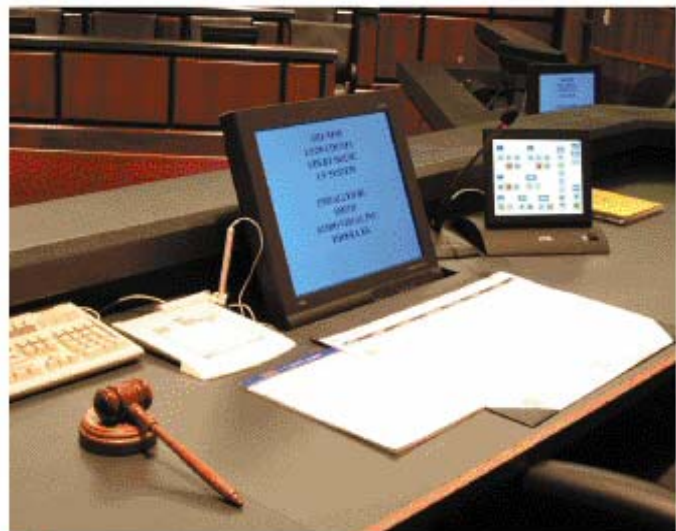




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How They Saw It

In the last 10 years the traditional audiovisual dealer has had to change, really change or simply live with the ever-fading margins. Twelve years ago the Video Toaster was the hottest selling item and it wasn't just the Video Toaster. It was all the accessory items that appeared on the market such as low-cost time base correctors, single frame recorders and enhancement devices such as the YCP-100 Y/C Plus card for the Video Toaster that put a serious jingle for the first time in many audiovisual dealers' pockets. This was provided the dealers had added staff with "computer knowledge" to interface software and hardware for the video-in-box systems. This period, known by many as the "Toaster Era" is from my view a picture of the things to come. As owner of the Y/C Plus it was an exciting time, which in my mind was the start of the "Systems Integration Era."



▲ The AMX touchscreen, located at the judge's bench, handles the control of the system, talking to the MediaMatrix, the Extron and the scaler/switcher.

A short time later the "Plug-N-Play" period arrived.

Everything you purchased for different devices, in particular computers was billed as plug-n-play. Oh really? Add a video card, an editing control interface or a animation controller, truly meant instead of playing, you were on the phone talking to tech support for sometimes hours only to find your computer's bios were not compatible or we had to write software so the devices could talk to one another, oh what fun!

Today, we deal with similar problems. The true interface solution is sometimes in hardware, custom cables and in most cases custom software, which has to be written by, you guessed it, the systems integrator.

In the last 10 years our firm has doubled or tripled in size, with many of the former job titles phased out and replaced with engineers and highly skilled installers. At the same time sales revenues have increased 50 percent to 100 percent per year, pretty cool for a former A/V dealer selling boxes. The systems integrator has found a niche, a zone: "The System Integrator Zone."

--Larry Heilman