

# THE SECRETS OF THE PERFECT AUTOMATION SYSTEM

This tip sheet on smart home automation will help you plan the system that best fits your needs.

**THIS EASY-TO-USE GUIDE ANSWERS THESE AND MANY OTHER QUESTIONS:**

What do you want to control? • How important is the dealer and installer?

How do you know it's safe and secure? • Will the system grow with me or become obsolete?

**THERE ARE MANY AUTOMATION SYSTEMS** on the market, and many ways to introduce smart home products and technology into your home, but the best home automation systems go above and beyond simply letting you turn something on or off with an app. Checking your thermostat on your phone or turning off a light with your iPad are both neat tricks, but a home automation system is much more than that. If you want to claim you have a truly smart home, your system needs to meet these qualifications. Unfortunately many of the basic and DIY systems don't do this, which is why those systems may disappoint their owners and eventually disappear from the market.

If you're thinking about getting an automation or smart home system for your home, or upgrading an older system, these 10 tips will help you navigate the sometimes complicated technologies and features that make custom home automation systems awesome.



## 1. CUSTOMIZABLE INTEGRATED APP

The key, as in the actual key that gets you in the door (if you use automated smart locks) may be your smart phone. Many competent smart home products exist, but if you can't integrate them all into one system, controllable by one central app, then you're doing more work than is necessary. The best systems use one integrated app --not four-- to shut off your lights, close the shades, adjust the temperature and secure the doors. But while the app is an invaluable tool (and often the thing that users get most excited about), don't forget about other important interfaces (see #5 for more).

## 2. A BIG BRAIN

While the app (and maybe the touchscreens and keypads too) is what gets your attention first, and the part you interact with daily, it's also not the brains of the system. That is the control/processor itself. Every good custom automation system starts with a central processor, and the processor is what determines, to some extent, which types of devices can be connected, which communications protocols it uses, how complex a system it can manage and how fast it can operate. Make sure your home automation installer uses the best brains available, which means a processor that has enough inputs, expandability, and processing power for your home.

## 3. FLEXIBILITY

Your home automation shouldn't be a one-trick pony. It's one of the few systems in your home that should be able to do it all--that means it should be able to handle your lights, your heating/AC system, your home security, home entertainment and much more.

#### 4. UPGRADEABILITY

Those touchscreens and black boxes may look impressive, but it's what you don't see that holds the true power of an automation system. Software is the driving force of an automation system. The more sophisticated that software is, the more the system can do. As technology changes, so must the software. Before you buy any system, be sure the manufacturer (or your CE pro) will be able to unlock and download software updates automatically.

#### 5. VARIETY OF USER INTERFACES

There are a number of different ways you can control the electronic systems in your home: by pressing the buttons of a handheld remote or wall-mounted keypad, by touching colorful icons on a portable touchpanel or by sliding your finger across your iPad. Depending on your family dynamic, budget and preferences, you might like to utilize a variety of different controllers, so make sure the automation manufacturer offers a wide selection of user interfaces.

#### 6. TIME-TESTED

No one, except for serious early-adopters, likes to be the guinea pig, so choose an automation system with a proven track record. Same goes for the person who installs the system into your home. You should be able to gather some historical background about manufacturers and installers from their company websites.

#### 7. STRONG DEALER NETWORK

You may have great hardware and software for your system, but you'll need a highly trained and certified installer in order to get your money's worth. Good home automation manufacturers go above and beyond to create a strong dealer network, by offering continual education and training and by supporting multiple dealers in a single geographic area. For consumers, having more than one dealer to choose from is important. When more than one dealer carries a



particular product in your area, pricing is more competitive and should one dealer go out of business, there's someone else you can call to pick up the pieces.

#### 8. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

One of the hottest topics in the consumer media is energy conservation. Automation systems can help save energy by turning off electronic devices automatically, and some do this better than others. Does the system you're interested in control thermostats, window shades and wLED lights? Be sure to check out the energy-saving features of a system before you buy.

#### 9. LAYERS OF PROTECTION

Everyone always wonders what happens to an automated house when the power or internet goes out. Does the system forget how to operate the lights when power is restored? If an automation system has the appropriate back-up protection, you won't have to worry about that.

#### 10. LONG TERM

You may want a system now primarily to control your home theater or to keep your family secure, but home automation systems can be addictive. Think about the kinds of tasks you want to do now, but also consider what you may want to add later on. If you have a system that's able to grow with your needs, you're more likely to use and appreciate it for a long time.



**FOR MORE TIPS** on how to get the ultimate home automation system for your home and family, download this **FREE SPECIAL REPORT: The Custom Part of Custom Home Automation**

Also check out **LEVITON SOLUTIONS** for more information.