



‘Extreme Makeover’ Tests Mettle

Why should an integrator do a free installation for ABC’s “Extreme Makeover” TV show? For HS Technology Group, the job proved its flexibility and built teamwork. HS Technology president Stuart Forchheimer (above, on crutches) visits the “Extreme Makeover” jobsite.

Why does an integrator devote 390 total manhours over six days, with 12 people working in 100-plus degree heat and rain, on a crazy schedule that started at 5 a.m. to do a free installation for a TV show? The answer might be, “To prove you can do it.”

By now, everyone has seen at least parts of ABC’s hit show “Extreme Makeover,” in which the network enlists a builder and scores of contractors to complete a home within seven days for a needy family. Last July (the show aired in late September), ABC selected Baltimore for the show’s largest project — an 11,000-square-footer for the non-profit group “Boys Hope, Girls Hope” in the city.

Even though Mark Recene, vice president of HS Technology Group (aka Homesafe Security Systems), thought the producers were “downright crazy,” he “knew it was something we had to do.”

The episode had the dubious designation of being the first time the show was unable to complete the project in seven days. HS Technology installed an alarm and video security system and flat panel-based surround-sound home theater.

What are the lessons from doing something like this? According to Recene, “First off, don’t as-

sume new customers will begin raining down.” He says the decision should be based on:

Manpower — “Whatever schedule they give you, forget it. You’ll need to have your people on standby and ready to show up and stay as long as it’s necessary to complete your portion of the project.

Money — You must pay your people for the time required to complete the project and not receive any compensation. In the meantime, you’ll also be passing on any revenue that would have been generated from paying customers.

Equipment — You must step up and provide (at your cost) any necessary materials that the “Extreme” producers or your vendors can’t or won’t supply.

“It was quite an accomplishment for us to have virtually all of our technicians together on one job at the same time. (First time for us.) We also proved to ourselves that we were capable of fulfilling our portion of the project in the amount of time that was provided,” says Recene. “What we were able to accomplish will stay with us all and make us stronger as a team going forward.”

—Jason Knott

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