



CE Pro **HIGH** **Impact** PRODUCTS



Crestron tops the list of integrators' favorite gear for 2007.

edited by Tom LeBlanc

Think of the *CE Pro High Impact Products (CHIPs)* of the year as sort of like the "People's Choice Awards." It's not some nameless academy that picks the winners; it's the people.

In this case, it's the folks who use the products — the integrators — that tell us what had a significant impact on their businesses versus what was just a lot of marketing hype. We rely on our integrator readers to let us know what products saved them time, won them clients and, basically, made them money in 2007. Those are the parameters.

Products can be super-sophisticated or exceedingly simple. This year's winners range from elaborate multiroom audio/video controllers to practical label-makers.

Unlike other "Best of" contests, we don't bench-test products and we don't select devices based on cool feature sets. Instead, we pick the ones that dealers have sold, installed and generally thrived on throughout the year.

The CHIPs winners are products that shipped on or about September 2006 through August or September 2007 — products that have been around long enough to convince dealers that they're winners.

Don't see your favorites here? Join our online CHIPs discussion at www.cepro.com/chips2007.



1. SurgeX | SA-82 Surge Protection for Flat Panels



SurgeX's FlatPak SA-82 Surge Protector and Power Conditioner can be mounted behind plasma and LCD flat panels, and that comes in pretty handy for installers. Blair & Associates, Cary, Ill., had already been using SurgeX power products for years, according to Blair Brommel, and was "elated when it came out with a smaller version we could hide behind panels."

Due to its unique design, it can be flush-mounted to many flat-panel mounting systems. Meanwhile, it has SurgeX's patented Series Mode surge protection technology, Impedance Tolerant EMI/RFI filtering and Over-Voltage Shutdown, which automatically restores power when line voltage returns to a safe level — meaning the installer doesn't have to flip a switch.

With low flat panel prices, power protection is tougher to sell. Brommel says it's easy to make a case for the SA-82 because it carries a low cost and blends in visually. "Consumers still find a need to protect their investment." www.surgex.com

2. Colorado vNet | Vibe Audio/Video System



It helps when products sell themselves. That has been the case with Colorado vNet's Vibe multiroom audio/video system, according to Steve Sellhorst, owner of Sellhorst Security & Sound, Omaha, Neb. After participating in a Street of Dreams display, he says prospective clients called, saying, "I don't know what that system is, but I have to have it."

That unknown system is an Internet Protocol-based multiroom solution with a friendly interface and a visual element designed to blend into a home environment. It can be set up for two or 20 rooms and its scalable design is flexible enough to adapt to a homeowner's evolving requirements. "The quality and ease of use is at a level unreachable by most comparable products," Sellhorst says.

Beyond the product itself, though, Sellhorst was impressed with Colorado vNet's service.

"We are a small potato to [Colorado vnet], I'm sure, but we are treated as though we are its only customer," Sellhorst says. www.coloradovnet.com

3. Rhino, a division of DYMO | 6000 & 6500 Label Makers



The Rhino 6000 labeling tool (shown) is ideal for installers working in the field, says Joel Kent, president of FBN Security Co. LLC, Windsor, Conn. He likes having the ability to create a library of table tasks using software before downloading from a computer to a label maker for printing in the field. It means he "can create uniformity of labeling and identification."

Mike Roark, a project engineer for Turnberry West Construction, Las Vegas, likes the 6000, too, but says Rhino's latest, the 6500, is even better. It's larger but "this increases the ease of usage and capabilities."

It allows users to customize over 1,000 labels and recall them instantly. It has over 150 pre-programmed industry terms and allows the customization of users' own terms, graphics, logos and symbols. "Our own graphics logo can be easily imported and added to labels, resulting in highly customized, sharp looking labels, specifically branded to our company," says Roark. www.rhinolabeling.com