



WHAT'S WRONG?

Since the breakup of the Baby Bells, traditional telephone service providers no longer control the inside premises cabling market, which has since been handed down to the private contractors, such as an electrical and low-voltage specialist. Unlike the telephone service providers, who follow long-time established AT&T installation practices and utilize standard reliable (laboratory tested) installation products, the private contractors are left to fend for themselves. Most of these contractors are experienced electrical installers, but many lack the training and experience on the voice/data/video side.

Private contractors have to establish their own cabling, product and cabling certification standards. No one (outside of the end-user customer) inspects or approves today's low voltage installations, resulting in a "Leave it to Beaver" type of attitude in the open marketplace. Therefore, the consumer sees an abundant number of poor installations and services as a result. Private contractors usually offer a limited warranty, up to one year, and outside of that are not responsible for maintenance of their handy work. On the other hand, service providers police themselves, by installing it right the first time, because with millions of subscribers, they want to reduce call backs or truck roll-outs, which cost an average of \$100 per call. Today's consumer has multimedia demands, which requires structured cabling technology that is

flexible, versatile, reliable and easy to manage. Gone are the days of merely installing an RJ-45 jack in every room of the house. What is the homebuilder-consumer to do when it comes to choosing a contractor who can meet the demands of new lifestyle technology?

If they don't use a service provider to do the installs (as some home builders are now doing) then select an electrical contractor who can provide both high and low-voltage installation services.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK: QUALIFY YOUR CONTRACTOR

Some questions to ask:

1. In addition to their electrical work, do they have certified, experience installers in the voice, data and video fields?
2. What are their certification credentials? And how many years have they been in business?
3. What is their warranty for service? One to five years, depending on the work.
4. What is their warranty for products installed? 15 to 25 years is good, lifetime would be better.
5. Where is the proof of licensing, insurance, size, references, complaint history, credit history, and civil legal history? ■

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