HDMI—You Idiot!

Like it or not, it's here to stay

By Gary Kayye, CTS

Like it or not, HDMI is here to stay. You have no choice in the matter. It is here; it is the standard; it IS HD. Well, mostly.

I am still amazed by the sheer number of commercial AV design consultants and installers (not salespeople) who hate HDMI and seem to have some sort of delusion that they can continue to design systems not using HDMI but some other non-standard carrier format for HD. It sort of reminds me of when component video came out and appeared on all types of analog HD gear back in the mid-1990s: The commercial AV market, instead of just connecting it to projectors or processing it as component video, actually convinced clients to convert it to RGBHV on BNC connectors because it was a captive-connector rather than using the RCA ones used by all component video outputs.

It actually created an opening for the residential AV integrators to grab a part of our market because there were plenty of component video lovers, and manufacturers, for that matter, in that segment of the market. And, still today, component video exists on hundreds of new products that debut each year, and RGBHV has all but disappeared as an output connector on just about any source device.

Now, we're trying to convince the customer that the digital format of HD and, thus, the HDMI connector, sucks.

Do you realize the disservice this is doing to the commercial AV customer? Do you realize that this is the standard connector format for digital HD, which is, by the way, an FCC-mandated standard as of February 17, 2009?

Geez, get over it!

OK, salespeople, stop listening to these designers and installers whine. Why the designers whine, I haven't a clue. But, here's what I was told by a respected design consultant who manages a major regional office of the world's largest AV system design firm: It's simply an issue of re-learning. He claims that systems designers are getting lazy about what they specify and that they stick to conservative products that they know work (actually a good philosophy, it seems to me), and that they think HDMI, so he says, is not reliable and is a standard that will be de-standardized. OK, good luck with that one....

Installers: Dudes, your job is to install. Just install. OK, not totally. I do want your feedback because I don't want to force you to install something that's ultimately a pain in the butt to install or manage, but this is not an issue worth wasting your breath over. If a salesperson, rightfully so, specifies HDMI distribution within a system, it means he or she meant to. Just deal with it. All the whining and under-your-breath complaining about how HDMI is not reliable, it comes out, it's flimsy, etc., is a waste of time. It is what it is: S-video's connector sucked, as do RCA connectors, but they were the standard for video.

If these whiner-babies would spend half as much time complaining and the other half coming up with a creative solution for making HDMI more “reliable” for the install world, they might get rich marketing the idea.

Here are the facts:
• Look at the back of any HD cable TV and satellite TV box and you'll see HDMI for digital-HD.
• Look at the input panel of every HD-TV and you'll see HDMI connectors for HD.
• Look at all the major cable and signal distribution product manufacturers and you'll see HDMI systems out there.
• HDMI is the only standard for carrying digital HD signals right now. Will there be another one day? Likely, because one day is a lot of days ahead of us. But, for now, HDMI is it.

And, look at the bright side of digital HD: One day, all this stuff will be wireless and you won't have to deal with HDMI anymore! Then, you installers will have to find something else to complain about. Oh yeah, if everything goes wireless, you will have something to complain about: your job that won't exist any longer....

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