

# Five-Star Service

RESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS READERS SELECT FIFTH-ANNUAL STELLAR SERVICE AWARD WINNERS

by Jeremy J. Glowacki

*Residential Systems'* fifth-annual Stellar Service Awards reader poll honors manufacturers and distributors for their exceptional customer service and communication, sales and marketing support, training programs, warranty policies, and websites in 2017.

The Stellar Service Awards are a paid-entry, opt-in awards competition. Any company could nominate itself for as many categories as it wished. All entries were then posted online and voted on by *Residential Systems* readers during a one-week judging period. The top three vote getters in each category were awarded Platinum, Gold, or Silver honors.

"Thanks to all of our participants and the readers who voted this year to recognize some of the best service providers in the custom integration manufacturing and distribution community. We had many great entries this year, and the winners of our Platinum, Gold, and Silver awards are truly deserving of recognition," said *Residential Systems* editorial director Jeremy Glowacki.

Here are our profiles of this year's winners in each category:

## Customer Service/General Communications

### AVAD (Platinum)

AVAD has expanded its call center and regional representative efforts to reach more dealers, in more markets with more efficiency to assist integrators with any technical, shipping, or logistical problem they may be facing. Value-added services such as the AVAD System Design Group provide customers with a full range of design services, including needs analysis, AutoCAD presentations, and product selection.

### PowerHouse Alliance (Gold)

The PowerHouse Alliance's distributor members offer convenience and product accessibility to their dealers with more than 40 warehouse locations nationwide. Next-day delivery is guaranteed anywhere in the country and many



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warehouse locations additionally provide same-day delivery, with plans to increase locations with those shipping capabilities in 2018. Same day will call is available at all locations, with several offering 24-hour will call, providing additional flexibility.

### Luxul (Silver)

Luxul offers its dealers a complete line of professional-grade solutions that simplify IP network design and deployment, making them easily scalable to accommodate any installation. Luxul's design team can custom design the network and provide a comprehensive layout along with a quote ready for you to use directly with your customers.

### Dealer Programs

#### Powerhouse Alliance (Platinum)

In addition to multiple industry-competitive rewards programs across the country, all distributor members offer ongoing factory-sponsored incentives and a continuous cycle of weekly specials. With the debut of the new A2V line of AV accessories and speakers, the PowerHouse Alliance also introduced a unique "Try Me" program.

#### Core Brands (Gold)

The Core Brands Dealer Rewards, open to all CI

channel direct dealers, offers up to 12.5 percent in quarterly rebates on purchases of ELAN, SpeakerCraft, Panamax, Furman, Gefen, Niles, Sunfire, and Xantech products. Rebates start at 2.5 percent for quarterly purchases of \$2,500 and increase up to 12.5 percent for quarterly purchases of \$50,000. Also, all orders placed on the Core Brands Portal receive free shipping.

### RTI (Silver)

RTI's Integration Designer APEX programming software recently became available, dramatically reducing programming time while making customization easier than ever. For dealers, APEX provides an enormous head start on every project and the scalability to compete in new residential and commercial markets. To protect profit margins, the programming software is only available to authorized dealers.

### Sales and Marketing Support

#### AVAD (Platinum)



AVAD has embraced a hybrid approach to new sales operations, which includes the expansion of digital web and mobile tools, central and regional call centers, a design and technical services group, a regional market-based sales force, will call locations in many new markets, and the continued use of company-operated physical locations in many existing markets. AVAD is also announcing the launch of updated Interactive Catalogs.

### Luxul (Gold)

Luxul supports dealers with best practices and finished designs for product and topography layouts, while the dealer portal offers all the training, sales, and marketing tools they need. With wide distribution dealers gain access to the complete line at the location of their choice.

### Peerless-AV (Silver)

Peerless-AV's sales and marketing teams work together to develop easily digestible and aesthetically pleasing marketing collateral that the sales team relies on. Customer support is a top priority at Peerless-AV and this focus can be found in all aspects of the company, including sales and marketing. Highly connected and cross-trained, Peerless-AV's sales team extends unified messages and quality support.

### Shipping and Freight Policies

#### AVAD (Platinum)

AVAD's National Freight Program enables integrators to conveniently pick up or ship orders to streamline their operations and timelines. AVAD offers free freight via UPS Ground for orders of \$750 or more and free freight via truck with waived service fees for a single order of \$3,500 or more.

#### Core Brands (Gold)

Core Brands offers free shipping to CI dealers on all orders placed on the Core Brands Dealer Portal. This creates significant and projectable savings, enabling dealers to plan and budget accordingly. Plus, U.S. orders placed before 7 p.m. Eastern Time are shipped the same day, adding convenience for dealers.

#### Vanco (Silver)

Vanco International offers some of the most aggressive and competitive free freight policies in the industry. A responsive and nimble team, Vanco is willing and able to expedite shipping for urgent orders and immediate installation needs on any of the 3,000-plus SKUs they stock. In an effort to provide distributors with live shipping updates and protect pricing, Vanco recently implemented a state-of-the-art scanning and tracking process.

### Training Programs

#### Control4's Pakedge (Platinum)

To support growing connected homes and the need for networking expertise, Control4 released the Pakedge Certified Network Administrator (PCNA) program to ensure networking competency for its Control4 and Pakedge dealer base worldwide. The hybrid-learning model comprises Pakedge hardware, combined with online interactive coursework, instructional office hours, and a proctored certification exam.

#### URC (Gold)

Throughout 2017, URC dealers showed up in force for coast-to-coast live training events, including hands-on integration of the latest URC and third-party smart home technology. The URC tech services team and sales engineers connect daily with its installer network to provide onsite training, product support, and systems design consultation via in-person, call center, live chat, online, forum, and email communications.

#### Volutone (Silver)

The purpose of Volutone's training programs is to enable its dealers to stay educated on emerging technologies, trends, and practices. With a line card consisting more than 125 vendors, its monthly technical trainings are must-attend events among its dealers.

### Warranty/Return Policy/Tech Support

#### AVAD (Platinum)



AVAD understands the importance of exceptional return and exchange policies with minimal struggle, which is why it offers a 90-day "good as new" return program for any current product, and in the instance any product fails within 30 days, integrators can exchange it hassle-free. AVAD Tech Support offers integrators unparalleled product knowledge from an in-house team of experts, aimed at helping dealers hone their competitive edge and troubleshoot system integration.

#### Luxul (Gold)

Luxul's solutions are backed by a three-year limited

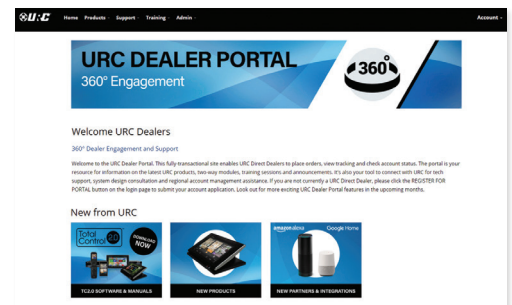
warranty, which is among the best in the industry, in addition to free lifetime tech support. An invaluable resource for issues in the field, Luxul's techs are available via chat, email, and phone to assist with configuration and troubleshooting.

#### Crestron (Silver)

Crestron has a 24/7 global tech support team that is broken up into three tiers ensuring that there is a Crestron Specialist available to answer all questions. The company's advanced technical support group is comprised of Crestron Master Certified programmers who are prepared to perform onsite visits and resolve customer issues free of charge when remote assistance is not enough.

### Web Portal/Online Tools

#### URC (Platinum)



The new URC Dealer Portal is a comprehensive resource for URC dealers and integration partners. This includes order entry, account management, software downloads, training, marketing, and technical resources. The portal offers online ordering of URC and third-party products, including seamless access to account information, order tracking, and support.

#### AVAD (Gold)

AVAD has invested heavily to create an enhanced website with added features to ensure their dealers have access to the tools necessary to best serve their customer base. The new AVAD site includes upgraded searching functionality, access to detailed order history, easy-to-access promotional pricing, and custom product recommendations.

#### Portal (Silver)

Portal is a web-based product catalog that allows AV integrators to find product information and make wholesale purchases from all of their suppliers in one place. Portal makes it easier for integrators to find what they need, build accurate proposals, and purchase products from their suppliers. Portal Select, dubbed "Amazon Prime for the Industry," provides dealers instant access to industry products from participating suppliers.