

**Question:** How can I make my home smarter?

**Answer:** Automating your home can create a safer and more comfortable habitat.

# Home automation market growth



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**Jeff Browne**  
President, Home C.E.O. Solutions



**Jeff Browne's house might as well be a robot: touch screens in the walls integrate with media players and fire and burglar alarms.**

Distributed audio brings music to every room, the selection changing from news radio in the kitchen to light jazz in the dining room just as the central brain senses the setting sun and brightens the outdoor lights. And with the growing popularity of smartphones and wireless networks, these aren't just toys for the super rich, says Browne, president of Home CEO Solutions, an Ontario-based installer of home automation and security devices.

"Even 10 years ago, this stuff cost a quarter of a million dollars and was only done in mansions," he says.

But when the recession froze the construction industry in 2009 and builders abandoned deposits on \$200,000-jobs, Browne had to innovate to stay afloat. The new strategy targeted a wider market, piggybacking on wireless home computer networks,

which got installers past tearing apart drywall and laying miles of cable and closer to what Browne lovingly calls plug and play.

"If you already own an iPhone, you're looking at a \$50 app and a \$200 piece of hardware plus some shipping costs to control your entertainment center," he says. "You really could run just about any home automation system out there with an iPad or an iPhone."

If you're looking to go beyond the basics, Browne still stocks dedicated master control devices that integrate audio, video, lights, thermostats, cameras and security systems more efficiently than the multipurpose device in your pocket might, with average high-end installation costs running between \$8,000 and \$50,000.

The piecemeal strategy appears to be working: the Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association (CEDIA) says systems integration was the only category to see revenue growth in 2010, with members self-reporting it as their most

profitable service.

Meanwhile, numbers from the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), an industry group representing some 2,200 international technology companies across the entire value chain of producers, vendors and installers, suggest the broader home technology sector is also making a recovery: after sliding in sales for the last five years (peaking at \$2.2 billion in 2007), the CEA predicts U.S. sales of home technologies will climb to \$1.86 billion by 2012, driven in part by the emerging trends of integrating home-based hardware with on-the-go control through wireless systems and mobile devices.

"The other thing is security," says Steve Koenig, CEA's director of industry analysis. "[People] can sit there on their iPad and visit a URL address for a view outside their front door."

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**HOME AUTOMATION**  
connects every aspect of  
your home into an easy-to-  
use system that can increase  
the security of your home.