



HTA's Best in the U.S. Awards

Each awarded technology integration firm is the best in their tier. Black is not better than Platinum or Gold, for example. The technology integration firms at the various levels are simply adept at different levels of project.

BLACK – This tier is for those firms who have clientele with projects that are extremely custom, very complex, demanding, and often “cost-no-object.” These firms must be at the top of their game to survive in that environment. They must also have a significant percentage of their business experience come from larger and more complex technology systems.

PLATINUM – The luxury homes that these firms work in typically have a notable interior designer or architect involved. The demands of these projects are typically not as extreme as the Black Level, though that does not mean the expectations are not very, very high. These firms typically have to deliver top-flight systems to discerning clients without the luxury of “cost-no-object” budgets.

GOLD – This tier are the warriors of the custom installation industry. They deliver value-oriented systems and excellent customer service to the biggest swath of the population of North America. There is generally less customization and complexity in the systems they offer, though these companies have to excel at technical skills and customer service to handle a wider range of clientele and projects.

ABOUT THE HTA

The Home Technology Association built a standard of excellence for home technology integration firms. The HTA gives the best-qualified integrators a certification and endorsement developed to differentiate these exceptional firms. HTA Certification is a badge of quality, designed

to help homeowners get first-rate technology experiences. Homeowners, builders, architects, and interior designers that hire HTA Certified integrators have peace of mind knowing they are working with truly professional firms that have passed the HTA's rigorous, 60-point HTA certification process. These stringent criteria were developed by industry veterans and HTA's Board of Advisors, including top executives from Lutron, Crestron, Control4, Savant, and others.

The HTA also educates architects, designers, and builders about the importance of technology design, emphasizing the need for it early. Every home needs technology. Even the most basic homes will have network/Wi-Fi and security needs, so where should these items be placed, and where does the wiring go? Many other technologies, such as video displays, speakers, cameras, access controls, control keypads and touchscreens, may need to be selected. The goal is to have it all look good and integrate with the rest of the home's design. The best integrators create design and engineering documentation that clearly define where all of the parts and pieces will go. The information shared may often impact framing, electrical, and HVAC proposals. Therefore, technology design should be one of the first items determined on a home.

Additionally, the HTA launched a Resource Guide this year, highlighting some of the top manufacturers and service providers that serve the home technology industry and are aligned with the HTA's mission of excellence. This program was designed to create a central resource directory that offers quick information about many of the products and additional services that integrators specify. Categories include smart home, audio/video, home theater, lighting, motorized shades, wellness/healthy home, networks/Wi-Fi, energy management, Digital/New Media Art, and more.

Best in the U.S. Awards

Bravas DFW
The Colony, Texas

Echo Systems
Olathe, Kansas

One Touch Living
San Diego, California

Home Automation Hawaii, LLC.
Honolulu, Hawaii

ETC Palm Beach, LLC
West Palm Beach, Florida

AVC Technologies
Tampa, Florida

Amplified Lifestyles
Hayward, California

WOW Media Inc.
Fall River, Massachusetts

Sound Components
South Miami, Florida

Maverick Integration
Nashua, New Hampshire

HEDsouth
Hollywood, Florida

Cyber Technology Group, Inc.
Scottsdale, Arizona

DSI
Los Angeles, California

Lifestyle Electronics
Park City, Utah

Paragon Systems Integration
Basalt, Colorado

Cloud 9 Integrated Systems, LLC
Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Bekins
Coopersville, Michigan

Metro Eighteen Inc.
Los Angeles, California

AHT Global
Miami, Florida

Vision and Sound
Manhattan Beach, California

Innerspace Electronics, Inc.
Port Chester, New York

Tech Superpowers, LLC
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Audio Video Systems
Plainview, New York

HomeTronics
Dallas, Texas

Metro Eighteen Inc.
San Francisco, California

DC Home Systems
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Man Caves Plus Inc.
Holtsville, New York

Premiere Systems
Naples, Florida

Futurehome Systems & Design Inc.
Fresno, California

Premiere Systems
Chicago, Illinois

ACOUSTIC ARCHITECTS
Miami, Florida

Audio Video Design
Westwood, Massachusetts

e-home inc.
Ridgefield, New Jersey

eInteractive
New Milford, New Jersey

Boca Theater and Automation, Inc.
Boca Raton, Florida

Residential Systems, Inc.
Littleton, Colorado

Big Picture Solutions, Inc.
Jupiter, Florida

Spire Integrated Systems Inc
Troy, Michigan

KP Audio & Video INC.
Calabasas, California

Dallas Sight and Sound, Inc.
Dallas, Texas

Unlimited Integration
Stafford, Texas

Audio Command Systems - South
Boca Raton, Florida

Media Systems, Inc
Houston, Texas

Intersect Corporation
Coral Gables, Florida

Osbee Industries, Inc.
Harrison, New York

Epic Smart Homes
Austin, Texas

A Shade Above
Morgan Hill, California

OPUS Audio/Video/Control
North Haven, Connecticut

OneButton
Brooklyn, New York

KOZI MEDIA DESIGN
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

REALM
Norwalk, Connecticut

Audio Command Systems
Westbury, New York

Audio Video Systems, Inc.
Murray, Utah

Elevated Electronics
Overland Park, Kansas

SAV Digital Environments
Bozeman, Montana

Electronic Environments
New York, New York

Echo Systems
Omaha, Nebraska

Audio Visual Design Group
San Jose, California

Modern Home Systems
San Diego, California

Bliss Home Theaters & Automation
Westlake Village, California

M2 Multimedia
Reseda, California

Hernary's LLC
San Carlos, California

AVX Design & Integration
Los Angeles, California

Audio Images
Tustin, California

Simply Home Entertainment
Culver City, California

Signals Audio Video
El Segundo, California

Cantara
Costa Mesa, California

Future Home
Los Angeles, California



Best in the U.S. Awards

Home Theaters Etc. Inc.
Omaha, Nebraska

NuHome Tech, Inc.
Van Nuys, California

Walbrandt Technologies
Saint Louis, Missouri

Sphere Audio Video
Birmingham, Alabama

Evolve Technologies
Dallas, Texas

Definitive Sound Inc.
Mississauga, Ontario

Audio Video Integration
San Rafael, California

Focused AV
Hillsdale, New Jersey

Electronic Lifestyles
Astoria, New York

Tampa Bay Electronic Systems
Tampa, Florida

Atlanta Audio & Automation
Atlanta, Georgia

PLAY - Custom Home Technology
Bluffton, South Carolina

Electronic Home
Atlanta, Georgia

Smarter Homes
Lakeway, Texas

Echo Workshop
Houston, Texas

Garrett Integrated Systems
Battleground, Washington

Sage AVT
NY, New York

Stereo Types
Charlottesville, Virginia

All Metro Tech
Murray, Utah

Tech Automation
Troy, Michigan

Enhanced Home
Port Chester, New York

Vineyard Sound Integration
Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

IGS Homeworks
Magnolia, Texas

Innovative Technologies & Associates
East Quogue, New York

Ardent Integrated Systems
Sherman Oaks, California

IQuarters
Montgomery, New York

Connect Consulting INC
Woodland Park, New Jersey

Easy Living with Technology
Clearwater, Florida

Technical Operations And Development
Sagamore, Massachusetts

Tree Ridge Enterprise Inc.
Bristol, Vermont

Integration Controls
Saint Louis, Missouri

HAAS Home Technologies
Austin, Texas

Sound Installation & Design
Jacksonville, Florida

Pacific Audio & Communications, Inc
Lihue, Hawaii

HOUSE SYSTEMS
New York, New York

Lunar Audio Video, LLC.
Pequannock, New Jersey

Automated Environments
Mesa, Arizona

Kreative AV inc.
Malden, Massachusetts

Digittech Custom Audio & Video, Inc.
Carmel, Indiana

Apex Audio Video
Austin, Texas

Buday's Home Electronics Simplified
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Bravas Houston
Houston, Texas

Haas Entertainment
Culver City, California

Bethesda Systems
Bethesda, Maryland

RAC Advanced Control, Inc.
Tahoe City, California

Technology Design Associates
Bend, Oregon

Kelowna Custom AV
Kelowna, British Columbia

Creative Sound & Integration
Scottsdale, Arizona

Tune Street
Great Barrington, Massachusetts

Custom Home Sound
Charleston, South Carolina

World Wide Stereo
Hatfield, Pennsylvania

The Audiohouse
Vero Beach, Florida

OneAdvantEdge
Miami, Florida

The Premier Group
Carmel, Indiana

Harrison Home Systems Inc
Golden, Colorado

Personal Technology
Alhambra, California

Synergy CTS, LLC
Naples, Florida

Co-DA
Indian Trail, North Carolina

Stone Glidden
King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

Desert Sound & Security
Phoenix, Arizona

Cutting Edge Systems Corp
Westford, Massachusetts

Restrepo Innovations
Wyckoff, New Jersey

Leich Audio Video
Saint Louis Park, Minnesota

ioty, inc.
Doral, Florida

Gilmore's Sound Advice, Inc.
New York, New York

Electronic Concepts
Rochelle Park, New Jersey

SilverGate Technology LLC
Chicago, Illinois

Electronic Home Environments
Sterling, Virginia

Rich AV Design, LLC.
Stamford, Connecticut

INI AV
Leesburg, Virginia

SmartTouchUSA
Columbia, Maryland

Mills Technologies
Skokie, Illinois

Millennium Systems Design, Inc
Orlando, Florida

Beyond Home Theater
Santa Monica, California

Refined Systems, LLC
Spring, Texas

One-Touch Automation, Inc.
Westfield, Indiana

The Integrated Home
Charlotte, North Carolina

@Home Audio Video Technology
Knoxville, Tennessee

Audio Warehouse
Charleston, South Carolina

mero concepts
Cedar Park, Texas

Brilliant AV
Costa Mesa, California

Adobe Cinema & Automation
Mashpee, Massachusetts

Atlantic Control Technologies, Inc.
Annapolis, Maryland

Precision Media Solutions, LLC
Lakewood, Colorado

Elevated Integration
Armonk, New York

System Integrators, Inc
South Burlington, Vermont

Aurum
Denver, Colorado

Symbio Lighting & Control
Houston, Texas

Audio Impact
San Diego, California

NXT AV
Irvine, California

Acoustic Evolution
San Diego, California

HIFI Club
Santa Barbara, California

Wilshire Media Systems Inc
Westlake Village, California

Legato Home Music and Theater
Santa Monica, California

Maxsystems
Van Nuys, California

ZHIFI
San Gabriel, California

Martec Technologies
Miami, Florida

Craftsman
Englewood, New Jersey

AV Squared
Omaha, Nebraska

AuVid Automation
Salt Lake City, Utah

AudioArt
Sudbury, Massachusetts

Teague iCtrl
Lenexa, Kansas

CH Automation & Theatre Systems
Alhambra, California

Automated Lifestyles of Texas, LLC
Katy, Texas

Northern Technology Solutions
Anchorage, Alaska

Harmonic Series
Fort Collins, Colorado

Swift Audio, LLC
Elk Rapids, Michigan

Integrated Tech Solutions
New Providence, New Jersey

Kustom Home Entertainment
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Smart Home Worx Inc
New York, New York

Custom Theater and Audio
Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

Fuzion3
Las Vegas, Nevada

MediaObsessions
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

frayednot
Cranford, New Jersey

Synergy Integrated Systems
Raleigh, North Carolina

InVision Home Theater
Walnut Creek, California

SmartHome Solutions, Inc.
Kennebunk, Maine

Buchan Consulting LLC
Mt. Prospect, Illinois

Modern Media Innovations LLC.
Dayton, Ohio

Pure Audio Video Systems
Chatham, New Jersey

Advanced Communication Technologies
Norwell, Massachusetts

Whitman Automation LLC
North Canton, Ohio

Bravo AV
Bernardsville, New Jersey

WAVE Designs
Mountlake Terrace, Washington

3D Smart Homes
Springfield, Missouri

Reference Audio Video & Security
Davenport, Iowa

AV Solution
New Rochelle, New York

Resources:

HTA Certified integrator finder
Technology Budget Calculator
Value of technology design & engineering documentation
Resource Guide

The organization's holistic approach in recognizing home technology firms

Many awards in the custom home electronics space are based on sales volume. But while sales volume can be a good indicator of success, it doesn't necessarily indicate whether or not a company is "The Best," according to The Home Technology Association (HTA). The recently released Home Technology Association's "Best in the U.S." awards take a different tack when recognizing home technology firms. "We take a holistic approach for the HTA Best in the U.S. Awards. You need to be HTA Certified — a well-rounded integration firm that excels at customer service, technical proficiency and business ethics. The HTA recognizes these firms, the ones consumers should be hiring for their projects, with certification and Best in the U.S. designation," says HTA CEO Josh Christian.

WHAT BEING 'THE BEST' LOOKS LIKE

Customer Service — All of these firms are evaluated on how they handle customer service. Every company must submit details about their customer service policies and how they provide exceptional service to their client base. Do they have after-hours support? Do they have a dedicated service team? Do they offer remote monitoring to provide instant repairs to a system that is down? We look at all the details and then the HTA contacts a slew of references to verify that the firm's reputation for customer service is exceptional. "There are plenty of companies that do a nice job at building and delivering a home technology system," Christian says. "This is just the halfway point. Consumers need an integrator to provide responsive ongoing support to maintain and update their systems. If you are only capable of integrating technology but unable to support it, we can't recognize your firm as one of the greats in our industry."

Technical Proficiency — The custom installation industry has a bad reputation for using clients' homes as test labs or learning centers. Too many homeowners have become frustrated with a programmer living on their sofa or in their basement for weeks or months as they "figure it out." The HTA awards firms who have an exceptional level of technical expertise. "We look for firms that take the time to be trained on the products they sell before they deploy it in customer homes," says Christian. "The firms on the Best in the U.S. list have very sharp personnel that really make a difference when it comes to the customer experience. These tech wizards save clients a lot of frustration by designing a system right the first time." The HTA verifies technical proficiency by interviewing trade partners, manufacturers, and local rep firms. If a firm has a shaky track record of delivering flawed systems or clogging up the tech support lines with remedial questions, they are eliminated from contention. Christian adds, "Consumers pay for technical expertise; the firms that are awarded take the time to be experts at their craft."

Business Ethics — Technology is confusing to most consumers. A typical homeowner feels vulnerable since they don't have a full understanding of technology. They must rely on their integration firm to give them honest and accurate info to inform their purchasing decisions. When assessing a firm, a number-one concern is "Can I trust these people?" Part of the HTA process for submissions is doing a deep dive on the reputation of the firm. Do they treat clients fairly? Do they have a stellar track record of doing the right thing? For the most part, integration firms in North America are run by decent, hardworking folks, but there are more than enough charlatans and poor managers that allow bad apples to remain in their organization. The HTA does a diligent check to make sure these firms are good citizens, have the appropriate licenses and insurances, and do not have an excessive history of litigation.

SANDBOX SKILLS

Another important criterion is a technology integrator's ability to play well with others. The HTA wants to make sure that an integrator has an excellent ability to properly communicate and coordinate with a design/build team. It is vitally important that a firm can provide great documentation to their partners on the team so that all design considerations for technology are properly planned for. Are their project management skills meeting the expectations of the design and build teams? Do they handle problems well? Can they creatively problem-solve? Do they acquiesce when the importance of design trumps technology in a living space? The HTA realizes that a project's success emerges from great working relationships amongst all stakeholders on the design/build team. To vet these skills, the HTA contacts interior designers, builders, and architects that have experience working with these firms to find out how they perform on a project. Rounding out the criteria includes the firm's ability to provide enterprise-grade home networks, a vitally important component of today's connected home. Also, the HTA requires that an integration firm is able to provide design and engineering documentation at the Platinum and Black levels. "We wanted to create a set of criteria that is meaningful to a homeowner and what they are looking for in a technology provider. We also want this award to be a seal of approval that a builder, interior designer, or architect can use as a benchmark to select a technology partner. HTA Certified dealers have to pass arguably the most comprehensive and stringent set of criteria of any program in the consumer electronics industry. The amount of verification that is done on these firms is simply unmatched," adds Christian.