

# 2019 Residential Systems Stellar Service Award Winners

The readers have spoken on their favorite manufacturer and dealer training programs.



Few things leave as lasting an impression as good service — in fact, probably the closest thing to it is bad service. As residential integration business owners and installers, you know the value of going the extra mile for your customers. Fortunately, the manufacturers and dealers that serve this market are aware of that, too, and offer a number of extraordinary service programs that can help you enhance your business, train your employees, and save you money.

Each year we shine a spotlight on these programs with the Stellar Service Awards, which are here to not only to celebrate the winners, but to increase awareness of what is available to you.

The Stellar Service Awards are a paid-entry, opt-in awards competition. Any company could nominate itself for as many categories as it wished. All entries were then posted online and voted on by *Residential Systems* readers during a two-week judging period. The top three vote getters in each category were awarded Platinum, Gold, or Silver honors. In categories where there were two or fewer programs, the awards were delivered according to popular vote.

Here are the winners of the 2019 *Residential Systems* Stellar Service Awards:

## DISTRIBUTOR PROGRAMS

### Customer Service/General Communications

#### PLATINUM WINNER

#### PowerHouse Alliance Dealer Program

The PowerHouse Alliance distributor members support dealers in their installations by serving as a resource for technical support, system design, and installation best practices, as well as full stock of the latest AV, security, networking, home control, and accessory products from a wide variety of brands. Dealers can take advantage of convenient locations near them from PowerHouse Alliance's network of warehouse locations across the country — with over 800,000 square feet across 36 locations, a number that grows each year.

Dealers can easily prepare for a busy installation schedule by leveraging same-day or 24-hour will-call and online ordering at most of the distributor locations. When attending one of the warehouses, PowerHouse distributor member staff are available for in-person support and expertise when selecting product, and for installation best practices, technical troubleshooting, system design, and information on the newest products fresh off the trade show floor. All Powerhouse distributors are

a resource for dealers for product and knowledge, and dealers can also benefit from regular communication from their local PowerHouse Alliance distributor member about their upcoming monthly events, demo days, and training programs on top brands, as well as special deals.

Learn more: [www.powerhousealliance.com](http://www.powerhousealliance.com)

### Dealer Programs

#### PLATINUM WINNER

#### Control4 Certified Showroom Program

In 2018, Control4 launched their Certified Showroom program worldwide to provide dealers local destinations to connect with homeowners, architects, and designers. Control4 believes that seeing and experiencing smart home technology first-hand is the way to help consumers understand how it fits into their life. Certified Showroom Dealers get support in advancing their showroom space with product, displays, and other tools that will help them wow potential customers. These dealers meet a series of elevated standards and receive training on smart home demos curated to show top features,

including smart lighting, multi-room audio and video, comfort, voice control, home networking, and security with Intercom Anywhere.

The Certified Showroom program was paired with a brand-new event, #C4Yourself Day, held in May and October 2018 to invite local homeowners, interior designers, builders, and architects to attend their local showroom and meet their dealer, demo smart home features, and begin designing systems for their home or customers' homes. Control4 Certified Showroom Dealers benefit from marketing and sales support from Control4, including showroom design, branding guides, discounted demonstration products, regional advertising, and much more.

Having a Control4 Certified Showroom enhances dealers' ability to sell smart homes to potential customers and to the build and design community. With a growing ecosystem of more than 12,500 interoperable devices, many homeowners learn that there's more they can do with a smart home when they experience it as a Certified Showroom. This gives dealers an opportunity to get involved with more new build

projects in their area by showcasing technology to homebuyers, designers, and builders, as well as the ability to expand or add onto existing projects by showcasing new features.

Learn more: [www.control4.com/](http://www.control4.com/)

#### **GOLD WINNER**

##### **Nortek Security & Control Dealer Rewards**

The Nortek Security & Control Dealer Rewards, offers up to 12.5 percent in quarterly rebates on purchases of ELAN, 2GIG, GoControl, Linear, SpeakerCraft, Panamax, Niles, Sunfire, Furman, Xantech, and Gefen products. Rebates start at 2.5 percent for quarterly purchases of \$2500, and increase all the way up to 12.5 percent for quarterly purchases of \$50,000. Also, all orders placed on the Nortek Security & Control Portal receive free shipping.

In addition to quarterly rebates, when dealers achieve annual Premier and Elite volumes of \$50,000 and \$100,000, respectively, they earn discounts on product purchases of up to 12 percent. Once you qualify for a premium level, you will earn at that discount level for the remainder of that year and the following calendar year. All dealers also benefit from discounts on demo gear to outfit their showroom.

Learn more: [www.nortekcontrol.com](http://www.nortekcontrol.com)

#### **Training Programs**

##### **PLATINUM WINNER**

##### **PowerHouse Alliance Training Programs**

The PowerHouse Alliance benefits dealers from training and events, expertise, and support, to delivery and will-call options to support their busy installation schedules. The PowerHouse Alliance distributor members offer an extensive

training program that brings manufacturer demos, updates, and education sessions to convenient locations across the country, leveraging the largest network of distributor locations in the country. PowerHouse Alliance members collectively represent 800,000 square feet of warehouse space across 36 locations, a number that grows each year.

In 2018 there were over 200 trainings and distributor trade show events, with over 20 available to dealers nationwide each month with updates on security, home control, networking, audio/video, and other installation best practices from vendors such as Samsung, Just Add Power, MSE Audio, KEF, Yamaha, Digital Watchdog, Luxul, Universal Remote, 2GIG, Hikvision, JVC, and more. In addition to regular trainings that dealers and their technicians can access at a convenient location, PowerHouse Alliance distributor members create special events to bring manufacturer demos and training to dealers, plus special deals, rewards, and giveaways.

Dealers are kept up-to-date on event, training, and deal news through social media and newsletters from the PowerHouse Alliance member in their area. They also benefit from the expertise and extra support provided by the distributors, whose staff are knowledgeable and ready to help with system design and technical support, and ordering is easy with 24-hour will-call, same-day will-call, and on-site delivery available from many locations. PowerHouse Alliance provides dealers with a one-stop shop for product, expertise, and support for projects across the country to support quality, fast installations.

Learn more: [www.powerhousealliance.com](http://www.powerhousealliance.com)

#### **GOLD WINNER**

##### **Control4 Training Programs**

Control4 continuously creates and upgrades its training and certification programs to best equip dealers and technicians for smart home, networking, audio, and specialty installations. In addition to the Control4 dealer training and the Packedge Certified Network Administrator training program, dealers can quickly refresh their skills on technical training techniques, third-party integrations, device setup, driver configuration, networking, and more using the Control4 Smart Skills training videos.

Control4 launched the Smart Skills videos in the dealer portal in 2016 with a library of 15 videos, and the intention to add one each month. Control4 has over delivered — there are now over 130 three-minute videos in the Smart Skills library. Dealers can quickly troubleshoot a problem on their mobile phone during an install or they can use the library refresh their skills and learn integration techniques and tricks videos that range subjects such as configuring a router, the Mockupancy experience, lighting scenes to buttons, a gas fireplace, Roku Player drivers, Z-Wave devices, Amazon Alexa, and Packedge BakPak monitoring.

The videos include instruction and a step-by-step view of how to set up an integration or configure a device in Composer Pro, and dealers can easily access the library of courses they use most frequently in the portal. As an accompaniment to Control4 training and support, the Smart Skills videos are an on-demand resource that help prepare dealers for any installation challenges without the time commitment of an additional course.

## **MANUFACTURER**

#### **Customer Service/General Communications**

##### **PLATINUM WINNER**

##### **MSE Audio Customer Service**

MSE Audio, parent company of Phase Technology, Induction Dynamics, dARTS, SoundTube Entertainment, SolidDrive, Rockustics, and Soundsphere, provides dealers with high-quality, versatile solutions for residential applications. MSE Audio offers an in-house, knowledgeable team of customer service representatives to provide dealers with product support, technical services, system design, and more. Dealers can conveniently reach customer service through MSE Audio's dedicated phone line or online live chat platform. MSE Audio's trained representatives are friendly, attentive, and responsive. With their

extensive audio experience, representatives can provide dealers with design layouts to maximize audio integration throughout the entire project. In addition, extensive work has been put into optimizing the website this year, and will continue into 2019, ensuring MSE customers a fast, safe, and informative website experience, with many new features coming soon. Lastly, MSE Audio's established shipping policy provides dealers with same day shipping for orders placed before 2:00pm CT and on-site pickup for local dealers.

#### **GOLD WINNER**

##### **D-Tools Customer Success Team**

D-Tools is continuously expanding its effort in providing our customers with the resources

needed to be successful. The D-Tools Customer Success Team is no exception. The D-Tools team is committed to providing D-Tools software users with world-class customer service, as well as direct contact to ensure that there is always a live person to speak with within business hours. Whether there are support issues, accounting questions, need for implementation guidance, or simply need someone to talk to, the team of Customer Success Managers (CSMs) are available and on-hand.

As part of its initiatives, our CSMs also contribute articles as a means to continue to help D-Tools customers with guidance, tips, and more in the case that help is needed, no matter the time of day.

Learn more: [d-tools.com/customer-success-team](http://d-tools.com/customer-success-team)



SILVER WINNER

### URC Technical Support Department

The URC technical support team provides ongoing product support and systems design consultation via call center, live chat, online, forum, and email communications. Technicians are crossed-trained on different platforms. The team includes a dynamic and collaborative group of new and veteran technicians, leading to a low turnover rate for Technical Support Reps. Average call center hold times are less than three minutes. The department is equipped with scalable testing environments, enabling managers and reps to test dealer issues on-the-spot at their desk or in centralized testing labs with third-party equipment.

The team features a Level 2 queue for escalated issues. An experienced, well-versed management team and dedicated team members embrace a customer-service-centric atmosphere. Open communications with third-party partners, vendors, and distributors allow technicians to deliver quick resolution to even the most complex technical and design issues. Extended hours enable the group to service the large domestic and international URC customer base.

The URC Technical Support Department is committed to internal training, including one-on-one and monthly group trainings. Throughout the year, technicians are invited to attend dealer training events, dealer meetings, and tradeshows for broader industry exposure and career advancement. Technicians are in-home testers for URC. They live with the URC product every day, allowing them to provide first-hand dealer assistance, feedback and product development suggestions.

The department is equipped with a newly upgraded call center phone system and FAQ/knowledge base library that acts as a constantly evolving technical resource. A dedicated RA (return authorization) team provides a smooth process for customers.

Learn more: [www.universalremote.com](http://www.universalremote.com)

### Dealer Programs

PLATINUM WINNER

#### RTI Dealer Programs

RTI is driven by a commitment to provide its dealers with the tools to deliver the ultimate user experience for their clients. It begins with the company's Integration Designer APEX programming software, the backbone of its control and automation solutions. Recently, the company introduced a new version of APEX — Version 10.4

— which allows dealers to take advantage of the RTiQ cloud-based remote management solution.

With RTiQ, dealers can monitor the status of components controlled by an XP control processor via a dashboard from anywhere in the world and receive email and text notifications that alert them if a failure occurs. They can then remotely trigger an action to restore the failed system or component. Free to RTI dealers, the remote management solution provides dealers with the opportunity to adopt a recurring monthly revenue (RMR) business model in the form of system management packages for a low monthly fee.

In addition to all the new and powerful ways RTI is supporting its dealers, the company is still backing them with its tried-and-true programs. These include RTI's Certified Dealer, Control Bucks, and the Dealer Accommodation programs.

Learn more: [www.rticorp.com](http://www.rticorp.com)

GOLD WINNER

#### DISH Concierge Team

The DISH Concierge Team is staffed by custom-integration professionals who know the ins and outs of the industry. This is a free, dedicated resource resource for DISH Custom Integrated Solutions, covering everything from smart entertainment to smart home automation.

- Advanced System Design: DISH will help design your video solutions, plus cost out equipment, installation, and ongoing service.
- Custom Integrator Hotline: Get help with DISH products, software, installation, and more. Speak with DISH engineering, technical operations, and product management.
- Technician Site Visits: DISH's certified technicians are available for on-site assistance, including walkthroughs, installation help, and troubleshooting.
- America's Favorite Entertainment: Get the details on DISH's TV packages, including sports, international programming, Pay-Per-View, and premium channels.

Learn more: [www.dish.com/cedia](http://www.dish.com/cedia)

#### Sales/Marketing Support

PLATINUM WINNER

#### Vanco

With a 60-year legacy of serving the residential and commercial AV industry, Vanco International engineers, manufactures, and sells premium audio/video products and electronic accessories. Backed by a team of knowledgeable support representatives and technology experts, Vanco delivers stellar sales and marketing support to

distributors and dealers, while offering assistance, and expert advice on system design options.

Vanco representatives lend on-site support at vendor events, including counter days, roadshows, tradeshows, vendor showcases, and dealer appreciation events. Vanco leads national training webinars to ensure distributors are armed with the knowledge to confidently recommend and install all Vanco, PulseAudio, BealeStreet, and Evolution products. Vanco also leads flexible training webinars by request to deliver a tailored session to interested distributors and installers.

Marketing support includes giveaway items, custom end-cap programs, custom distributor signage, POP displays, custom event and promotional flyers, and product demo displays for in-store use. They also provide product images, catalogs, sales sheets, and other literature for vendors to expand upon their marketing efforts.

Committed to providing only the highest quality products, Vanco tests 100 percent of their active products at their U.S. headquarters in Illinois. This second round of rigorous testing to ensure products are fully functional before to shipping to distributors. Vanco is dedicated to assisting the dealer and distributor community in producing high-quality customer experiences across home theater, premium audio, and commercial installations, and support representatives can be reached five days per week by phone or live chat via Vanco's website, and reached by e-mail 24 hours per day, seven days per week for additional support.

Learn more: [www.vanco1.com/contact-us](http://www.vanco1.com/contact-us)

#### Shipping/Freight Policies

PLATINUM WINNER

#### Vanco

Vanco International's free freight policies are some of the most competitive in the industry. Vanco adeptly expedites urgent shipping orders for immediate installation needs on any of their 3000+ product SKUs. Vanco has also implemented an innovative, state-of-the-art scanning and tracking process in a proven effort to eliminate the possibility of errors and delays, while improving efficiency. To ensure customer satisfaction, Vanco utilizes their ability to provide distributors with live shipping updates on all orders. With this rigorous new tracking system, orders are manually screened and pickers scan each product and compare serialized products against the corresponding purchase order numbers to ensure that distributors are not selling to a re-seller who is violating MAP pricing.

Vanco values the rights of distributors and does not sell to any end users.

Learn more: [www.vanco1.com/contact-us](http://www.vanco1.com/contact-us)

### Training Programs

#### PLATINUM WINNER

##### Lutron

Lutron Electronics provides intensive, hands-on courses for our professionals to learn how to design, commission, and troubleshoot Lutron Solutions. In addition to the technical training aspects of the program, Lutron provides sales and business education to ensure our customers receive a high level of service from our professionals. Lutron harnesses the power of online, blended, and in-person courses to achieve a total learning solution that is reinforced over the course of a professional's relationship with Lutron. Each year, Lutron hosts a National Residential Opportunities tour to showcase new products and technologies as well as updates to programs and services.

Learn more: [www.lutron.com/lcionline](http://www.lutron.com/lcionline)

#### GOLD WINNER

##### Peerless-AV Certified Installer Training Program

Peerless-AV places a strong emphasis on educating the AV industry, namely residential integrators and installers. Through its Certified Installer Training Program, which is compliant with standards established for continuing education for system integrators and installers, Peerless-AV works with industry professionals to increase their expertise and provide top of the line support to homeowners.

Offering in-person or online webinar options, these value-added courses demonstrate the importance of proper installation techniques and safety, and address efficient methods to reduce the risk of faulty installations. Attendees will receive customized, hands-on sessions to fit their installation needs, and detailed takeaway resources that can be referred to again and again.

To best meet industry demands, Peerless-AV consistently reviews its levels and makes changes that meet advancements in the space.

Peerless-AV's program consists of five total levels:

###### 1. *Bronze Level: Getting to Know the Basics*

Includes training for flat, tilt, pivot, and articulating wall mounts, and projector/display ceiling mounts with ceiling accessories.

###### 2. *Silver Level: Fundamentals of Digital Signage Solutions*

Includes training for basic video wall mounts

and carts, menu board wall mounts, and kiosk product overview with installation tips and tricks.

###### 3. *Gold Level: Advanced Digital Signage Solutions*

Includes training for full service video wall mounting options and multi-display ceiling applications.

###### 4. *Platinum Level: Mastering Wireless and Outdoor Solutions*

Includes best practices for installation and setup scenarios for wireless systems, outdoor displays and sound bars, media enclosures, and touch overlays.

###### 5. *Diamond Level: Video Wall Mounting Systems for Direct View LED Displays*

Includes training on direct view LED displays and video wall mounting systems, including the benefits of such technology and how to properly install both flat and pull-out video wall mounting systems.

Upon completion of these levels, integrators will be able to execute successful installations.

Learn more: [www.peerless-av.com/en-us/training](http://www.peerless-av.com/en-us/training)

#### SILVER WINNER

##### URC Dealer Training

URC is committed to delivering industry-leading training for their global network of systems integration professionals. Each year, thousands of loyal URC dealers spend their time and resources attending live training events, joining webinars, and actively engaging with URC's eLearning curriculum. Throughout 2018, URC dealers attended Total Control, MX HomePro, and Complete Control live training events, including hands-on integration of the latest URC and third-party smart home technology.

All URC training sessions are hosted by highly experienced programming and training specialists. Hands-on integration with devices and equipment offers the ultimate realistic experience — complete with real-life scenarios and exercises that dealers can relate to.

URC's flagship Total Control three-day certification training, held throughout the United States and in select International venues, delivers the perfect amount of knowledge and information that dealers can retain and utilize in the field, including a step-by-step learning process with review exercises.

The Total Control certification training covers all pertinent areas of programming knowledge, including networking, basic programming, customization, integration, and automation programming. This rigorous curriculum allows dealers to specify and install systems

the moment they get certified. The training fee includes an incredible assortment of URC product, lodging, and meals. URC also offers in-depth advanced Level Two and Commercial training for experienced Total Control systems integrators.

The well-seasoned training curriculum delivered by an energetic and exciting team of trainers works in concert with an organizational culture of dealer-first support and service. URC sales managers, sales engineers, training, and tech support departments provide the ultimate support whenever needed for all dealers, new and existing.

Learn more: [www.universalremote.com](http://www.universalremote.com)

### Warranty/Return Policy/Tech Support

#### PLATINUM WINNER

##### Vanco

With a commitment to helping the dealer and distributor community succeed in creating high-quality customer experiences across home theater, premium audio, and commercial installations, Vanco International delivers stellar technical support by phone, live chat via their website, and e-mail support with representatives available 24/7. Vanco hosts several training resources publicly on their website, including documents and videos to deliver industry knowledge and in-depth product demonstration. Training videos breakdown popular product features such as ARC, HDBaseT, HDMI Distribution, Sonic Vortex, IR, and more.

Led by Vanco's experienced director of training and product knowledge, training videos featuring product across Vanco International's four unique brands, including Vanco, Evolution, PulseAudio, and Beale Street Audio. Vanco's website hosts all products across all four brands with a detailed description and unique product manuals available for download.

Continuing their 60-year legacy in the AV industry, Vanco International continues to engineer, manufacture, and sell premium audio/video products and electronic accessories that are 100 percent QC tested in the U.S. Vanco International honors a lifetime warranty on all Vanco cables and works directly with their dealers and distributors to provide flexible warranty and return policies.

Learn more: [www.vanco1.com/tech-support](http://www.vanco1.com/tech-support)

#### GOLD WINNER

##### RTI

Demonstrating RTI's commitment to product quality, reliability, and support, the company

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offers a three-year warranty on its portfolio of control and AV solutions, including wired and wireless controllers, processors, AV distribution systems, amplifiers, and accessories in addition to demonstrating RTI's rock-solid confidence in its products. It also inspires end-user confidence and provides another great selling point for dealers. To ensure its products are only sold and installed by RTI dealers, the warranty does not apply to products purchased from unauthorized sellers or internet sites.

Learn more: [www.rticorp.com](http://www.rticorp.com)

### Web Portal/Online Tools

#### PLATINUM WINNER

#### URC Dealer Portal

The URC Dealer Portal is a comprehensive resource for URC dealers and integration partners. Dealers can place orders for URC and third-party products — and download software, two-way modules, marketing materials, product images, manuals, and other technical resources. It offers online order and account management,

including seamless access to order history, tracking, and invoices.

The URC Dealer Portal is also a robust training resource. Dealers can view the training schedule and register for in-person, webinar, and self-paced training. Self-paced training modules are fully integrated into the site, allowing dealers to engage with the tutorials 24/7/365 from the comfort of their home and office. Trainees can also view their training history and download online certificates for the courses that they completed.

In order to facilitate efficient communication, the portal features a support menu for immediate access to various URC departments and facilitates registration for URC email alerts. Business owners can add and delete employees, including assigning permissions (such as purchasing authority) for their registered personnel. A dedicated URC portal email address enables existing and potential dealers to ask questions or seek assistance.

URC dealers around the world are pleased with the convenience, intuitive organization, and performance of the dealer portal. We are committed to continual improvement and as

such will continue to enhance the site in 2019 with even more robust features and content.

Learn more: [www.universalremote.com](http://www.universalremote.com)

#### GOLD WINNER

#### Nortek Security & Control's Web Portal

Nortek Security & Control's user-friendly web portal simplifies the order process and vendor interactions, saving the dealer time, labor, and resources. Through the portal, dealers can access all related product literature, from catalogs and cut-sheets to installation guides and high-res images. Additionally, dealers can easily search by brand or by the large number of categories that NSC offers.

Further, the portal provides dealers with access to real-time inventory status, order entry, processing and tracking, easy re-orders based on historical information saved to their account, and enables easy access from any device with a simple UI that scales to your device.

Through the portal, dealers also have first access to promos and special offers and all portal orders receive free shipping.

Learn more: [www.nortekcontrol.com](http://www.nortekcontrol.com) ■

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