As 2015 heads to a close, it is customary to reflect on the year it has been. So join us as we check what we think are the top ECI-- and custom installation-related-- stories of the past 365-or-so days...



The 4K TVs Start Trundling In: Global TV shipments might be technically on a decline, but a nalysts point out at least one bright industry spot
-- 4K TVs. CES and IFA saw the likes of LG, Sony and Panasonic (among others) present higher-resolution TVs, and with the increasing availability of content taking advantage of such displays one should hope consumers will start picking up such sets.

First 8K TV Hits the Market: Speaking of TV, Sharp already has the next-next big thing as it launches the LV-85001, an 85-inch TV with 8K (not 4K) resolution. Aimed at early adopter within the B2B and B2C markets, it is available in Japan and, as far as content goes, handles 8K test transmissions from national broadcaster NHK.

Virtual Reality Edges Towards the Mainstream: 2015 did not actually see the release of any big name virtual reality headsets, but news involving the revamped product category came thick and fast. The Facebook-owned Oculus reve aled the final version of the Rift,
as did Samsung with the smartphone-powered Gear VR
. Meanwhile Google presented an update on the View-Master, and even Valve announced a collaboration with HTC in VR headsets.

Pioneer Becomes Onkyo Subsidiary: Onkyo now owns the Pioneer home entertainment , consumer headphone and phone businesses, making the Pioneer Home Entertainment (PHE) unit an Onkyo subsidiary. The unit covers home cinema amplifiers, Blu-ray players and other AV products.

Home Automation on the Up: Home automation remains a rapidly growing sector in Europe , if with some caveats-- vendors still need to tackle low consumer awareness and a lack of value propsition. But once high-players tackle the awareness issue, the automated world should be the installer's oyster.

Nest Arrives in Europe: Google-owned Nest continues striding towards our shore with the European launch of the 3rd generation Learning Thermostat,
one complete with OpenTherm compatibility allowing for improved boiler control. In addition 2015 had the company tackle device communication protocols with
Weave
, essentially a take on HomeKit and the like.

Apple Updates STB: Apple confirms its commitment to its supposed "hobby" as it updates the Apple TV .
The new version of the STB retains the same form factor, but adds a more powerful 64-bit A8 CPU, new OS, an App Store and a remote complete with touch surface.

Amazon Creeps into Automation: The Echo, Amazon's curious cylindrical speaker-slash-voice assistant of sorts, gets something of a purpose as now it can control Insteon, Samsung Smart Thing, Belkin WeMo and Philips Hue connected devices.
Such functionality is limited, but it does represent Amazon's first step in automation.

Google Redesigns the Router: Google claims to have an easier way for customers to manage and connect to home networks with the OnHub , a TP-Link collaboration in cylindrical routers complete with mobile device app.

RIP Joel Spira: April had Lutron Electronics bid farewell to founder Joel Spira , who ided of natural causes aged 88. Spira created the first solid-state dimmer in 1959, before founding the company together with his wife Ruth in 1961.