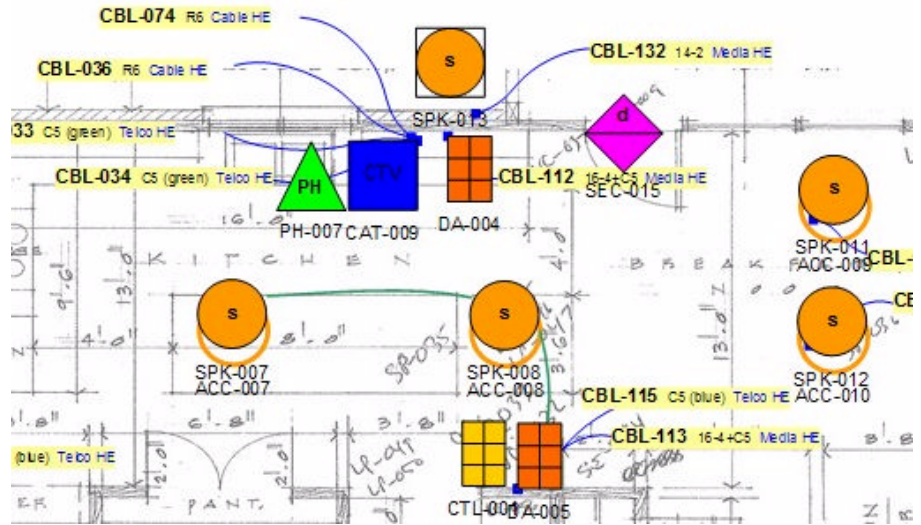


Learning is about asking the right questions, but how do you know what to ask? Based on years of experience, DistinctAV Education Briefs give you the most important industry insider information to help you make wise decisions before and during your construction project.

We see home building and remodeling as an investment, and pursue long-term positive returns. Not just from a financial perspective, but also from personal satisfaction, enjoyment, and comfort perspectives.



What you need to know about...

System Design & Prewire

The wires behind the walls dictate what your home electronics will be capable of, how clean the results will be, and how easy and intuitive they are to operate. They also determine how expandable, flexible, and upgradeable your systems will be.

DistinctAV designs your structured prewire based on an investment strategy: if it makes sense to get a wire behind the drywall during construction, then it goes in. If it's something that can be easily installed after construction then it is flagged as "optional". It always costs more to add a wire after construction, not to mention disruption of the living space, occupant interruption, etc. Attics, unfinished space, crawlspaces, and well-placed conduits can ease some of the pain of retrofit wiring (wiring after drywall).

Our prewire designs are balanced, yet capable. We have many tricks that keep the costs down, yet provide nearly unlimited capabilities.

We use a holistic approach to system design. This way we can gain the most value and functionality from the systems. It affects several other trades and vendors so communication is critical but the payoff is great.

Our process does require a few decisions to be made at certain milestones. For example, applying lighting controls allows a typical savings of 10-20% off the electrician bid compared to traditional "old-school" wiring. It also adds more flexibility and control of the lights, smoke detection, outdoor lighting, and doorbell functionality after construction.

Gas fireplaces can be controlled through the unified remotes and/or automation if they are specified with the proper start devices. They also become part of the temperature control solution instead of fighting with it which adversely affects occupant comfort. Our systems can easily turn off all the TVs, music, and lights (and more) then close the garage door when you simply arm the security and leave.

Every new home should be wired for the "basics". Auto manufacturers realized that people won't buy a luxury car without power windows, power seats, power locks, and a great audio system--yet builders routinely build homes without basic electronic amenities. The end of the housing free-for-all has changed this trend as buyers look beyond the paint and trim. They expect to see these features in low-maintenance, luxury homes. A good prewire is the only positive return on investment in home electronics!

DID YOU KNOW...

Most trades make their highest margins when they stick to "old-school" designs they've been using for years. For example: Electricians routinely wire houses using traditional 3-way and 4-way switches. This practice increases their total bill and profit margin and is easy for them to find installers. For the homeowner, it is inefficient to operate, inflexible, and restrictive compared to lighting control systems.

Beyond the basics, there are "level" decisions that affect the prewire design, such as:

"Is high quality house music important? How about advanced touch-screen interfaces?"

"Do you want to monitor the window status for additional security and temperature control?"

"Do you want to control automatic blinds for convenience, privacy, and temperature control?" A client wanted to integrate their new blinds but could not because the motors they bought use a proprietary remote. A simple recommendation from DistinctAV could have avoided that issue and the cost for the compatible blind motors would have been the same.

The DistinctAV process means you don't have to worry about selecting the electronics before construction. They change constantly anyway so why spec old technology? Instead, we focus on where you want features and place the minimum number of wires there to accomplish all your goals with an experienced eye toward new technology trends.

By designing and providing all the systems together, you'll find project savings and have better end results. Get bids on separate items, but be sure to ask each one to work with the other systems like the examples above.

THINK ABOUT IT...

Does the garage door company's auto-close feature send you a text message if your garage door bounces up or is left open?

Is the HVAC contractor's fancy thermostat controlled by your remote or phone? It costs less to add an integrated thermostat, and can provide smarter control over the temperature.

You'll see the total is much more and the results won't be as good. Plus you have to manage more trades!

Consider DistinctAV for:

- HD Video
- Audio
- Security, Access Control
- Networking/phone
- Lighting controls
- Power Protection
- Energy Management
- Security Cameras
- Intercom, Doorbell, Gate Control
- Built-in vacuum
- Theaters & Surround Sound
- Temperature control (thermostats and zone controls)

RED FLAG!

Some AV and security companies offer "free" prewire packages. They hope to make up the loss in component sales, binding service contracts, and costly retrofit wiring. These packages tend to be minimal and limited to supporting only the systems the vendor sells. Most AV companies who have tried this have gone out of business, leaving the homeowner and builder without any documentation or warranty.

- Fireplace Control
- Motorized mounts and cabinets
- Leak detection, sump high level alarms, emergency water shutoff
- Irrigation & water feature control
- Pool and Spa control and monitoring
- Informatics & Edutainment systems.

SUMMARY:

- Design ALL your low-voltage systems together, preferably using one designer with experience in Lifestyle Systems Design. Hire an independent designer if necessary.
- Bring that company on your team as early in the design process as possible. Creativity, communication, cooperation, and "Can Do" attitude are key factors to choosing a designer.
- Prewire for WHERE you want WHAT functions (sound here, control there, intercom here, lighting there, etc). Only skip a wire if you have ABSOLUTELY no desire for a feature and you strongly believe no one else EVER will.
- Save money by not terminating all the wires in the beginning—you can terminate them when you need them with little negative impact. Base your decision to trim, cover plate, or completely hide a wire on HOW SOON you plan on using it—1 or 2 years after construction: Trim it, 3+ years out: Wait.
- Low-voltage wires can be hidden behind walls. Always get a complete wire list and even better, get a wiring diagram that shows where each wire was installed.
- If available, purchase a narrated pre-insulation video of your home or take LOTS of photos just prior to insulation.
- Group all your wiring head-ends together when possible. This allows systems to be connected together and re-task wires.
- ALWAYS put an empty 2" conduit between the structured wire panel/Rack location and the attic. Run conduit if you want extra flexibility or have plans that may significantly change.