

Selecting Your Integrator

Twenty questions to ask. The interview guide your future self will thank you for.

INTRODUCTION

Interview three. Choose one.

Most homeowners interview three integrators before they choose one. We encourage it. These are the twenty questions that separate the trade from the practice.

REFERENCE

Twenty things to look at.

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- How long have they actually been doing this?
- O1** Company age is a marketing number. Leadership experience is the one that matters. Ask how many years the principals have personally been doing luxury integration, not how many years the LLC has been registered.
- What certifications can they document? Ask to see the wall.
- O2** Certifications expire, lapse, and sometimes get printed without basis. Ask for current certificates. Confirm with the issuing bodies. The serious ones - Crestron Elite Pro, HTA Luxury, OSHA - are easy to verify and expensive to fake.
- Do they document every project? Ask for a sample project manual.
- O3** Documentation is the cheapest tell. If they cannot show you a redacted project manual from a recent job - rack elevations, conduit maps, network diagrams, programming notes - they will not produce one for yours either.
- Will they coordinate with your architect during DD and CD?
- O4** Not after the fact. The integrator who shows up after drywall has already lost the chance to do the job well. The right partner sits at the architect's table early and stays there through bid documents.

- 05 Do they install conduit and pathways themselves, or hand it to a low-voltage trade?
- Conduit ownership is the line between integrators who can guarantee the infrastructure and integrators who can only guarantee the boxes that go inside it. Ask who runs the conduit and who owns the result.
- 06 What does their rack room look like? Visit one.
- Photos are easy. Visit a finished job. Look at how the rack is dressed, labeled, ventilated, and serviced. The rack room is the cleanest tell of a company's standards, because nobody is supposed to see it.
- 07 Do they run all four divisions in-house, or sub it out?
- Residential, commercial, hospitality, and military or government. A firm that runs all four under one roof carries more rigor into your home than one that only does houses. A firm that subs everything out cannot guarantee the standard end to end.
- 08 How is service handled after the project closes? Same team or hand-off?
- Some firms install with their best people and service with their newest. Ask who answers the phone in year three. Ask whether your project manager stays on the account. The answer tells you how long they expect to know your family.

- 09 Are they a current Elite Pro Crestron Dealer?
- Elite Pro is the top tier of the Crestron dealer program and it is a real bar. Volume requirements, training requirements, customer satisfaction scoring. It is the closest thing the industry has to a residential credential that means something.
- 10 Are they HTA Luxury Certified?
- The Home Technology Association vets firms on documentation, project process, customer references, financial standing, and trade practices. It is the most rigorous independent vetting in the residential integration world. Few firms hold it.
- 11 Are they OSHA Certified?
- It seems like a back-of-house detail until you are standing on an active job site. OSHA certification protects the homeowner from liability and signals that the firm runs jobsites the way a commercial general contractor would.
- 12 What network platform do they standardize on?
- Look for Ubiquiti, Cisco, Meraki, or Aruba-class gear. Consumer-grade mesh systems do not belong in a forever home. The network is the spine, and the spine should be enterprise-class hardware on a refresh schedule the integrator manages.

- I3 Can they show you a 20-year-old job they still service?
Anyone can show you a portfolio of recent work. The harder ask is a twenty-year-old install they are still maintaining. That is the proof that the relationship outlasts the contract.
- I4 Do they offer programming as a separate, billable line item?
Programming is engineering. It takes hours, it has versions, it gets revised across the life of the home. A firm that hides it inside a lump sum is a firm that will hide change orders too. Pay for it openly and you will get it openly.
- I5 Will you meet your project manager before you sign?
Sales people sell. Project managers run jobs. The two are rarely the same person. Insist on meeting the project manager who will actually be on your job, before you sign the agreement.
- I6 How do they handle change orders during construction?
Change orders are inevitable. The question is whether they come with documentation, pricing transparency, and a process - or whether they arrive as line items on the final invoice. Ask to see a sample change order from a past project.

- 17 What is their pricing model? Cost-plus, fixed, T&M? Get it in writing.
Each has trade-offs. Cost-plus is transparent but unbounded. Fixed is predictable but encourages cutting corners. T&M is honest but requires trust. The model itself matters less than the clarity with which it is explained in the contract.
- 18 Will they tell you when to spend less?
The honest ones do. The ones who only ever upsell are working for themselves. Ask a direct question: when in this project would you tell us not to spend the money? Listen for a real answer.
- 19 Do they listen first or pitch first? Watch the first meeting.
The first meeting is the audition. Did they ask about your family, your schedule, the way you live? Or did they walk in with a brochure and a spec sheet? A firm that listens first will design for you. A firm that pitches first will sell you whatever they have on the truck.
- 20 Do they document the systems they install for the next contractor, designer, and homeowner who will read them?
This is the question that separates the trade from the practice. Anyone can install a system. Few will document it so well that the next person who walks into the rack room - in year ten, in year twenty - can find what they need without making a phone call.

IF YOU ARE EVALUATING RESTREPO

Here is how to reach us.

We invite the comparison. Call the office, email the team, or visit us in Franklin Lakes. We will walk you through a finished rack room, share a sample project manual, and tell you - honestly - whether we are the right fit for the home you intend to keep.

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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Serving NJ, CT, and NY

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