

Twenty Mistakes, Avoided.

What we have seen in 20+ years of combined leadership experience in luxury integration work.

INTRODUCTION

The mistakes worth avoiding.

Twenty mistakes we have watched homeowners make. None of them are fatal. All of them are avoidable, if the right conversations happen early enough.

REFERENCE

Twenty mistakes we see most often.

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- Bringing the integrator in too late.
- O1** By the time the drywall is up, half the decisions that mattered are already made. Engage the integrator during design development so conduit, pathways, and rack room can be coordinated with the architect and the trades, not retrofitted around them.
- Skipping conduit to save money.
- O2** Empty conduit during framing costs pennies. Pulling new conduit through finished millwork costs thousands and bruises everything it touches. Run more conduit than you think you need. Run it to every keypad, every shade pocket, every closet, every outdoor zone.
- Treating wireless as a substitute for wiring.
- O3** Wi-Fi is for things that move. Anything that lives in one place belongs on copper or fiber. The forever home that runs televisions, cameras, and access points on wireless will be the forever home that has problems nobody can quite pin down.
- Buying gear before the rooms are designed.
- O4** The screen, the speakers, the projector, the rack components - they all follow the room. Buying the gear first means making the room conform to the gear, which is backwards. Specify the room first; the gear specifies itself.

- 05 Forgetting the rack room until the basement is finished.
- The rack room is the spine of the home. It needs space, ventilation, power, service access, and a real door. Discovering you need it after the basement is finished means stealing a closet from somewhere it does not belong.
- 06 Letting the electrician own the low-voltage scope.
- Low-voltage is its own trade. Electricians are excellent at line voltage and uneven at low-voltage. The integrator should own the low-voltage scope, coordinate with the electrician, and stand behind both the design and the install.
- 07 Designing lighting around fixtures instead of around layers.
- Fixture-first design produces homes with beautiful pendants and the wrong light. Layer-first design - ambient, task, accent, decorative - produces rooms that feel right at every hour of the day. Layers come first, then fixtures.
- 08 Putting the network on consumer-grade hardware.
- Consumer mesh systems are designed for apartments. A forever home needs enterprise-class switching, properly placed access points, structured cabling, and a network the integrator can manage remotely for the next two decades.

- 09 Ignoring acoustics until you can hear the problem.
Acoustic isolation between rooms, attenuation inside rooms, and mechanical noise control are nearly free during framing and expensive afterward. The homes we are called back to fix are nearly always homes where acoustics was an afterthought.
- 10 Choosing keypads to match a designer's spec without considering programming.
Keypads are also a programming interface. The number of buttons, the engraving, the back-box depth, the family of products - all of it has to match the control system that lives behind them. Designer-led keypad specs without integrator input lead to walls that need rework.
- 11 Forgetting the family will change in 20 years.
The children will grow up. The household will get bigger and then smaller. Parents may move in. A home office may become a nursery may become a guest room. Design infrastructure for those transitions, not for the family photo at move-in day.
- 12 Skipping aging-in-place planning at 50 because it feels far away at 70.
The right time to plan for aging in place is during the original build, while the walls are open and the floor is going down. Lighting at the right level, video at every entry, voice control wired in, wellness scenes already programmed. Invisible at 50. Indispensable at 80.

- I3 Buying a theater before you have committed to a theater room.
- A great theater starts with a room: dimensions, isolation, riser, screen wall, projector throw, HVAC routing. Buying a projector and screen and then hunting for the room produces a media space. A theater needs to be designed as one from the start.
- I4 Letting the integrator pick the brand without listening to your life.
- Brand choice should follow lifestyle, not the other way around. An integrator who shows up with a single brand for every client is selling a portfolio, not designing a home. Listen for the integrator who chooses from a shelf, based on what the family actually needs.
- I5 Approving a system you do not understand.
- If the explanation does not make sense to you, do not sign. The forever home is yours; the system is yours; the responsibility of explaining it in plain language belongs to the integrator. A system you cannot describe is a system you will not use.
- I6 Not testing the system fully before the contractor leaves.
- Punch lists get rushed at the end of a build. Insist on a full commissioning - every scene, every keypad, every camera, every shade, every audio zone - with you in the room. Sign nothing until the system actually does what it is supposed to do.

- 17 Not getting documentation.
Get the conduit map. Get the rack elevation. Get the network diagram. Get the programming notes. Get the scene definitions. Get the service binder. Documentation is the difference between a home you own and a home you rent from your integrator forever.
- 18 Choosing the lowest bid for an infrastructure trade.
The lowest bid wins by leaving things out. In an infrastructure trade - conduit, wiring, racks, network - the things left out are the things you will replace at year ten, while the higher bidder would have built them in once.
- 19 Cheating on the surveillance system.
A camera at every door is not coverage. Plan for perimeter, side yards, blind sides, pool decks, driveway approach. Adequate light. Adequate storage. Off-site backup. The system the family never thinks about until the day they need it.
- 20 Treating service as an afterthought.
The install is over in months. The relationship lasts decades. A firm that treats service as a cost center will not be there for you in year fifteen. A firm that treats service as the whole point will. Choose accordingly.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Every mistake on this list is a homeowner story.

We have watched these errors happen, helped untangle them, and carried the lessons into the next project. If any of this is familiar - and you would like a second opinion before you commit - come talk to us.

ABOUT RESTREPO INNOVATIONS

A practice built for the long view.

Restrepo Innovations is a luxury technology integration practice based in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, serving forever homes across NJ, CT, and NY. Our four divisions - residential, commercial, hospitality, and military/government - share one standard of work and one standard of documentation. Our leadership team brings 20+ years of combined experience to every home we touch.

FOUR DIVISIONS

Residential . Commercial . Hospitality . Military/Government

CERTIFICATIONS

Elite Pro Crestron Dealer . HTA Luxury Certified

OSHA Certified . Ubiquiti UISP/Pro Partner

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Built to be lived in. Documented for the next twenty years.