

Smarthome's Top 10 Tips for Custom Installers

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Raphael Oberholzer, senior manager at Switzerland's Smarthome (and CEDIA board member) gave us these top 10 tips for staying on top of complex installations.

1. Have very deliberate strategies for managing other players in a big project. Not just the client but architects, electricians and other sub-contractors.
2. The technology has to be planned very early. Some large electrical contractors still think wiring for A/V is just adding a TV and loudspeaker connection per room.
3. Have tools for managing a project successfully. In other words coming away with the budgeted profit and with glowing referrals. Great referrals mean never having to spend much on advertising or PR.
4. Feed back your experiences from jobs into the tools so they evolve.
5. Have tools to deal with accurate time costing, your expectations of other contractors and contract "creep."
6. Take a firm professional line on billing. Get a significant payment up front. Make clear that work stops if a payment is missed.
7. Your perceived professionalism is the key to getting your management approach accepted by clients and other contractors.
8. CEDIA training is valuable in helping get new staffers up to speed. CEDIA has started offering training courses on the Continent in languages other than English. Raphael is overseeing German language courses.
9. Male clients love toys for boys, but female clients have little time for hard to use technology. Make sure there are some gizmos for him but everything is effortless to use for her.
10. Always look for the next technology: for example, mesh networks. These wireless networks don't cross-interfere but make each other stronger.