



As this year comes to a close, we get around to decide which CI industry stories were the most important. Was Apple buying Beats, or was it Jeremy Burckhart's return to the industry? Take a moment to gather your Top 10 before comparing it with ours below!

**Big names take on automation:** Home automation was the new hotness of 2014. How hot? Google coughed up no less than \$3.2 billion to [buy smart thermostat maker Nest Labs](#), Samsung revealed the [Smart Home platform](#) at CES 2014 and Apple integrated the HomeKit device control platform in iOS 8. [Expect the smart home opportunity to grow even bigger come next year.](#)

**[Jeremy Burkhardt is back:](#)** the man behind SpeakerCraft made his return this year with [Orig in Acoustics](#). The comeback was not without its controversies, as it followed the [failed acquisition of outdoor audio maker SoundCast](#), not to mention [non-compete lawsuits](#) from former employers Nortek.

**[Pioneer drops home electronics:](#)** Pioneer had enough in 2014, seeing how it sold 51% of Pioneer Home Electronics to private equity company Baring as part of a new operation joined by Onkyo. Why did it sell out? The company clearly sees no future in CE, and instead wants to focus on the more lucrative auto electronics market.

**[Apple buys Beats:](#)** Apple's biggest acquisition (yet) was shrouded by weeks of speculation--

## The ECI Top News for 2014

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so much so [it led to disbelief on our part](#) -- yet, come end May 2014, it still happened. So why did Apple spend \$3.2 billion for headphone maker? Apple is [still finding a way to integrate the Beats brand with its own](#), but we're sure it is already finding use for Beats' star co-founders, Jimmy Iovine and Andre "Dr. Dre" Romelle Young.

**[TVs rebounds \(somewhat\):](#)** The ailing TV market gets some good news, as DisplaySearch says Q3 2014 shipments are up by 4% Y-o-Y through primary TVs entering a renewed replacement cycle, at least in some regions. 4K TVs also show some shipment acceleration, and increased competition (leading to cheaper prices) should lead to more sales.



**Goodbye plasma, mixed fortunes for OLED:** In more TV news, 2014 [marks the near end of plasma TVs](#), as China's Changhong is the only company making such TVs in the world following the dropping of the technology by LG, Samsung and Panasonic. In the meantime TV makes appear to [be putting OLED technology aside in favor of quantum dots](#), even if one can also argue LCD will continue to rule over TVs, be it HD or UHD/4K.

**[Loewe finds new owner:](#)** German high-end CE maker Loewe got lucky in 2014, as it managed to find a new owner (Munich-based Stargate Capital) following the withdrawal of funding from investment group Panthera.

**[Netflix expands into Europe:](#)** Netflix made "significant" expansion into Europe this year as it entered Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium and Luxembourg. As a result IHS says international customers will [make 20% of overall Netflix subscribers by end 2014](#).

**Amazon makes STB:** In a confirmation of long-running rumours online retailer turned hardware maker Amazon revealed the Fire TV, a console-slash-STB in the shape of a small black box handling streaming media content and games.

**RIP George Feldstein:** Crestron founder and industry legend George Feldstein passed away in 2014 at age 73 after a battle with brain cancer. A "Made-in-America" success story, George Feldstein founded Crestron back in 1969, and currently the company employs over 2500 people and is estimated to be worth around \$1 billion.