

HD Living

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Photography by William Psolka
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A Truly Grand Opening

Electronics Design Group provided this client with his ideal home theater: an open, roomy showplace.

You may envision the typical home theater to be a closed, dark space—a simulation of an actual movie theater in your home. And for many, that's the ideal for such an installation.

But for one client, closed-in and dark was the exact opposite of what he wanted for his new home. Fortunately, he brought Piscataway, N.J.-based home theater/automation integrator Electronics Design Group (EDG) on board for his project—to his great satisfaction.

There's no greater testament to how satisfied a customer was than to hear from the customer himself. Thankfully, this customer was so enthused about the outcome of his project with EDG that he agreed to speak with *HD Living*.

"My goal for the project was to not have a closed-in room,"





the client recalls, "but to have a room [in which] you'd have all the benefits of a home theater, but [also] have the freedom and accessibility so that when you entertain, everybody can participate in [the space]."

The client felt EDG was very receptive to his input, and he considered the project to be a true collaboration between the integrator and himself. He even involved associates from his own business: "We took some of the design people from my firm," he says, "and [EDG] brought in an acoustical specialist. Between EDG, ourselves and the acousticians, we came up with a concept that works extremely well and achieved my goals for my home."

The acoustic specialists were RPG, a materials company whose wall and ceiling treatments are used to diffuse and absorb sound. For this project, RPG precisely positioned treatments to trap unwanted bass and absorb reflections and echoes that can interfere with proper sound reproduction.

The client goes on to describe his unique theater concept: "It was more to have the look of a screening room rather than some ornate copying of the Sanger Theater in New Orleans or the Rivoli in New York. To me, on a miniature scale, those [types of home theaters] look silly. This has more of a screening room texture than a movie theater or a grand palace. It's more subtle,

but it fits into the whole design of the house."

In the interest of the subtlety he mentions, along with his desire to have the space be open and relatively unadorned, the electronics for the theater were placed in a separate room adjacent to the theater, out of sight to anyone in the theater room.

As you'd expect with a world-class company like EDG, the integrator utilized top-quality electronics for the project, including a Crestron control processor, RF receiver, touch panel and room interface; LG Blu-ray player; Kaleidescape movie player; Genelec amp, speakers and subwoofer; Runco projector; and Stewart 132-inch projection screen.

All told, the project took six months from start to finish, although, the client related, much of that time was taken up by the builders and other contractors working on the new home, and EDG's work was completed quickly.

But was it completed to his satisfaction? The client answers: "I'm quite pleased with it! We achieved our goals—the area, the sound quality, the picture quality, the comfort of the seats ... it came out well—esthetically and architecturally. It doesn't look like a multiplex cinema. It has style and definition to it, and the concept of using all of the acoustical material gave it a very rich and sophisticated look. Of course, I would definitely use [EDG] again!" **HDL**



Service on Steroids

Electronics Design Group establishes revolutionary new Client Care Center to address customers' continuing service needs.

In a perfect world, you'd have a home theater installed in your home and it would function perfectly forever. End of story.

But we all know that's an unrealistic scenario. Truth is, over time, even the finest electronics equipment money can buy will go. Batteries will run out of juice. Lights will burn out. Nothing lasts forever.

One innovative home theater specialist, however, has come up with its own solution to this challenge. Electronics Design Group (EDG), an integrator based in Piscataway, N.J., has established a new Client Care Center, an operation which has the singular purpose of doing everything possible to ensure EDG's customers continue to experience flawless service for years to come.

"The Client Care Center is basically a service department on steroids, for lack of a better term" comments EDG Director of Client Care Keith Cottrell. "Our goal is do something that this young industry has been unable to do traditionally, which is to

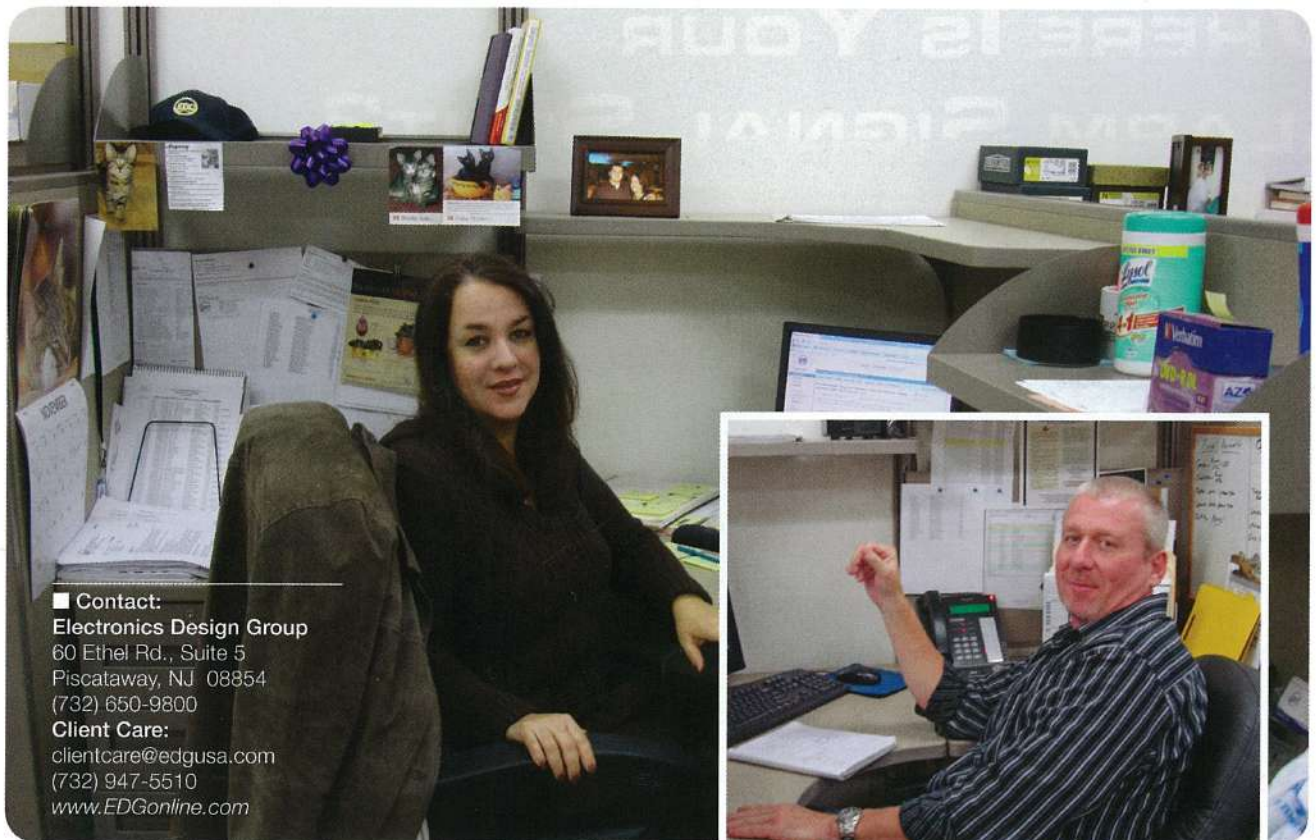
raise the bar on service, be a little bit more proactive in our approach, trying to touch base with clients before their systems break, which is like having a crystal ball sometimes."

Established about a year ago, the Client Care Center is the go-to destination for EDG customers seeking service, repairs or simply answers to their questions. It's Cottrell's goal that the center will break the mold of what people expect from a traditional service department.

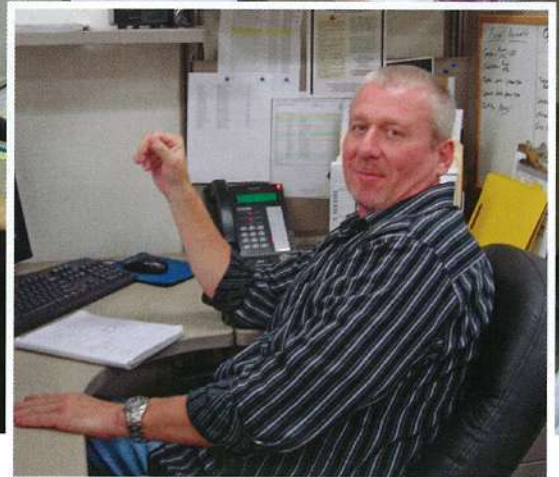
"No matter what industry you're involved in," he says, "no one likes to call a service department, because it means something's broken. It means you have to pay for something to get fixed and it's just a stressful situation when you want something to work and it doesn't."

To set itself, and EDG in general, apart from the rest, the CCC is looking at what other service departments are doing in the home theater industry—and then doing things completely differently. "We're kind of reinventing the wheel," Cottrell says, "and trying to dig into other resources in terms of what customer





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service is all about. ... Things break, so it's frustrating, especially if (customers) haven't used their systems for a while. They go to have a party, or entertain, or sit back and relax with their family—and the system doesn't work. Usually it's on a Friday or Saturday night when that happens.

"One of the first things we did to make sure we get that far-reaching approach across is we established an emergency care rotation," Cottrell says. "Every technician is on call. There's one technician on call after hours, Monday through Sunday. ... It's also backed up with a supervisor. Most of the time it's things that we can remedy over the phone.

In hopes of preventing outages from occurring, the Client Care Center is trying to work more proactively—and encourage clients to do the same. "There's no way for any of us to know when electronics are going to break," Cottrell says. "Even properly maintained electronics—when they want to go, they go. Things like batteries, bulbs on projectors, power supplies, connections, that, over time, come loose or break—all can be inspected on periodic system checkups. Wiping down video monitors so your TV has better brightness or picture quality—most folks don't think about that."

But if the center is successful in its mission, clients will think about such things. "The maintenance is really going to drive that point home. ... We have to establish the value, which is part of the education that your electronics are going to break and our number one job is to reduce your stress. In order to do that, you need to allow us to get in there and do the maintenance."

One recent interaction with a client showed Cottrell how effective the center can be. "We had a client up in Connecticut," he recalls. "His home is about an hour and a half from our location. He (contacted) our after-hours support on a Sunday because his Crestron and Lutron systems were down. He spoke to our on-call technician who tried walking him through a reset on the phone that didn't work. ... The next day, after one of our dedicated technicians was done with his service calls, we rolled his van all the way up to Connecticut to do an on-site assessment.

"It turned out that his Crestron processor had taken a hit by a surge or a lightning event," Cottrell continues. "We were able to find (a replacement processor) in our warehouse (and) get it pre-programmed by one of our project managers. We had it delivered via courier to the technician, who got the system back up and running. So less than 24 hours after he initially called, we got him back on line. I received an e-mail thanking us profusely for being able to do that for him."

For now, Cottrell is focused on spreading the message about the center and educating EDG clients on preventative measures they can take at home, including stocking their own backup parts such as bulbs and batteries, so repairs can be done quickly if something goes.

Cottrell believes that over time, EDG customers will embrace the Client Care Center and take advantage of what it has to offer. "It's a good value," he says. "Just like any other program, you get out of it what you put into it." **HDL**