

# Top Shelf Support

## RESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS READERS SELECT FOURTH-ANNUAL STELLAR SERVICE AWARD WINNERS

by Jeremy J. Glowacki

Installing the greatest projector, the most capable matrix switch, or most intuitive control system means little if there's no one around to answer questions when something inevitably goes wrong. With so much emphasis on products and performance, the valiant effort of the people who toil behind the scenes to support, educate, and make life easier for integrators often goes unsung.

In *Residential Systems'* fourth-annual Stellar Service Awards reader poll, we take the time to honor manufacturers and distributors for going the extra mile to provide exceptional customer service and communication, sales and marketing support, training programs, warranty policies, and websites in 2016.

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

The editorial staff at *Residential Systems* thanks all participants and readers who voted this year to recognize the outstanding efforts of companies that strive to keep the foremost focus of this increasingly technical industry on its people.

Here are our profiles of this year's winners in each category:

### Customer Service, Communication Portal (Platinum)

Portal is a complete, web-based, industry-specific product catalog that allows professional installers/dealers to find product information and make wholesale purchases from all of their suppliers in one place. Portal collects and organizes product data including pricing, availability, specifications, and videos. This is done by industry and category, and then presented in a comprehensive-yet-intuitive web catalog, making it easier for resellers to find what they need, build accurate proposals, and purchase products from their suppliers.

"Customer service is extremely important to us (one reason we call our Customer Support team our "Dealer Happiness" team), so this award is pretty special," said Josh Willits, VP of dealer happiness.

### Peerless-AV (Gold)

Peerless-AV's Solutions Support Unit, known as the Customer Care Department, is committed to providing exceptional service, while maintaining one-call resolution. Every customer care representative obtains full Peerless-AV product training, as well as technical education, allowing them to answer customer issues efficiently and effectively. For highly technical issues, Peerless-AV relies on its team of "PeerTech Pros," a group responsible for providing support surrounding all of Peerless-AV's emerging technology and wireless solutions. Peerless-AV's Solutions Support Unit provides multiple options for support, including live chat, phone, video chat, email, and fax.

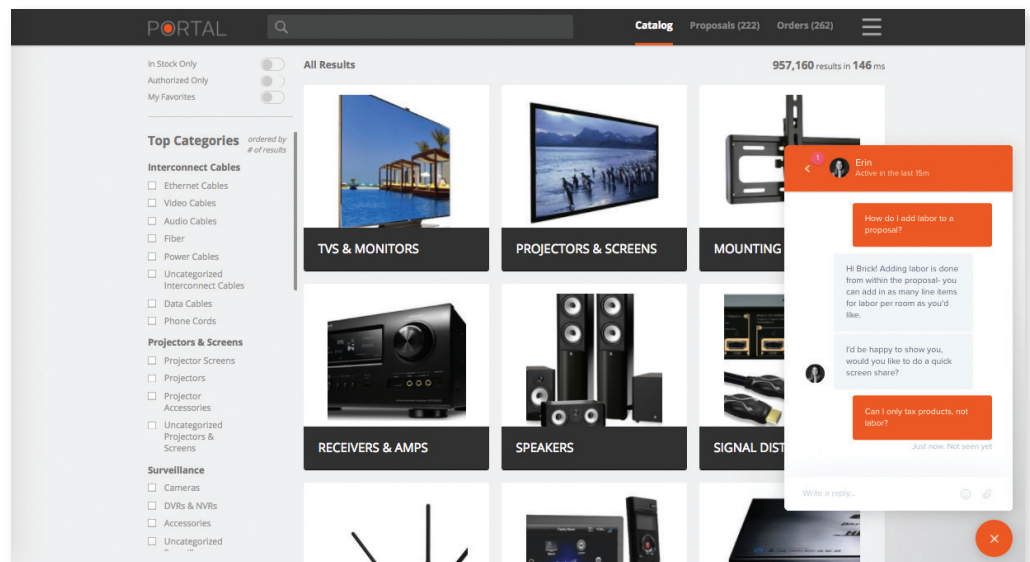
### Middle Atlantic (Silver)

A customer-first philosophy drives every member of Middle Atlantic, and a dedicated customer experience team is devoted to providing expert technical support, design services, and rack installation walkthroughs. The company begins by listening to customers' needs and delivering on requirements for product development, engineering, training, and education. With integrator tools such as its Configurator and onsite and online training via AV Academy, Middle Atlantic is committed to simplifying the integrator's job and giving them the tools to build intuitive, personalized systems to meet

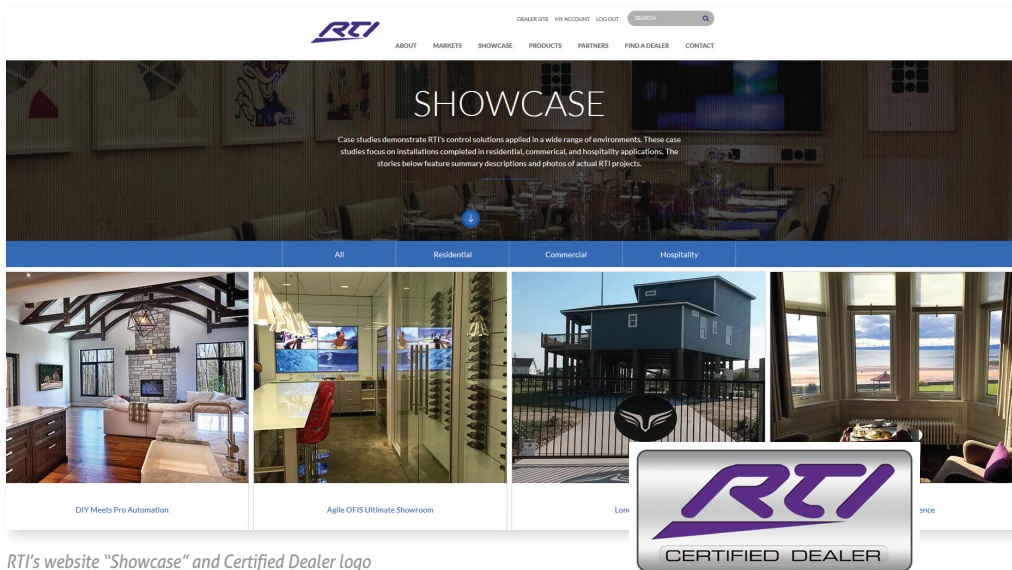
the needs of any AV environment.

### Dealer Programs RTI (Platinum)

To guarantee the best-possible user experience and protect dealer profit margins, RTI's Integration Designer programming software is available only to authorized dealers, and the RTI Certified Dealer program helps ensure that its products are sold by trained custom integration professionals. RTI takes a firm stance against products sold by unauthorized dealers online. A disclaimer on the RTI website notifies consumers that RTI products sold online



Portal engages with clients within its product-ordering portal.



RTI's website "Showcase" and Certified Dealer logo

are not covered by any type of warranty, and are not eligible for any type of service or support. RTI incentive programs include Control Bucks and Dealer Accommodation programs (for U.S. dealers). Control Bucks are given to integrators who complete on-site training courses, and can be redeemed for RTI products and other merchandise. RTI dealers accumulate Control Bucks as they purchase RTI products. The company's dealer accommodation program offers aggressive pricing for dealers who want to invest in RTI demo systems for their showroom or personal use.

### Crestron (Gold)

The Crestron Partner Rewards Program (PRP) rewards Crestron Technology Professionals (CTPs) with more cash awards than ever before. The more you grow, the more cash you'll get back. Dealers can earn awards through a purchase rebate or a quarterly growth rebate. Crestron considers its PRP as the industry's most generous incentive program. In addition to cash rewards, Crestron shares in the investment for the CTPs to grow their business through marketing and market development activities.

### Epson (Silver)

Epson offers a line of Pro Cinema home theater products that are dedicated exclusively to the CEDIA channel. To further protect channel integrity, Epson utilizes UMRP pricing policies to protect all dealers' margins. In addition, Epson offers customized incentive campaigns to fit dealer needs, ranging from assistance with the development of demo rooms as well as special offers, such as the company's exclusive Pro Cinema package, which includes a spare lamp, mounting kit, and extended warranty.

### Sales and Marketing Support, Shipping Policies Peerless-AV (Platinum)

Peerless-AV's sales and marketing teams work together to develop easily digestible and aesthetically pleasing marketing collateral that the sales team relies on. Customer support is a top priority at Peerless-AV and this focus can be found in all aspects of the company, including sales and marketing. Highly connected and cross-trained, Peerless-AV's sales team extends unified messages and quality support. With a focus on education and strategy, the team presents holistic, cohesive technology solutions from a single supplier. This efficiency and reliability has continued to be proven as a great benefit to partners and customers. Peerless-AV's marketing team continuously looks for new and exciting ways to promote the company's solutions. The team works closely with all of the industry publications and organizations, and has a strong foothold at all industry tradeshow.



Peerless-AV's sales and marketing team, pictured from left to right, Tom Novotny, Mila Tulchinskaya, Christina Martinez, Lynnette Marshall, Kelly Yuen, Rachael Hinds, Megan Dutta, Ashley Zick, Brian McClimans, and Earl Naegele. Not pictured: Andrew Aaron, Craig Recchia, Jeff Blankensop, Kathy Petrin, Lawrence Campbell, Maggie Hayes, Megan Zeller, Nick Belcore, Therese Cleary, Brian Schumaker, Christine Lauber, Dwight Jenkins, Hut Hutto, Howard Lerner, John Johnsen, Kevin McDonald, Maggie Austin, Peter Hopkins, Richard Fiorino, Robert Branlund, Wade Wollock, Yesenia Martinez, and Dave Dahm

### AVAD (Gold)

AVAD offers integrators what it calls "incomparable warranty and return policies and tech support" because they're "customers, too." The distributor understands the importance for exceptional return and exchange policies with minimal hassle, which is why it offers a 90-day "good as new" return program for any current product and, in the instance any product fails within 30 days, integrators can exchange it hassle-free.

### RTI (Silver)

RTI's sales support includes a new website that puts the focus on the broad range of solutions that are possible with RTI user interfaces and custom programming. The new design features a day-in-the-life timeline with interactive elements that allow users to explore how RTI simplifies the home, office, and business through state-of-the-art automation. Furthermore, the website's "Showcase" section is filled with real-life installations to provide dealers and end users with inspiration for their projects. Through RTI's Case Study Program, dealers can submit details about recent projects for inclusion in RTI's showcase, social media, and marketing collateral.

### Training Programs/Web Tools Portal (Platinum)

Portal is a web-based, industry-specific product catalog that allows professional installers/dealers to find product information and make wholesale purchases from all of their suppliers in one place. Portal collects and organizes product data including pricing, availability, specifications, and videos. This is done by industry and category, then presented in a comprehensive web catalog, making it easier for resellers to find what they need, build



ORDERS				
ORDERS (262)   Processing (303)   Shipping (137)   Received (116)				
#821	Ken and Megan Project PO			
Integra	#821-act-5503	1 item - \$500.00		Draft
Atona	#821-D	1 item - \$149.99		Draft
Autonomic Controls	#821-E	1 item - \$1,285.00		Draft
SnapAV	#821-F	9 items - \$622.33		Draft
Sonos	#821-G	9 items - \$0.00		Draft
Capitol Sales	#821-K	3 items - \$414.00		Draft
DoorBird	#821-M	1 item - \$0.00		Draft
URC	#821-N	1 item - \$302.00		Draft

Portal's web-based, industry-specific product catalog

accurate proposals, and purchase products from their suppliers. Portal's "Dealer Happiness" team provides customer service for dealers through phone calls, emails, demos, and live chat right in the Portal app or on the Portal site. The Dealer Happiness team keeps the average response time on the in-app chat to less than 90 seconds, typically. As mostly former dealers, the Portal team makes every effort to provide the type of customer service that they needed when they were integrators.

#### The Powerhouse Alliance (Gold)

The PowerHouse Alliance distributor members keep dealers nationwide knowledgeable and on top of consumer electronic, security, automation, and networking products and installation methods with trainings from local expertise. Each month, the 12 distributor members host certification and training programs as well as events, open houses, and webinars across the country; they also provide advice for dealers from each of their 39 locations to help them select the best products for their customers' installations. Trainings are available for almost any manufacturer.

#### D-Tools Professional Services Group (Silver)

Comprised of a tenured team with deep industry knowledge and expertise, the D-Tools Professional Services Group's (PSG) mission is to help those using the D-Tools platform become proficient, efficient, and effective. The team facilitates customer success by driving deeper adoption of the System Integrator (SI) platform. Offering hands-on training and third-party software integration support, the PSG team helps customers make the most of their software investment. The PSG Group helps D-Tools customers fully explore and exploit the advanced functionality of the software and service packages available, including many that can be purchased à la carte or through convenient packages that bundle select services and training.

#### Warranty/Return Policy/Tech Support

##### AVAD (Platinum)

AVAD Tech Support offers integrators

unparalleled product knowledge from an in-house team of experts, aimed at helping dealers hone their competitive edge and troubleshoot system integration. Integrators can take advantage of AVAD's newly expanded Tech Support through their regional representative, a recently expanded call center service, or through the enhanced web portal. AVAD's valuable support includes assistance from the AVAD System Design Group, a team of technology experts who provide residential and commercial design services including needs analysis, AutoCAD presentations, and product selection.

#### The DaVinci Group (Gold)

The DaVinci Group's warranty programs are a key part of providing exceptional service to them. The company offers a lifetime warranty on its speakers and a five-year warranty on its electronics. If a product needs to be replaced, The DaVinci Group makes every effort to get a new one delivered as soon as possible; if required, it will expedite replacement products at the company's expense. It also recognizes the extra effort and expense incurred in replacing defective products, so it issues a credit to its dealers' accounts to help



An AVAD showroom

offset the expense of a truck roll when they have to replace an installed product that fails under warranty.

#### Epson (Silver)

Product performance and customer satisfaction is a top priority for Epson. The company offers toll-free access to its PrivateLine priority technical support, and a three-year warranty on its Pro Cinema models sold exclusively to the CEDIA channel, including free two-business-day exchange/replacement with Extra Care Home Service. Via Epson's PrivateLine, customers are provided direct access to advanced technical staff to address product needs as quickly as possible.



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