

Upselling the Remote

RTI's Pete Baker says the key to winning clients over is a headache-free user interface.

Nothing is more important in a professional home theater installation than a universal remote control system. Let me reiterate. Nothing is more important than a properly installed universal remote control system. Not the speakers, the video display, the surround-sound processor ... nothing!

A quality remote control system will have a bigger impact on your clients' satisfaction than anything else. I equate the remote control system to a Web browser. Without a good browser, it is impossible to experience all the wonders of the Internet, no matter how powerful and fast the computer is that you own. Likewise, without an easy-to-operate remote control, your clients will become frustrated with their home electronics.



RTI's Pete Baker says many clients are unable to distinguish between mid-level and high-performance A/V components. They can more easily appreciate a quality remote control system.

Admission Is the First Step

Custom installers cannot survive and grow without the aid of satisfied customers and client referrals. In its most basic form, this is the most important element within any successful installer's current business model. Dealers must compel their clients to tell every guest that enters their home how incredibly talented their installer is. Obviously many elements are involved in creating this kind of customer satisfaction, but there is one simple thing that can improve your chances: Get the remote control system right.

There are two major pitfalls that snag many custom installers. First is the mistake of devoting inadequate resources to the remote control portion of an installation. Second is using mass-market universal remote controls that do not allow installers to provide customized added value to an installation. Let's put it another way: Don't propose a \$200 remote that your client can buy at any retail store to control a professionally installed A/V system.

The truth is that many of your clients will not

be able to distinguish the difference between the quality A/V components that are now available. If you are working with a tight budget and need to keep the costs down, A/V components are the area to cut. After the system is installed, the remote control user interface will become the system in the client's mind. And it's literally the only thing they need to understand to enjoy the entire system.

Delivering the Goods

What traits should installers look for in the remote control systems they sell and install?

Here are five make-or-break features a remote control system should offer:

1. Make sure there are options that ensure macros execute flawlessly.
2. Make sure accessory options are available to deal with unexpected job site problems.
3. Make sure you have the option to transmit commands via IR, RF or both.
4. Make sure options are available to improve the reliability of the RF reception.
5. Make sure options are available to monitor the on/off power status of equipment.

My intention here is not to provide an all-inclusive feature list that describes the perfect remote control system. Rather, it is to point out how important a remote control system is and how often it is undervalued.

Unfortunately, because cheap OEM remotes are included with every A/V component that we buy, there is a perception that the remote control system is no big deal. As a custom installer, I hope you realize just how important it is to the success of your business.

Pete Baker is worldwide director of sales & marketing for Chanhassen, Minn.-based Remote Technologies Incorporated (RTI) (www.rticorp.com).