

casa integration opinion

Your Home Technology Professionals

May 2017



Thank You for 16 Years

Introducing a New Casa Integration – and Why

This is a different Casa Integration Opinion. That's because, as some of you know already, I am closing down Casa Integration as it is currently constituted. So this newsletter represents the final chapter of what began as a somewhat naïve dream in 2001.

The intervening 16 years have been among the best in my and my family's life, so first: a huge thank you to everyone that's been involved – and especially to David Rusconi, David Federico, Larry Feurzeig, and Steve Chuck. These fine gentlemen assisted me over the years and I could have accomplished little, if anything, without them.

Tech Broke My Heart - Luckily

Why am I moving on? Am I not very fortunate to have a successful business that I own myself, with customers others can truly only dream of?

Put simply, I stopped believing. But let me digress.

By far the most challenging part of this business is the literal trench warfare I must wage every day with technology. What grew to wear on me over time was that, regardless of the quality of the products in question, and the care (obsession in my case) by which they're installed, there still will be "problems". Some small, some large, but no matter what: the more technology, the more problems. It's that simple.

Now: don't get me wrong. I am a technologist – probably always have been, and I probably always will be. But over the past 18 – 24 months, I became

Continued: see "Thank You", overleaf

Dialed In/Not Dialed In

Dialed In

- **Not Leaving Clients in a Lurch:** great, Dean, but now what? You sold me all of this stuff, and now who's going to take care of things? Well, if you've read the main article, hopefully you know I actually do care.

I am referring all of our clients to **Cham Sumanasekera** and his company, **Regent5** (www.regent5.com). Cham can be reached at cham@regent5.com, and his office number is (650) 242-5745. Please be sure to tell Cham you were a Casa Integration client if you contact him.

Not Dialed In

- **The Worst:** over the course of 16 years, here are some of the worst technology monsters that have crawled out of the sewer. Yes, it was that bad.
 - URC's RF interference issues – our standard custom remote control from '02-'10 caused a lot of reliability frustrations – for everyone.
 - HDMI. HDMI. HDMI. HDMI. The single worst thing of any kind I've experienced in over 30 years in technology. Many times, HDMI nearly sent me over the edge.
 - SnapAV and their QA disasters with amplifiers and Internet-connected power centers. A company you've never heard of, yet one that we relied upon for years, for many products. That was a mistake and caused a lot of trouble for you and us.
 - ProControl near death experience – these remotes, our go-to for the past 5 years, act like they're dead – until it's power-cycled. What a great way to wrap up this section.



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Casa Integration is a curated design/engineering/instructional online tool for defining and implementing the technology in a new home.

"Thank You", continued

Increasingly disenchanted with the whole thing. I came to realize that the methods employed by me and nearly everyone else in the same business in the end fail our clients. They're too complicated, too intimidating, and not reliable enough, especially given the expense involved.

Related to that is the exponential increase in the capabilities of the products we use. An example: streaming movies, TV shows and cat videos used to be a function separate from your cable TV subscription. But now, Comcast offers Netflix and YouTube right on their own X1 cable boxes. So while a Roku and/or an AppleTV would add incremental abilities, the complexity those devices bring is not needed by the vast majority of people.

For cord-cutters, the opposite is also true. Why have a cable TV subscription when an AppleTV and a Hulu Live subscription gives you most major channels and all of the streaming one could want?

This also applies to the sound from your TV and your music system. Why the big, complex surround sound system, when a Sonos Playbar below the TV (and its discrete matching subwoofer nearby) provide "good enough" sound for most for both movies and music?

And it is those two words – "good enough" - that have brought us to the new Casa Integration. I believe that for the vast majority of people out there – even sophisticated people with plenty of resources that can afford most anything they desire – less is absolutely more in today's frenzied tech world.

I personally believe we are at a tipping point. Humans are analog creatures, not digital, and I think that many have already had enough intrusion from all things technology in their lives. The new Casa Integration is thus focused on delivering the "**smart enough home**".

It's Still Called Casa Integration

So here's the elevator pitch (we are in San Francisco, after all): Casa Integration is a curated design/engineering/instructional online tool for defining and implementing the technology in a new home.

Our new website (currently under development) is intended for homeowners, general contractors, electricians, designers, and/or architects. It asks questions regarding what capabilities are desired, and then our website's proprietary algorithm generates all that is needed for the end-to-end process - equipment lists, cabling specifications, best practices/general instructions, etc.

I believe I've distilled things down to the point that a given project's electrician and a handyman can do all of the actual installation work, especially with the

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photos, helpful hints and other tips the site will supply, reflecting the 16 years I've been in business.

Our website will lead clients through a simple questionnaire, which asks them about the technical features they want in their new home. What rooms get TV's and music, whether lighting and/or motorized shade control is desired throughout or in particular rooms, whether surveillance cameras are desired, etc. Quality WiFi and all of the basic cabling a well-equipped home needs are all included, automatically.

Our site's "engine" now does the rest. It creates a complete statement of work, a part-level equipment list (including prevailing street prices), an estimate of the labor costs involved, a cabling plan, and complete guidelines for bringing it all together. At no cost, the client can choose to receive the statement of work and a summarized budget. \$400 or so gets them the complete package, with all the homeowner and their contractor will need for a technically-savvy and well-equipped home. It's very likely we'll also offer a premium tier, where our clients can receive remote support before, during and after their home is built and the technology installed.

Is the new Casa Integration for everyone building a new home? No. We're targeting homes 1,500 to approximately 5,000 square feet in size – beyond that, you likely have requirements that will require a "Casa Integration 1.0" kind of company. Much smaller, you really don't need much. But my investors and I hope there's a large, national market remaining. People that will love our "Goldilocks" approach to technology in the home: no custom controls, no intimidating racks, and a system they themselves can understand and troubleshoot when something does go wrong (there's still tech involved, after all). Yet with just the right amount of "wow" and exactly what they want.

Saving The Best for Last

Now the important stuff. There is no doubt what I'll miss the most are the absolutely amazing clients I was able to attract and mostly retain over the past 15+ years. It's impossible for me to express the gratitude and the emotions I feel toward you all. While not every single customer was wonderful (I had a few real duds), nearly all were.

When I started Casa Integration in late 2001, I call it a "naïve dream", because I definitely did not know what I didn't know, and I doubt I would have had the guts to start it if I had. Make no mistake: while I lived my dream via a lot of blood, sweat, and tears (plenty of all 3, I can assure you), it was the patience and understanding of my clients that made it possible. I hope what I did made a difference in my clients' lives – they certainly did in mine. Thank you – very much. ■