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Give your home a brain

HOME AUTOMATION IS HERE TO STAY, SO MAKE SURE YOU ARE READY FOR IT.

Welcome to the age of Home Automation where consumers can relax and let their homes do all the work. It may sound like something from the future, but we are already experiencing a shift toward the Internet of Things (IoT) concept. In this theory of infinite possibilities, people live in harmony with things through a giant network of programmable, wireless technology. Everything will evolve around personal location and preferences in order to save time and energy. Your home will understand your desires and needs and will work in the background to make sure you have a comfortable, efficient lifestyle.

It may sound like a movie you've seen before, but we are already taking small steps toward an IoT world through the rising use of Home Automation. More homeowners are discovering the many ways home automation controls and features can complete everyday household activities automatically with little to no user intervention. By 2020, it's estimated that 44.1 million households will be utilizing smart home technology to navigate daily life.

When combined with other types of technology, home automation can greatly improve quality of life, but making all the pieces work together can be a challenge. Getting the most out of home automated systems requires intentional design and build. You need to determine what you want your system to do, and you need to create space for your home's new "brain."

"As a Residential Designer, it is important that I understand not only our client's design style, but their expectations on how the home will function," says Sam Liberti with Low Tide Designs. "By identifying all the specialty systems in the home, their primary use locations, and the equipment required, I can design the central "brain room" into the home plan for all the equipment to be housed in a central location. This hub needs to be easy to access, well ventilated, and most importantly inconspicuous in the design."



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A brain room? Well, we are talking about a highly functioning system. Home automation is no longer just about home theatres and whole house audio. A complete system will be able to control lights, dimmers, timers, security cameras, water features and pools, a sprinkler system, garage doors, water heater, thermostat and smoke alarms. In addition, USB outlets and charging stations and wireless access points can be controlled through the system. Remember, we are talking about infinite possibilities, and with home automation continuing to grow, it's a good idea to have the brain in place for things you might want to add in the future.

WORKING FOR YOU Next to security, one of the best benefits of total home automation is shade and lighting control. Shades and blinds can actually save you energy dollars IF you remember to adjust them each day to maximize their use. Automated shades and blinds adjust for you, and they work throughout the day to allow the sun in during cooler months or keep it out during the summer. With automated lighting, you never have to come home to a dark house, and you can set your lighting so that it appears you are home when you're not.



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Making space for this technology may incur an eye roll, but with good planning, it should only take up the room of a small closet. The return you get will be worth it when you walk into your home and press a button that instantly transforms your house into “evening relax” mode (shades pull, lights dim, soft music plays, pool lights come on). Or, when your house saves you money by sensing when you are home and adjusting the thermostat and water heater accordingly.

“My husband and I have owned energy efficient homes in the past and were interested in integrating these technologies with automated systems to maximize our homes’ performance and provide us the conveniences of modern technology,” says Kathryn Drury, Homeowner and Residential Construction Consultant at Drury & Associates, LLC. “Automated lighting, thermostats, water heater, and Nest system are just a few of the high tech hardware we installed.”

To navigate the options and make sure your “brain room” is properly designed, start by enlisting the help of a professional. “We worked with our designer, Sam Liberti of Low Tide Designs and a home technology integrator to select the systems and discuss where all the equipment would be located,” said Kathryn. “Now our home works for us.” **LOW**