



CUSTOM
ELECTRONIC
DESIGN &
INSTALLATION
ASSOCIATION

Five Minutes with Ken Erdmann

How did you get started in this industry?

While in high school I worked part-time in my father's electrical contracting company. I installed music and paging systems in commercial businesses and retail spaces. I offered to install these systems in customer's homes as house wide music systems. That was in 1969-71. I liked the work more than electrical and stayed with it as the industry grew and the systems became more complex.

Who in the industry has been your biggest influence? How and why?

I had two great influences in the industry. First my father, for all the usual father and son type reasons, but also very importantly he encouraged my efforts in the custom side of the business. The second great influence was my grandfather. At age three he suffered from polio and never walked after that yet he built a successful electrical contracting business including building AM radio tuners and mono amplifiers and installing monophonic sound systems in customer's homes, sometimes even in more than one room. He was famous for overcoming any obstacle put in his way, we all learned that no matter the problem there is always a solution and nothing is accomplished by feeling sorry for oneself.

Describe some of your most memorable moments in the industry.

In 2003, I was named The CEDIA Volunteer of the Year. A couple of years later I was elected to the CEDIA Board of Directors.

What do you think was the greatest advance, event or trend in our industry in the last five years?

The distribution, management, and storage of audio and video content in a digital format; including the proliferation of digital media servers. Equally important in the industry is the adoption of high definition television, and the management and distribution of HD signals.

What trends will affect custom integrators in the next two years?

The growth and need for integration of gaming systems. The migration to HD video and digital audio both in new installs and upgrades to existing systems. The margins on video equipment continues to shrink and the need to make more profit from skills and knowledge rather than from equipment markups will need to happen in the next two years.

What are three things that custom integration companies need to do to prepare for the next two years?

- a. Recognize things as they are not as they were a few years ago.
- b. Learn the fine art of customer service. Protect their customer base from competition by offering the level of service and expertise not offered by the other companies.
- c. Improve their level of expertise through education both from CEDIA and the companies they represent.

What drives you to be a member of CEDIA and how has it benefited you and/or your company?

The association with other member companies, the networking and idea sharing that happens at CEDIA events and the opportunity to take advantage of CEDIA Education and Certification.

Out of all the CEDIA member benefits, which two have affected your business the most?

CEDIA education & Management Conference and the offerings I have attended during the conference.