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inside track

Publishing Corporation

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Dear A/V Specialist/Custom Integrator:

Years from now we will look back on the great recession of 2009 and remember what it took to survive it, what helped pull us through.

Right now, though, we are still in survival mode, and therefore, sharing information, sharing experiences and ways of coping (beyond cutting costs) will give us the opportunity to make adjustments in our businesses that can improve our chances of survival and position us properly for better times ahead.

For the specialty retailer and CEDIA integrator the inside track *Supplier Loyalty Survey* has always been invaluable as a barometer of the partnership behavior of industry vendors, as it is experienced by the dealer community. This year's difficult economic environment has put vendors and dealers alike under serious stress. In this situation some vendors have recognized that their own survival is best served by a redoubling of efforts to support their dealers. Other vendors saw some of their key dealers go under and scrambled to replace them, which sometimes led to further upheavals in the affected markets.

As you consider - for each vendor whose product line you are authorized to carry - how that vendor has performed in calendar year 2009 on the 16 parameters that together make up the business relationship, please be fair in your grading. Award the grades that your vendors have earned. Your vendors are looking for honest feedback. Superficial grading (such as all 3.0's or 4.0s across the board) is not very meaningful. It's better to grade your 10 or 12 most important vendors thoughtfully than to dash off undifferentiated grades for every single brand you carry.

Most of you will be familiar with this survey and will know how to complete it. Just click on the [2010 survey](#) link and be on your way. For those new to the survey, detailed instructions are right on the survey form. Please note that the deadline for (electronically) returning survey forms is **Monday, November 23, 2009**. All participating dealers will receive the complete set of results issues (which will be published in December through February) as our thank you for their efforts. Vendors may - and will - encourage and remind their dealers to participate in the survey. But there should be no pressure put on dealers beyond that. Vendors, dealers and inside track value the honesty and high integrity of this survey, and we are all united in the responsibility to uphold it.

I look forward to strong participation in our 25th anniversary year.

Sincerely,



Gisela Schoell
Editor