

A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR THE CUSTOM ELECTRONICS PROFESSIONAL

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VENDORVIEW

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'LIFT'ING PROJECTION EXPECTATIONS

Stewart Filmscreen gives dealers more opportunities for premium installations.

Your average carpet walker at the Consumer Electronics Show last month was pretty impressed with Panasonic's 150-inch plasma set. Mouths agape, eyes widened, they awed at the size of it. But if you're a custom integrator, the awe probably turned into shock sometime after you started calculating the logistics of actually hanging the darned thing, let alone support it should something go awry. And, let's face it: Why bother when you have projection systems at sizes, resolutions and placement options that blow every flat screen away?

That's the kind of sentiment Stewart Filmscreen director of sales Joaquin Rivera heard from dealers all week. And listening to dealers is how Stewart grows its business. It's what led them to being ranked No. 1 in the Inside Track Supplier Loyalty Test in overall supplier loyalty ... for the 10th year.

"Stewart Filmscreen understands that it is not just about the product, it is about solving problems creatively for our customers and for us the customer is king," Rivera said. There are several things that Stewart does to earn that loyalty, including its "Quick Ship Program," which delivers next day shipments on standard-sized fixed screens, significantly minimizing lead times. In-house training is conducted six times a year in a "state-of-the-art" training center to ensure dealers know how to spec the products into their various projects. In addition, the sales staff is assigned designated territories, providing personalized attention and experience meeting the needs of certain groups of partners.

This isn't to say that Stewart didn't deliver its own "awe-inspiring" pieces for dealers fortunate enough to visit the booth. The big item was the

StarLift, a take-off of Stewart's already popular StarGlas technology. StarGlas is qualified safety glass that sandwiches a thin film layer between two pieces of glass. Capable of blocking 100 percent of ultra-violet light, the StarGlas screens are abrasion- and stain-resistant, and are completely non-combustible. The StarLift is a motorized mechanism designed to raise and lower the StarGlas rear projection screen, and can be integrated into a piece of furniture, allowing the screen to be hidden from view until needed. It's



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—Joaquin Rivera,
Director of sales, Stewart Filmscreen

available in two models and comes pre-installed with a StarGlas screen. The 65H (diagonal) can be fully extended with a height of 34-inches and width of 57-inches. The larger 72H (diagonal) is 37 inches high with a width of 63 inches. Both can be customized to accommodate additional dimensions.

Rivera says that Stewart ideas like StarGlas allow its dealers to differentiate themselves and make better margins. Also, StarGlas can be used outdoors, opening up a completely new market for innovative projection solutions.

"StarGlas has been a very long-term project and was mainly created for the commercial market to address digital signage," he said, adding that installing StarGlas actually lowers the cost of maintenance because the screen material's film lies in between two layers of glass—glass that can be cleaned easily on each side everyday, just like a window.

"During the development process we found StarGlas to be an amazing solution for a wide assortment of residential applications [as well]," Rivera said, namely meeting the growing demand

for outdoor theaters and multi-purposed entertainment rooms. "Up until now, rear projection has been a small segment of the consumer market, however, StarGlas provides our dealers with the tools for offering their customers out-of-the-box ideas that will differentiate them from their competitors." For example, one of our installers replaced an entire window with StarGlas so the owner could provide entertainment for his guests in the backyard.

The StarLift provides this opportunity to bring StarGlas to the residential market in a big way.



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"Flat panel TVs are extremely popular but they are limited by size and visual performance," Rivera said. "Our installers like to create unforgettable and 'Wow!'-type installations for their customers. The StarLift provides them with the needed solution to specify StarGlas as a new type of screen material in home installations." For instance, one Stewart dealer is placing a StarLift that will pop out of a bar in a cabana by the pool.

Another product that has been brought from the commercial marketplace to the residential market is CineCurve, Stewart's curved screen. The CineCurve was initially designed for Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood and is now available for the home cinema market. The slight curvature of the CineCurve screen allows

light to be reflected back toward the audience and away from the walls, increasing brightness and improving uniformity. It's meant to create an increased sense of immersion; viewers should feel like they are in a movie theater within their own home. Currently, a custom integrator is installing a 16-foot CineCurve in a Los Angeles home.

It's difficult to design these solutions, however, so Stewart specializes in helping dealers understand all the different possibilities that are available to them. "Before the sale, we help them with tools such as our Screen Assistant, which provides the dealer with drawings, dimensions and electrical schematics," Rivera said. "Our sales engineers offer support to ensure they always pick the appropriate screen material for a specific project and the final

project meets the integrator's objectives."

All of these products and services are designed to give dealers as many "sexy" options as they can handle and offer to their customers. This year, Stewart Filmscreen will be launching a new Web site that will be "more useful and informative" for both dealers and consumers so they can take advantage of those options. But more importantly, the company will be courting more dealers to tell Stewart what they want.

"If for some reason you need something that we do not yet make, we will make it (when it's physically possible)," he said. "We are constantly evaluating the market and our product line to find new ways to offer our dealers exciting projection solutions." **CR**