

More Margin for Flat Panels



There's no doubt that sales of flat-panel televisions are growing at a radical rate. This is great news for our industry and is a happy thing for your clients. They want flat panels. Some of their

friends have them, and they give their home a "cool" factor so your client decides it is time to get flat.

There is danger here, however, big danger. It's called eroding margin. It's readily known that as high-volume item manufacturers seek market share gains, industry prices decline, as do margins. This puts pressure on designer/installers to make their total presentation of skills, services and satisfaction much more valuable to their client.

Your skills as a business owner are rooted in customer satisfaction, so you certainly want to provide the Joneses with those flats.

Just Ask CEDIA... This rather basic job, however, appears to be heavily laden with cool but cost-declining video technology. How to price these flats in the bid with a sure chance of closing the sale is critical.

The wise choice is to know the market, including panel size, format compatibility, current prices today and price a few months out. Right here, you gain your clients' trust because you *know*. And the subsequent sage knowledge to utilize is the classic up-sell.

Up selling is often about attachments. Ac-

cessory manufacturers focus on this, and so should you. Manufacturers of primary hardware such as components and speakers are looking more and more at attachment rates, too. So, in a custom installation job, the attachment is not just a few pieces of gear. The attachment is the whole job to the Jones' home.

To upgrade the margin on the job, those sleek flat panels that Mr. and Mrs. Jones have chosen, there are myriad ways to make the flat-panel rooms (plural...very important) extra valuable to you and the time of your CEDIA Certified Technicians. Let's start with the connection of the panel to the wall. Perhaps the panel in the primary viewing room would be well suited to some nice cabinetry to customize the room. Or, the panel is to be set where some nice roll-up art and a surrounding frame would make Mrs. Jones positively giddy, not to mention, the envy of her friends. Then there's upgraded interconnects—reliability and performance for clients and more margin for you. While we're still on accessories, let's be sure that all remotes work flawlessly. Insist on plasma-friendly IR receiver and repeater systems.

Now is where it gets exciting. Audio. Speakers belong with every flat panel sold, period. Yes, even those flats which include speakers. I've never seen one with a pair of surrounds, a center and a subwoofer. BAM! Three up-sells. There's a huge opportunity in the plethora of flush-mount and surface-mount speakers—wall or ceiling, rectangle or round, elliptical or tall and slender, two-way or three-way, film sound certified or audiophile-approved. The beauty of these choices is that you surely sell a brand or two that probably covers all. And that brand is profitable. There's no limit to what you will design, spec, bid and sell to our nation of Joneses, but there sure is money with the flat panel... if you sell the opportunities that it offers.

—**Buzz Delano**
Sonance, Director of Sales

Awards Honor Industry's Best Work

CEDIA's Electronic Lifestyle Awards honored 27 CEDIA members at its annual EXPO in Indianapolis, Indiana, for excellence in the custom electronics design and installation industry. All Designers' Choice entries were voted on by CEDIA EXPO attendees. Manufacturers' Excellence awards were decided upon by a panel of designer/installer judges.

DESIGNERS' CHOICE AWARDS — Best Home Theater Level I: CHT Systems, Dallas, TX; Best Home Theater Level II: Howell & Associates, Burlington, Ontario, Canada; Best Home Theater Level III, Integrated Media Systems, Sterling, VA; Best Home Theater Level IV: Howell & Associates, Burlington, Ontario, Canada; Best Home Theater Level V: Electronics Design Group Inc., Piscataway, NJ; Best Home Theater Level VI: Sound and Vision of Orland Park, Orland Park, IL; Best Home Theater Level VII: Genesis Audio Video, Irvine, CA; Best Media Room: Electronics Design Group Inc., Piscataway, NJ; Best Integrated Home Level I: Under \$400,000, AVL Pro Inc., Naples, FL; Best Integrated Home Level II: \$400,000-\$600,000, Land and Sea Entertainment, San Diego, CA; Best Integrated Home Level III: Over \$900,000-\$1,100,000: AVL Pro Inc., Naples, FL; Best Integrated Home Level IV: Over \$2 million, Engineered Environments, Oakland, CA; Best Special Project: Audio Warehouse, Charleston, SC; Best Hidden Installation: Electronics Design Group Inc., Piscataway, NJ; Best Home Theater Architecture: AVL Pro Inc., Naples, FL; Best Dressed System - Photo: Audio Video Resource Inc., Mount Vernon, WA;

In addition, manufacturers received awards for the following categories: Best Video Product: Kaleidescape Inc., Kaleidescape System; Best Audio Product: Crestron Electronics Inc., C2N-DAP8RC Digital Audio Processor; Best Custom Installation Product: Sonance, Symphony Extreme XT Outdoor Speakers; Best Home Networking Product: Crestron Electronics Inc., e-Control 2 Software; Best User Interface: AMX, Modero Touch Panel.

CEDIA Calendar of Events

CEDIA Boot Camp

December 3-5 Indianapolis, IN

CEDIA Education & Certification at CES

January 8-11 Las Vegas, NV

CEDIA Boot Camp

January 28-30 Indianapolis, IN

Integrated Systems EXPO

February 3-5 Geneva, Switzerland