

# At the flick of a button

Technology plays a pivotal role in almost all aspects of our lives. What's more, the entity has moved into our homes, compelling technophiles to devise the Intelligent Home. **Sanjiv Malvi** who has pioneered and designed some of these smart systems decodes the concept.



What is an Intelligent Home? Good question! To a few it would entail an extravagant and meaningless collection of gizmos, performing useless tasks. To others it would be akin to bringing home a set of a Bond films. Having pioneered designs of some of the super intelligent homes in India, I tend to look at them as a "Lifestyle" issue. Simply speaking it is a matter of harnessing existing technologies and creatively bringing them into our homes, to make our interaction with our home simpler, faster and more meaningful.

A typical example will justify my point. The home cinema with projector and screen is something most of us have experienced by now. Those who possess such systems, are aware of the confusion the plethora of remotes create: each for the screen, the projector, the amplifier, the DVD, the cable box etc. In addition each piece needs to be switched on independently and put into the correct mode. By the time you have the system ready, you start the hunt for the DVD. Consider yourself lucky to find the DVD you wanted!

But what if I told you it's possible to add "Intelligence" to a "stupid" system.

What if you had a little gizmo called a 'Touch Panel' to interact with? You pick it up, touch it and its screen comes alive with beautiful icons. One icon says 'Watch DVD'. You touch it. The magic begins. The system fires up, the screen comes down, the projector, the amplifier 'knows what to do'. The lights automatically dim, the curtains close and guess what, you don't even need to search for a DVD. The Art Covers of hundreds of movies displayed on the screen will allow you to simply select and watch the movie of your choice!

## The beauty of an intelligent home is that you can remain connected to it wherever you are.

The concept of an intelligent home is to simplify and add value to almost any aspect of our life. It can take care of audio, video, home cinema, lighting, air conditioning or any form of indoor 'Automation' like security too. The beauty of an intelligent home is that you can remain connected to it wherever you are.

Different members of the home can simultaneously listen to their choice of music in their own spaces. The 'Protective Daddy' may just access the security

cameras on his laptop from another city, country or even continent, to make sure that all is well back home. The 'Loving Mummy' may just want to monitor the room temperature in the baby's room while she is sitting with her friends in the garden. In more elaborate systems a lot many features can be added, ranging from automated gardens, lawn management, pool and spa management, keyless entry, landscape lighting, smart gates, energy management....the list is endless.

In really advanced systems, one can

easily keep a track of the kids using simple GPS devices; have the system identify authorized personnel using Biometrics. Multiple homes and offices can be seamlessly connected to each other, thus making distances magically disappear.

How does one go about designing an Intelligent Home? The best time to start is while building or renovating. This way it is possible to allocate required spaces and most importantly to prepare the house for the future by run-



Courtesy: Lodha Group

ning appropriate wires. Never cut cost on wires, they form the spinal nerve of the project.

Technologies advance very fast; it is a must to prepare the house with a professionally designed wiring infrastructure to accommodate future expansion. Most importantly, have a very experienced Integration Consultant on board. In my experience most interior designers have no clue about any of this!

In short the system consists of The Head End where the 'brain', the critical equipment and global sources sit.

Then comes the rest of the house with all kinds of third party equipment like speakers, lights, aircon, curtain motors, cameras, various sensors etc., which take commands from the Head End.

Lastly, wired or wireless Touch Panels. You will operate the house using these touch panels. The user interface that appears on the panels should be customized to suit your taste and convenience. The way they are programmed should be tailored specifically for your convenient use.

I have always maintained that an in-

telligent home is a lifestyle decision. When you choose a shirt it can be from a roadside shop or a couture product, the cost differentials can be as wide as the sky. So too here. You can start with a few lakhs and the top end can make even the deepest pockets look shallow.

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