.
- Aesthetically, it is more of what is outside the tent than inside. Doesn’t block the view of a beautiful wedding lake scene, or a building grand opening.
- Incorporate nature into the event.

- Temperature should be a serious consideration, it is not reinforced, so it is unstable and will tend to stretch with heat or become brittle and crack when cold.
- Cleaning is tough, only looks new once, shows water spots, cloudiness, any debris.
- Does not handle much wear and tear. Scuffs, blemishes, patches stand out like a sore thumb.
- Does not have great longevity if in heavy rotation.
- Priced at a bit of a premium over standard laminate fabric.
### Benefits & Challenges

**Sailcloth Vinyl**

- Ultra translucent fabric makes light pop inside by day, and outside by night.
- Aesthetically one of the best looking tents on the market, beautiful heat seal patterns and points of interest.
- Very lightweight and easy to move around.
- Fabric is a bit more delicate, wash sparingly.
- Does not wear that well due to ultra translucent material, permanent stains stand out, patches take away from the aesthetic of the product.
- Not great for long term rentals.
- Price at a premium, expect to pay more than standard laminate tops.
Conclusions

- Experiment with different fabrics, differentiate yourself from the competition, and allow clients to customize their tent venue space.
- Find the right fabrics for you. What fabrics work best with your climate and environment, and how well are you willing to take care of them?
- Don’t forget, you have a choice! Major manufacturers will make tents to your spec, and sometimes paying the premium, or trying different fabric manufacturers, will help you keep tents looking fresh longer.
- "If you want to keep fabric looking good for a long time, you have to treat it like skin." Fred Tracy, self-professed genius

Time for Questions

Tommy Wilson, CERP  
All Occasions Event Rental

Bryan Bolt  
TopTec Event Tents

Sean McCarthy  
McCarthy Tents & Events
Networking Lunch
La Nouvelle Orleans Ballroom
12:15 – 1:30 p.m.

1:45 p.m. Sessions
Protect Your Vinyl  Room 272
Handle With Care: Dishes and Glassware  Room 277
Breakthrough Selling Outside of Your Comfort Zone  Room 267