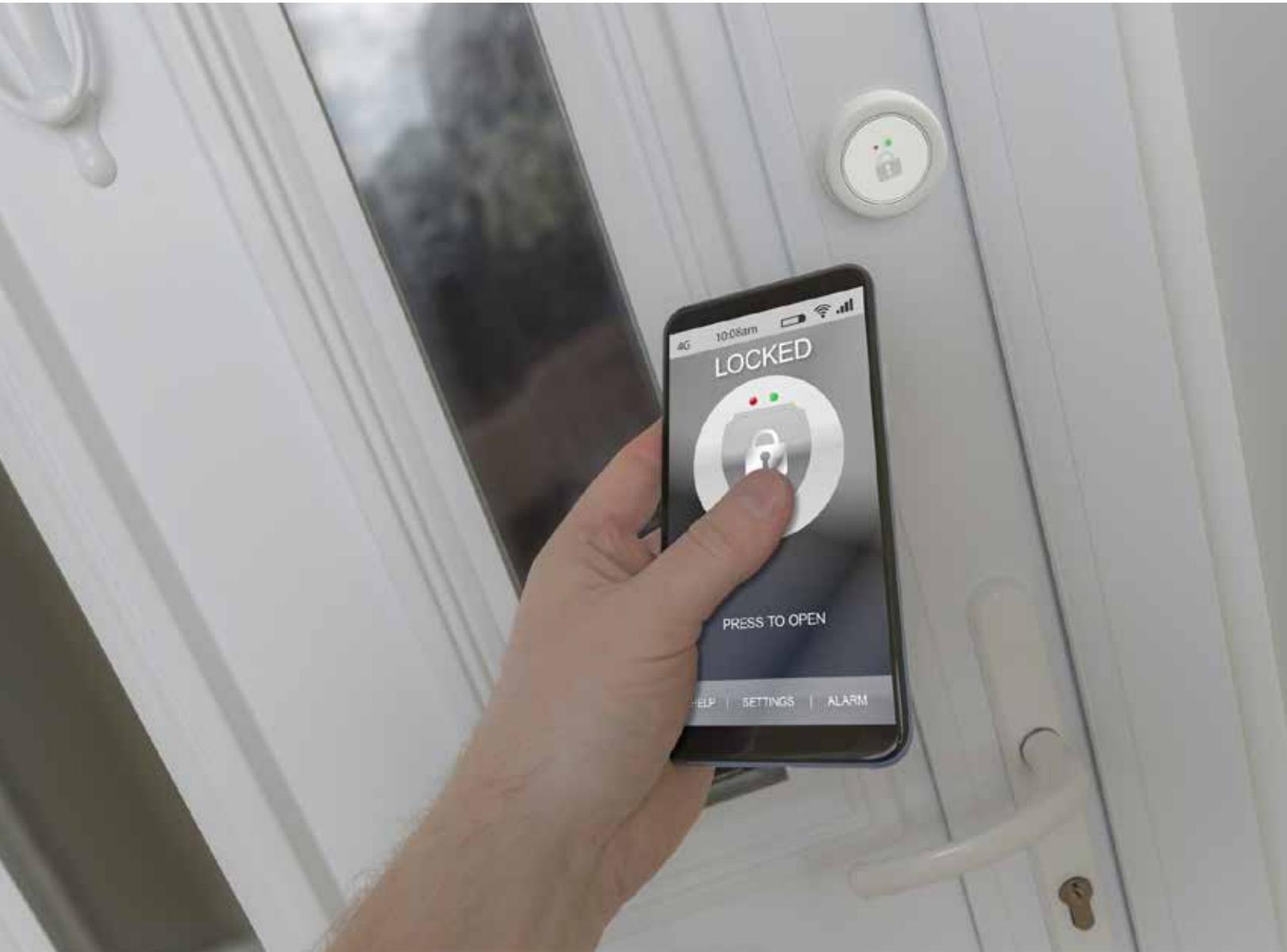


# CEPro EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMER

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## 14 Reasons Why Your Home Needs a New Security System

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Security systems have been around for decades protecting homes and families quite admirably. They watch for break-ins and fire, sounding an alarm at the first sign of trouble. They call out to central monitoring stations, which dispatch the appropriate emergency responders. It's the core competency of any make or model of home security system, but you can realize so many more benefits from today's generation of home security systems. For example, during an emergency situation, the security system can signal select lights to flash, and when there's a fire it can override the heating and cooling system to prevent the spread of smoke. Systems today can dispatch alerts to your smartphone and respond to commands issued from your smartphone, no matter if you're down the street or halfway around the world.

With perks like this, it might be high time to invest in a smart, connected, integrated security system. Want to make sure you're a good candidate for a home security makeover before you bite the bullet? Answer the following 14 questions, to gauge the practicality of beefing up your home protection by having a smarter type of security system installed.

## HOME SECURITY CHECKLIST

### Yes No

- I am a working parent and my kids arrive home alone from school.
- I am the caregiver of an elderly parent.
- I have small children who are afraid of the dark, especially during nighttime trips to the bathroom.
- I travel frequently, leaving my home unoccupied for extended periods of time.
- Babysitters, landscapers, and other people often frequent my home when I'm not there.
- My home is situated near a busy public area.
- I like to keep track of who's home and who isn't.
- I often set off the alarm accidentally.
- I sometimes forget to activate the security system at bedtime or when I leave the house.
- I like using smartphone apps to control and communicate.
- I own a summer home.
- I want the peace of mind that everything at home is okay.
- I would like to visually monitor certain areas of my home, like the swimming pool, the front door and backyard.
- I would like to safeguard my house from water damage.
- We have a home security system or surveillance cameras.

If you answered "Yes" to more than 5 of these questions, then your house is strong candidate for a professional security system evaluation. Read "Understanding the Installation Process" on the next page to decide what your next steps should be.

## UNDERSTANDING THE INSTALLATION PROCESS

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions on the previous page, your house is a candidate for professional home security. A home security system will bring more efficiency, convenience, comfort, peace of mind, customization and energy savings to you. So now what? What are the first steps to take?

Well, there are several important questions you need to ask that are not necessarily related to the technology, namely:

- Do you feel like you can install this yourself or do you need to hire a professional?
- Determining your budget?
- How do you go about finding and contracting with a professional integrator?

## DIY OR PRO?

If you’re looking to add smart home technology, the first thing you need to decide is who is going to do the work. Should you tackle the design and installation of the system yourself or leave it to a professional?

There are several home security products and systems out there that homeowners can install themselves. These options have made smart home systems accessible to people who may not have been able to afford to pay a professional to install a system, as well as given tech-savvy consumers fun, doable projects to tackle on the weekends. However, some people just aren’t that handy. The dream of creating a high-tech home can quickly become a nightmare. If you can’t handle the scope of your project, don’t have the necessary equipment, or don’t know what you’re getting yourself into, you may want to seriously think about hiring a professional installer. Before you go the DIY route, here are a few pros and cons to consider:

## THE DIY ADVANTAGES

**It’s Cheaper.** Installing a home security system by yourself can save you a ton of money. You aren’t paying someone (the cost can average around \$100 an hour) to complete the work. Plus, you may be able to find equipment and materials at a bargain, if you shop around or online.

**You Did It Your Way.** If you want to work on the room at 3:00 a.m. on New Year’s Eve, you can do that. Nights, weekends, holidays, sick days; it’s all on your schedule. Also, you don’t have to consult with anyone regarding

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equipment and décor. If you prefer a certain brand of security cameras, there are no arguments. Heck, if you want a ginormous touchpanel surrounded by Swarovski crystal unicorns, that's what you shall have. You're the king of this castle.

**There's Help Out There.** There is a huge DIY community on the web, with many forums specifically devoted to the home security category. And they want to help. You can find inspiration as well as help with measurements, equipment recommendations, installation, and everything else that could possibly be associated with your project.

**It Feels Good.** You did this—and those are bragging rights that aren't easy to come by.

## THE DIY DISADVANTAGES

**It Can Take Forever.** Research takes time and so does the actual installation process. You'll need to work around your job, your family, when your family likes to sleep, when equipment can be delivered, and however many times you can slam your thumb with a hammer. If time is something you're in short supply of these days, know that some projects can take weeks, months, or even years to complete when you do it on your own.

**You Need Certain Skills.** Wiring can be dangerous, even if you know what you're doing. This is not something that you want to learn about as you go along. A professional is called that for a reason. Also, they are trained to know power requirements, as well as things like mounts, racks, programming, upgrades, and more. After spending all of that time and money on equipment only to have the camera fall off the wall because you didn't properly secure it would be a tragedy.

**It Can Be Costly.** See above. Plus, if you don't wire or install something correctly, having a professional come in to clean up your mistakes can often cost more than it would have to hire someone from the get-go.

**Your Choices May Be Limited.** Several manufacturers do not sell directly to the consumer, so if you have your heart set on certain brands, you may be out of luck. And don't think it's your lucky day if you find them online; there are many unauthorized stores out there, which can make warranties null and void.

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**It May Be a Bit Off.** There are certain features that only a professional is able to unlock. Professional installers spend time and money to learn how to properly install home security equipment. This also means that they can fine-tune everything once it's installed, to make sure it works perfectly under your specific conditions.

## WHAT DOES AN INTEGRATOR DO?

It pays (and sometimes saves) to hire a custom electronics (CE) professional. Once you've decided to work with a CE pro, you need to know where to find one—and what to expect after you hire someone.

Think you “know a guy?” CE pros get paid to do this work, and they do it well. The right CE pro will know about cutting-edge products, how to integrate them throughout your house, and how to tweak them to your needs. They go through hours and hours of training on a regular basis. This ensures that they know how to choose and install the right equipment for each customer. It also keeps them up to date on new technologies, products, and upgrades.

While you probably have an idea of what you want in your head (or maybe even on paper), your CE pro has experience. Your pro has probably worked on something similar to what you're envisioning and he'll know what's needed to get you there. More importantly, the right company will know how to avoid common problems, such as weather, cramped spaces, or those pillars in the middle of the basement. Many will also offer up “out of the box” solutions to make that system even better than you could have ever imagined.

Not sure what to look for in an integrator? Here are four things to consider:

**1. Listening Skills.** Like any good contractor, a quality home control integrator knows that this is your project and your home. Be sure your electronics integrator is willing to listen to your ideas and suggestions, and that he fully understands your needs, wants, and expectations.

**2. Certification.** If you just want to hook up a Blu-ray player or need some speakers calibrated, there's nothing wrong with the “I know a guy” recommendation. However, a home security system is a much bigger proposition, which is why the Electronic Security Association (ESA) exists. Ask your CE pro if he's an ESA member, as well as how current he is with training and continuing education requirements. This national association has certifications in multiple disciplines required to construct a home security system.

**3. References.** You wouldn't hire an employee without first checking their references, so don't make that mistake when hiring a custom electronics

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integrator. Ask to see your prospective contractor's portfolio and have them walk you through a similar project the company has worked on. In some cases, an integrator will have his own private showroom you can visit to see these systems in action where you can play with them. Also, CE pros often have access to private design centers or experience centers hosted by leading manufacturers. Be sure to visit the integrator's website and look for photo galleries.

**4. Support.** When you hire a professional installer, make sure he is prepared to stand behind the work. Programming that controller, understanding its features and quirks, teaching you how to use it, and supporting you if it fails is how a custom electronics pro earns his keep.

Just know that your CE pro is not a mind-reader. This tailoring of technology is the forte of a home systems integrator, but it only works if you openly share with him or her information about you and your family. Nitty gritty details aren't necessary, but an overview of your routines, schedule, likes, and dislikes can help tremendously in your home system integrator's ability to select the appropriate products and systems for your home and program and install them in a way that suits your needs perfectly. If you're unsure, he can offer suggestions. Saving energy, entertaining friends and family, safety and security, a more convenient way to manage a busy household, or all of the above; no matter what your hot button is, your home systems integrator can find a solution. He should also be able to do that within your budget (be sure to have a ballpark idea of what you'd like to spend).

In addition to conducting this "phase of discovery," a home systems integrator is responsible for selecting the products and systems that will go into your house, installing them, and customizing and programming those products and systems. Depending on the scope of the project and his or her level of expertise, some portions may be subcontracted. Don't be alarmed. It's a fairly common practice. For example, if a home systems integrator specializes in audio and video systems, he may team up with another firm that can handle the integration of a home security system.

In most cases though, you will deal only with your primary integrator, whose job includes guiding you through the entire process. Be an active participant during every aspect of the project. Even if you're not particularly tech-savvy, a home systems integrator appreciates your input. It's crucial to the successful implementation of the system and your overall satisfaction with your smart home investment.

The right CE pro will guide you throughout the duration of your project. That

This  
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includes everything from choosing and installing equipment to final tweaks. It also includes keeping to your budget and working through all of the finer details, such as contracts, permits, and other tidbits you probably never knew about.

## WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU HIRE A CE PRO

Creating a smart home isn't just about cool electronics and figuring out what time the lights should go on and off each day. There's a lot of paperwork, people, and money involved. A custom electronics (CE) professional can help sort of some of those details, but you should know what to expect.

**Get a Contract.** Ask your home systems integrator to provide a written "Scope of Work" document. This should go into more detail than simply what types of products will be purchased and installed. It should spell out specifically how the systems will function, so that both you and your home systems integrator are working toward the same goal.

**Other Documentation.** Documentation is an important part of any home-tech project, giving you a "roadmap" of what was installed and where everything is located. Line-item list of products, wiring schematics, and 3D renderings of rooms will prove valuable if and when you decide to expand and modify your home security systems. This documentation becomes even more important should you decide to work with a firm other than the one that originally handled the project.

**Budget.** You may go into your project with a price in mind. Make sure your contractor knows what your budget is—and get everything in writing. Know that some home systems integration firms may charge separately for design and installation. Also, determine upfront any fees you could incur for modifications after the initial installation. Some integrators offer a gratis period for minor adjustments, but others don't.

Next, think about which portions of the project you'd like to allocate the most money. For example, you may want most of the budget to go toward high-quality surveillance cameras. Just remember, the first bid presented by a home systems integrator is often used to get the dialogue flowing. If the bid is higher than you expected, don't assume there's no way to get your budget back in line. You can work with your home systems integrator to re-engineer the project, perhaps by sacrificing a few features now that you can always add on later.

So what is the budget? Obviously, ultimately that is up to you and your wallet, but one easy way to determine if you are in the ballpark is to look at the cost of electronics in new home construction. It is difficult to isolate specifically what

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the costs should be for a single subsystem like a home security system, but let's look at the cost of electronics in a home in general.

According to the Custom Electronics Design and Installation Association (CEDIA), 7 percent to 12 percent of a custom home's construction costs is typically electronics, and construction costs usually amount to 60 percent of a home's total market value, according to the National Association of Home Builders. So (to make it easy math-wise), let's say your home is valued at \$500,000. That means to build that home it costs a builder \$300,000 (including the value of the lot itself, which accounts for between 15 percent and 20 percent of construction costs, or \$45,000 to \$60,000 in this example). So we have to subtract the cost of the lot from the \$300,000, leaving us with a total construction cost for bricks and mortar of about \$250,000, to keep this at round numbers.

Using that 7 percent to 12 percent range for electronics, it means the electronics in the new home will be valued at between \$17,500 and \$30,000. That sounds like a lot, but start adding up the cost of TVs, wiring, network routers, security, smoke detectors, smart appliances like refrigerators, touchpanels, light fixtures, Blu-ray players, stereo receivers, speakers, and more. According to the Consumer Technology Association, the typical U.S. home has 35 IP-connected devices alone, not to mention the number of "dumb" devices not connected to the Internet.

Now, remember that if you are hiring a professional, you have to also pay for his labor. According to *CE Pro*, a trade publication serving the custom electronics industry, the average national hourly rate to hire an electronics professional is \$85.16 per hour, and even higher if the system requires programming. Those rates are comparable to rates charged by other skilled installation professionals, from electricians to refrigerator repairmen.

**Who Is That?** Know that some projects may require multiple people. Depending on the sophistication of the project, there could be many people working at your house, including builders, architects, electricians, and interior designers. For example, as mentioned if your automated home includes electronic security, in some states where licenses are required your CE pro may have to hire a security integrator if he does not have a security license. Know who your main point of contact is, and have his or her phone numbers and email addresses on hand.

**Relax.** The amount of time to add smart technology into the home can take anywhere from a few hours to several months, if not years. Firm up a schedule

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from the start, but be flexible. As is the case with any home construction or renovation project, unexpected holdups are common. Be somewhat flexible, but if there's a firm timeframe you'd like to meet—like before the holidays or some other special event—let your home systems integrator know right away. He or she may need to rework the game plan to accommodate your schedule.

Like any construction project, especially a retrofit on an existing home where holes are being cut into the walls or ceilings, there will be dust and debris. Again, be patient. A good CE pro will dispose of all that and clean up the home. Also, there will sometimes be hours or even days where it looks like no work is being done in the home. That's normal. Wires are being pulled inside the walls, components are being linked to the home network, audio/video systems are being calibrated.