TREND #1
ENTERPRISE-GRADE HOME NETWORKS

Not just an attachment sale anymore. **BY JULIE JACOBSON**

OST CE PROS install home networks as an obligatory piece of an integrated solution, but now integrators are turning these systems into profit centers.

The secret is in selling enterprise-grade networking gear, the likes of which are found in office buildings and other commercial properties where videoconferencing, high security and fast Internet are required. The products are profitable and offer a slew of benefits that integrators are just now recognizing… or should be:

▷ They enhance the network significantly, both in wired and wireless performance. More and more products are being attached to the home network – IP cameras, home automation systems, streaming media and more – threatening the entire ecosystem without a strong IP infrastructure in place.

▷ They offer a host of remote access and management capabilities.

▷ They provide a variety of options for security.

Bjørn Jensen, principal of WhyReboot in Miami, provides network consulting and integration services to dealers. He says his business has been booming even during the housing crunch because "people that require a commercial-grade network were the ones that weren't necessarily hurt as much as everybody else."

But robust networks aren't just for high-end home systems anymore.

"As the general population, including integrators, begins to realize that everything they do now depends on a reliable network, we think we'll be in high demand for quite some time," Jensen says.

SELLING THE SYSTEMS

While most integrators would agree that a commercial-grade networking ecosystem is highly beneficial to a whole-house A/V and automation system, they often have a tough time selling it when consumer-grade routers and access points can be had for less than $100. Their high-end counterparts may be five to ten times that amount, and maybe even more. Since consumers have been fine with good-enough networks for all these years, it may be hard to nudge them into higher-priced products.

CE Pro 100 integrator Michael Pope of Audio Video Interiors in Middleburg Heights, Ohio, pushes the sale by installing high-end networking gear for free. If a client doesn't see a "dramatic improvement" in network performance, the company will swap out the good stuff *(see page 28 for more networking tips from AVI).*

While brands such as Pakedge, Luxul and Access Networks used to be some of the only network product and service providers at CEDIA Expo, the 2012 event showcased a slew of high-end gear from new and legacy vendors.

Furthermore, we saw at the Expo numerous new entries into the remote network management category providing

A plethora of new products and services from companies like Luxul are now on the market to help integrators sell robust home networks.

new opportunities for recurring revenue and quality service without truck rolls.

In addition, the Expo was the launching pad of the organization's new Residential Networking Specialist Credential. ▪

CE Pros and Home Networking

SOME 75 PERCENT of CE pros include networking products in their installs – more than they do remote controls and racks/mounts.

Streaming media/cloud content was the No. 3 category for growth potential for CE pros in 2012, just behind CCTV and multi-room audio.

In a straw poll of CE Pro 100 Summit attendees, 37 percent of respondents cited network-dependent technologies like HDMI over IP, IP cameras and streaming media as exciting technologies on the horizon.

In the CE Pro 100 Summit survey, the "cloud" was mentioned by 12t percent of respondents for everything from "cloud-based content" to "cloud-based IP control systems" to "cloud-based services." ▲