

Dealerscope

PRODUCT & STRATEGY FOR CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY RETAILING



CEA Special Report



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Better Home Entertainment Sound

An opportunity for dealers and retailers to enhance the home entertainment experience

Consumers are buying more home entertainment systems each year. With uncertain economic conditions, watching movies, playing video games and listening to music at home offers a less expensive entertainment alternative for many consumers. Building a great home entertainment experience requires high-quality audio components.

The MP3 generation grew up listening to music through earbuds, many of which have poor frequency response. It's no wonder, then, that many of these consumers have low expectations for home entertainment sound quality. Those of us who grew up with large headphones, high-quality speakers and LPs played on turntables outfitted with diamond needles know how good sound can really be.

Today, most American households have flat panel TVs, many of which feature multiple speakers. CEA recently released its U.S. Consumer Electronics Sales and Forecasts 2009-2014 report, which is optimistic about 2013 home audio segment sales, finding many consumers are ready to upgrade their current systems to "foster a more immersive entertainment experience." The report forecasts an 11 percent year-over-year home audio unit growth with more than \$1.69 billion in sales expected this year.

CEA's 2012 report on home audio purchasing trends, *Discovering the Motivations and Opportunities Behind Home Audio Upgrades*, highlighted three key purchasing motivators for consumers:

1. Some buyers want the latest and greatest equipment and experience.
2. Others want a change or need to replace broken or out-of-date equipment.

3. Life changes, such as a new home or an updated home, drive consumer demand for new audio equipment.

Sales opportunities are much greater if we include the large group consumers who are satisfied with their current equipment but want to improve their home audio entertainment experience.

Acoustic Solutions

As some consumers upgrade and others delay equipment purchases, overall interest in improving their home entertainment sound

ment, incorporating wall and ceiling acoustics, and reconfiguring a room's layout. Consumers can start by drawing a room layout with speaker placement and seating. Position speakers in a way that equalizes the volume level for listeners. Draw lines on the layout, representing secondary wall reflections to determine the best placement of one or more acoustic wall panels to absorb reflected sound.

Acoustic panels are available in varying sizes, materials and price points to fit consumers' budgets. Decorative acoustic panels can be color coordinated with existing furniture to add visual interest. Some even double as art. Many existing acoustic panels provide limited absorption over a wide frequency spectrum and are not capable of absorbing low frequencies. However, manufacturers are working on better panels that are lighter, thinner, more eco-friendly and can absorb a wider range of frequencies.

Knowing about acoustic solutions is helpful. But without the proper guidance, consumers cannot achieve the best sound experience. By following simple manufacturer's instructions, consumers can easily position and mount acoustic wall panels in minutes, reducing secondary audio reflected off walls. It is as easy as hanging a large picture.

Dealers and retailers currently selling AV receivers and speakers should consider carrying a selection of quality acoustic wall panels to enhance their customers' home audio entertainment experience.

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quality has broad appeal. But most consumers lack the knowledge to improve their room acoustics.

Ideally, sound travels in one direction from the speakers to the listeners. But in most homes today, sound reflects off of hard wall and ceiling surfaces, diminishing music quality and the clarity of dialogue in a movie, making it hard to understand. Better sound quality requires reducing these secondary sound paths.

Solutions include adjusting speaker place-