

HTA HOME TECHNOLOGY ALLIANCESM UPDATE



T H E V O I C E O F A M E R I C A ' S H O U S I N G I N D U S T R Y

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■ Home Technology Trend Benefits Builders and Buyers

By Andrea Reiner, *Innerspace Electronics*

Home technology installation is a billion-dollar industry, and it's expected to continue to expand. Many of today's home buyers are interested in structured wiring, home theaters and home automation. A survey of builders found that more than half offered electronics for home theaters and installed them in 46% of homes sold, according to Parks Associates, a leading market research and consulting firm that provides information and analysis on emerging technologies.

Incorporating Technology to Cater to Consumers

For builders, it's important to incorporate technological enhancements buyers will notice — amenities to help turn their house into a home. Rather than offer standard packages, builders might ask probing questions to determine buyers' lifestyle needs. For example, a customer-focused builder could ask "Would you like to automate your lighting, heating and other systems to save energy?" or "Do you often listen to music and watch television?"

From there, builders can employ fairly simple automation and networking to create homes that cater to technology-seeking buyers. Some of the most popular technologies being installed are home theaters, gaming rooms, security systems and lighting and automation. To support these high-tech amenities, builders are adding a variety of networks, including:

- Structured wiring for the secure distribution of data signals for phones, computers, TVs and audio components
- Wireless networks that are ideal for existing homes

For some builders, including technology in homes can be offered as an upgrade, such as installing Corian countertops or hardwood floors. For those who construct upscale homes, technology may be included as a standard feature. Either way, adding technology can help builders better distinguish and sell their product to consumers.

In fact, many builders feel that home technologies are a significant differentiator in the marketing of their new homes, according to a recent study by the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA). One third of the builders surveyed in the CEA 2007 State of the Home Builder Study felt that technology in the home helped them increase their revenue.

How Technology Benefits Buyers

For home buyers, purchasing a house installed with high-tech products or structured wiring is an



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investment that offers a variety of benefits, including:

- Control — Using smart automation technology can provide complete control of everything from lighting and heating to audio and video systems.
- Savings — Automating lights, thermostats, sprinklers, etc. minimize waste and translate into long-term cost savings on energy bills.
- Value — Homes enhanced with technology generally are more attractive to buyers and hold their value better than less equipped homes.
- Comfort — Automation can make leisure time and entertaining more enjoyable, as homeowners can control lighting, music and temperatures with the touch of a button.
- Flexibility — Structured wiring makes it easier and more cost-effective to add lighting control, a more advanced computer network or a higher-end audio system.

Resources for Builders

The installation of technology can dramatically improve home owner's lives. However, keeping up with technology can be a challenge for builders. Technology is ever-changing. What was standard or the latest innovation last year may not be so today.

Fortunately, builders don't have to be technological experts to integrate the latest innovations into their homes. The key is to create close relationships with Electronic Systems Contractors (ESCs). These professionals have the latest information in their field, and are familiar with the building industry. So they can effectively advise builders on the newest technology trends and how to implement them to benefit customers.

The Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association (CEDIA) has an online Finder Service at www.cedia.org to help builders and homeowners locate a certified electronic systems contractor partner.

In addition to partnering with a CEDIA member, builders who want to capitalize on the rising demand for home technology can turn to the Home Technology Alliance (HTA) for help. A partnership between the NAHB and CEDIA, the Alliance offers a variety of tools to help builders keep current on home automation practices and trends for new home planning and construction, as well as the remodeling of existing structures.

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