

Building technology into your custom remodeling project



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The newest member of today's building team is quickly becoming the low-voltage contractor because they understand the latest products and technologies that can be integrated into the home to enhance its comfort.

You've just received the building permits. Now you can begin construction of the custom home remodel you've been planning for years. Congratulations! Hundreds (if not thousands) of design and planning decisions will be made to ensure that the vision of your remodel is customized to your family's needs.

Before breaking ground, have you considered how today's technology systems can be integrated into your home to enable you and your family to truly enjoy all the entertainment, educational, security, and communication benefits of a properly wired home?

Electrical wiring is a given in every home. You can't live without it. But do you give the same thought and consideration to low-voltage wiring—a necessity for providing Internet connection, phone, video and audio streams throughout your home?

Today, we still see many homes being constructed where the electrician runs the high-voltage electrical lines and then, as an afterthought, adds a few drops for some television and phone outlets. The insulators and sheet-rockers then come in and the home's walls are closed forever. At this point, many homeowners miss an invaluable opportunity for integrating a low-voltage wiring infrastructure into their homes.

More often than not, this oversight is not intentional. In most cases, the key members of a building team—the architect, builder, interior designer, and electrician—don't have enough knowledge about today's computer, data, video, audio, and lighting control systems to provide accurate, custom-tailored advice to homeowners. Many people realize, often when it's too late, that a low-voltage contractor needs to be part of the building team if you're envisioning a home where technology enhances the way you live in and experience your home.

If planned for and installed properly, a home with an integrated, low-voltage wiring system can enjoy benefits such as:

- A high-speed, shared Internet connection in every room of your home
- Whole house music that can be individually selected and controlled in each room or from your backyard
- A home theater experience complete with great surround-sound effects
- Beautiful plasma screens that hang on your wall like artwork, or projector systems that display movie-quality images onto screens over 100" in size
- Security cameras at the front door and/or backyard swimming pool that can be viewed on any television or from your home computers
- Intercom systems for each room, your front door and the entry gate
- Lighting control that lets you control all of the home's lights with a single button or create lighting scenes in your entertainment or landscape spaces

The newest member of today's building team is quickly becoming the low-voltage contractor (also known as a home network integrator) because they understand the latest products and technologies that can be integrated into the home to enhance its comfort.

Ideally, the relationship with your home network integrator begins when your home's plans are first drawn. This partnership continues throughout the home's construction, up until you move in, the products have been installed, and you and your family can easily operate the technological features of your home.

After families have settled into their new homes, the low-voltage contractor is often asked to become the family's "electronic concierge." Acting as your home technology expert, the home network integrator keeps you abreast of new and improved computing, audio, and video products that you may want to have integrated into your existing systems.

Remember that the decision to add a knowledgeable and reputable low-voltage contractor to your team is as important as deciding which architect, builder



Integrated wiring in your home increases your entertainment choices, with enhancements such as streaming audio and video from the Internet that can be enjoyed from practically every room. Photo courtesy cyberManor.

and interior designer to hire. Knowledge and expertise are a must. Look for someone skilled in designing, configuring, and installing home networking systems, and include this person early in your planning stage—maximizing the enjoyment and value they can bring to your newly remodeled home.

Gordon van Zuiden is President of cyberManor, a custom home networking integrator located in Los Gatos. cyberManor consults with homeowners, builders, and architects on the design, integration, and implementation of data, audio, video, phone and lighting control solutions in new and remodeled homes. His technology solutions were showcased in the 2002 Sunset Idea House in Willow Glen and will be demonstrated again in the 2003 Idea Houses opening in Los Gatos in August. For more information, call 408.399.1717 or visit www.cybermanor.com.

Home Improvement Facts

The Top Six projects in America are:

Kitchens	47%
Baths	46%
Other Interior Work	41%
Room Additions	35%
Sunrooms	32%

(Source: The National Association of Remodeling)

Affluent Americans (those with incomes of \$100,000 or more) spend \$31 billion a year on home improvements.

(Source: Yankelovich Partners)

Most home remodeling is:

Professionally installed	78%
DIY (Do-It-Yourself)	18%
BIY (Buy-It-Yourself)	4%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)