



# A Noteworthy Post

Registered Outreach Instructors have unique, valuable positions, promoting electronic systems contractors. *By John Lupear*



**We are a networked world, quite literally, with the dominance of the Web and digital technologies.** In years past, successful businesses might have been able to cordon off their corner of the world and work to protect their turf. In today's world, by contrast, the most successful businesses will embrace openness, sharing and collaboration. This is why I enjoy being an ROI (Registered Outreach Instructor) for CEDIA—the job itself cultivates the very principles that lead to success for today's businesses.

Since the founding of our company, Audio Video Design Consultants, we have worked hard to cultivate relationships with industry partners. For the past two years, in particular, we have doubled our efforts to expand this network and forge new relationships. This hard work has helped us immensely during the less than hospitable economic times we are all currently facing. Frankly, we know it has also helped the builders, architects, and interior designers we work with, too. An opportunity to expand our professional network was the main reason I jumped at the chance to become an ROI with CEDIA this past summer.

## A Look at ROI

The purpose of CEDIA's ROI program is to educate and promote the collaboration between electronic systems contractors (ESCs) and others in the building, design and construction industries. The goal is not to promote one's individual business or any single manufacturer or groups of manufacturers—in fact, this is justifiably prohibited. Expanding one's network of industry professionals is a natural byproduct of offering ROI classes. This benefits all parties involved.

ROIs like myself undergo training and testing to become registered instructors. Once our training is complete and we have passed the required testing, CEDIA gives ROIs access to professionally developed presentations. We can then offer these presentations to professionals who can receive Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) for attending. I'll be the first to admit that often people are only interested in these classes because their professional associations require a certain number of CEUs per year. However, one of the pleasures of being an ROI is seeing a skeptical or uninspired audience suddenly realize the potential benefits of collaborating with an electronics integrator.

Lately, I have offered many courses to architects and architecture firms. To be honest, it is obvious that some architects (especially older firms) see our industry as a distraction at times. Often this is simply because they haven't been properly educated about the diverse offerings of our industry, how to find a reputable ESC, or how to best manage a mutually beneficial collaboration. Time and again, I have found that after a single class, architects realize that a reputable integrator actually helps them real-

ize their projects in a more efficient, profitable and aesthetically pleasing manner. I have also found that professionals in the building and design industries are glad to have a source that they can trust regarding electronics integration. Having a qualified ESC on board with their projects not only offers a sense of security in knowing that they are getting expert advice, it also helps with the bottom line.

## Partnering for Profit

These are competitive times in all of our fields, and everyone is looking for something to separate them from the pack. Having a qualified ESC attached to one's projects becomes a distinguishing factor and can even generate new opportunities within a project. Whether you are an architect, builder, or designer, if you are working on projects of a certain scope, your clients are using integration systems. Those firms that simply view the ESC as an "outside" source or just another subcontractor are losing opportunities to expand their scope within a project or, worse, can end up scrambling to revise their designs because not everyone is on the same page. The most successful architects, builders and designers realize that working as a team creates more opportunities for everyone and results in a happier client. Let me offer a couple of examples.

Many of my ROI classes offer a broad overview of the services a reputable ESC can offer. Let's take two of those—lighting control and home theaters. We have found that firms who don't have a trusted resource to provide these services spend little time discussing them with their clients. This is a shame, because each of these services can lead to more revenue for everyone involved, not just the "electronics guys" or the "AV company." A bonus room that is turned into a theater provides more billable hours for architects and designers and more profitable work for builders.

The same is true of lighting control. When a client gets excited about lighting control, they tend to pay more attention to ceiling and wall design, which helps everyone. Suddenly that once-neglected plain room gets a beautifully coffered ceiling with custom mahogany woodwork, a gorgeous chandelier and ornate wall sconces. This means more opportunity for builders, designers and architects (not to mention a more impressive addition to everyone's portfolios.)

So, in summary, my first role as an ROI is to help educate my industry colleagues about the many diverse offerings of electronic systems contractors. The larger goal, however, is to stress the advantages of collaboration and networking. ■

*Locate an ROI in your area at [www.cedia.org/roi](http://www.cedia.org/roi)*