

# When Name Calling Matters

## CLEARLY DEFINING YOUR JOB CAN REAP RICH FINANCIAL REWARDS

A couple of years ago, a business professional speaking at the annual CEDIA Management Conference began her presentation by running through the complete list of “names you call yourselves” to describe what CI businesses do: custom installers, home theater designers, audio-video contractors, home technology consultant, etc. The audience laughed. It was a great icebreaker, but at its core that list underscores a challenge to electronic systems contractors (ESCs) today. If you can't explain to someone what you do in a phrase or couple of sentences, then how do you think it sounds when you try to explain the details?

ESC may well be an accurate name in that it

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is not specific to audio, video, security, or lighting. But how do you answer the simple question, “What do you do?” and turn that into a real-life sales opportunity? After all, selling always starts with, “May I help you?”

The wonderful people who line up to hear you describe what you do to their homes in the good name of entertainment are looking to place confidence in you as well as qualify your abilities to turn their dreams into reality. Think ahead. Take their current reality of “they want” into great consideration and go for it.

Very few budding customers spending time with you are not serious buyers. It's a most lovely characteristic of our trade that given the complexity of simple to extreme installations, a person talking to you about this experience is ready to sign on a project. Your job is to be clear about what you do so the client knows you are the



A young couple in their first home is a great up-selling opportunity for custom integrators.

one to do it for them. Here are a few scenarios to consider.

### THE REMODELING PROJECT

The clients love their neighborhood so instead of selling up they decide to redesign the floor plan and add another room. That's a huge cue for you. This customer is a good candidate for not skimping on things like a larger home theater, or maybe even a dedicated theater if they have the space and the home equity loan all tidied up. Odds are they have neighbors who have become friends and visit the home. They entertain. They want others to feel good in their home. They are looking for you to convince them that you can make this happen.

### THE FIRST-TIME HOMEOWNERS

A young couple is moving from a condo to their first home and they want to upgrade the basic distributed audio system in the three-year-old property. That's your cue. Sell something better. More sound in more rooms with more control, a bigger TV, and lighting control without the need for clapping. This is an easy up sell, as you will be leaving them wanting more in a few years when they discover that distributing video and Internet content is what they want next. Of course, you told them the first time that what you do is prepare them for future upgrades. You

sold a future pre-wire on the retro job. They won't be happy later if you did not.

### THE MULTIPLE-HOMES CLIENT

Wealthy clients with a couple of homes want to talk to you about their newest big box on dirt. You did not outfit any of the previous homes, so why have they come to you? Their previous ESC can't take on this out-of-town job and recommended a couple of ESCs in your market. The customer has not been to the other referral, and you don't want them going there. How do you seal the deal? The client knows what AV guys do since this will be system three, but to improve upon what they have in their other homes is the big cookie you want them to taste. You should replicate what they like in the other homes and build on that. Compliment them on what they have in their other homes and convince them that you can give them a great experience in this new home, too. Provide them with references. Qualify them for their preferences based on how you will work with them. Customers may not remember what you tell them but they will remember how you make them feel.

### JOB DEFINED

What is it that you do? You design and install electronic home entertainment systems. That sums it up, right? But it's about the gear, which is a means to what you do. You make people feel good about themselves, their choices, their home, their family, their friends, and their lifestyle. You make people believe that you are the one to do cool tech projects in their home and you want them to tell everyone about your work. That's a luxury that all ESCs should get to experience.

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