

SPECIAL EHX ORLANDO ISSUE

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Turning UP THE Heat

Tangora Technologies transforms HVAC business into custom using advanced documentation procedures. *Page 60*

Finishing a job another dealer couldn't can produce **great referrals**, and tremendous headaches.

Job Takeovers: Forbidden Fruit **OR** Easy Money

by Tom Marino & Linda Ponzoli

JOB TAKEOVERS

Snapshot

Job takeovers can produce **excellent referrals** and superb portfolio material.

Job takeovers potentially involve **agitated** and financially strapped clients.

Troubleshooting and proper skill-set are **prerequisites**.

Job takeovers are the reclamation projects of the integrator business. It's a lot like picking up a talented pitcher off waivers who is recovering from Tommy John surgery and has a notoriously troubled past. It's risky. There's a chance that he could pitch to his potential and turn out to be a shrewd signing. There's also a chance that he could spend the season on the DL or disrupt your team chemistry, creating a host of new team problems. ■ On the surface, job takeovers appear to be easy money. Somebody else has started a job and you need only step in, tie up the loose ends and finish it up. Sometimes it is that simple. Many other times it is not. ■ The problem is that the previous dealer didn't finish the job for a reason. He may have been in way over his head, and therefore made a lot of mistakes that now need to be corrected.

Or perhaps it was the customer who proved to be too difficult for the job to be completed effectively. In these cases, the takeover dealer will have his work cut out for him.

Dealers who have been around a bit are likely to have experienced an exchange like the following.

“Mr. Smith, I have a home automation system from XYZ that just doesn’t work.”

“What’s it doing?”

“Well, I’m not really sure. It’s never done what we were promised it would do.”

“Did you call XYZ to come fix it?”

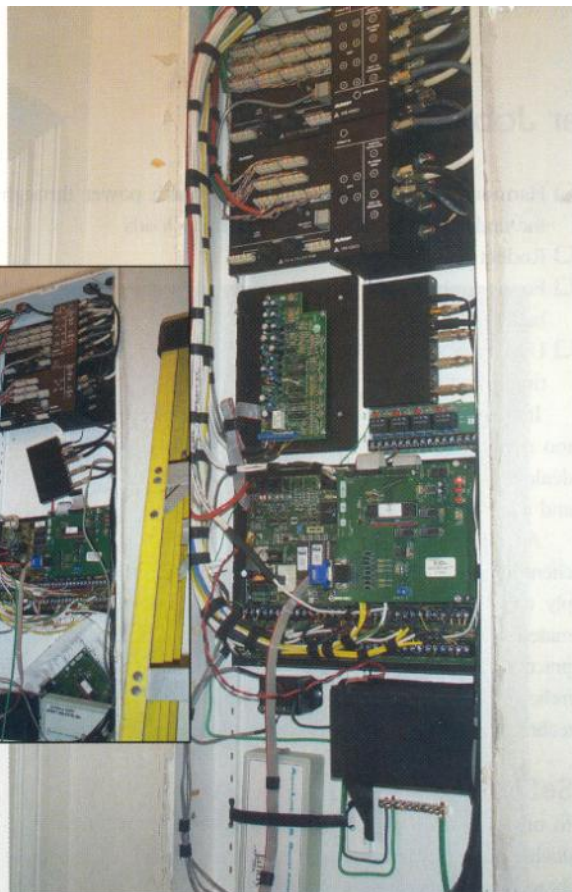
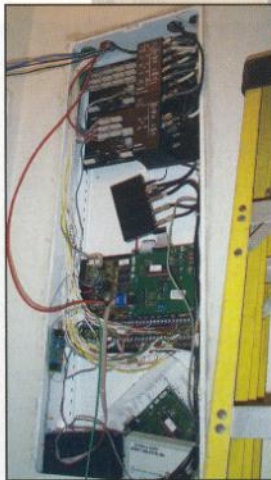
“Yes, several times. They come out, putter around, and claim the problem is somebody else’s fault. I’m not happy with their work. And I want somebody to come out and fix it.”

“Sure, we know what you mean.”

Whether or not to take on a potentially difficult job like this is a key decision for dealers. It certainly could turn into a great referral. If XYZ can’t handle a job and then somebody else steps in and makes it all better, the customer will be all the more pleased with the new dealer’s relatively impressive work. However, if the new dealer is unable to complete the job, the customer will be even more agitated. The dealer will have invested man-hours in an effort that doesn’t even pay off as a potential referral. So a dealer must be able to read which scenario is likely to play out.

Before accepting a job takeovers, there are things to consider. Job takeovers involve complex troubleshooting of unreliably integrated electronics installed by a company that may not have been completely qualified to do so. The possibilities are endless. This checklist includes many problems to investigate before choosing to accept a job takeovers:

- Bad or wrong connections
- Damaged or pinched cable, wrong type of cable, or missing cable
- Sheetrock-covered outlets



Enthusiastic referrals and excellent before-and-after portfolio shots can spring from cleaning up previous dealers’ work.

- Grounding problems, ground loops
- Induced hum or electrical noise caused by improper routing of cables
- Signal bleed
- System components that don’t work because the former installer burned them out
- Lightning and system damage caused by power surges or electrical noise on the powerline
- Improper outlet connections created by the electricians

The Super Story of One JT

A dealer who can successfully execute a job takeovers is a lot like a superhero.

My company is an HAI five-star dealership. And we were called by HAI to visit a customer having extreme problems with an HAI system. The thermostats were changing temperatures without being programmed. The original integrator, who charged top dollar for the system, had made multiple return visits to rectify the problem. The customer was told to call an HVAC repairman, who came several times, charging the customer for each visit. The problem, the customer was then told, was the thermostats.

Finally, the integrator had the customer hire an electrician, at the customer’s expense. This was the last straw—and I got the job takeover.

After running to the nearest phone-booth to change into my cape and tights, I visited the agitated client’s home. As I checked over the HAI system, I was unable to find even one line of temperature setback programming for the thermostats. This is the single most energy-saving automation a home can have. I made the client aware of this fact.

Next, I surveyed the system and found the tray that catches the air conditioning

overflow condensation was full. So I bailed the water, and snapped on a cheap, simple thermostat. This way, the HAI thermostats couldn’t be blamed for any problems. Two weeks later the HVAC repairman was called out for the same problem—and had to change the evaporator. (From past experiences, I’d learned to carry a basic thermostat in case there were any problems with AC systems. That way the HVAC repairman can’t blame the fancy, “electronified” thermostat.) I’d fixed the automation, and proved the HAI equipment wasn’t at fault. I was a hero!

Superman saves the day!

Takeover Jobs

- ❑ Harmonics caused by drawing too much power through the underrated wire feeding non-linear loads
- ❑ Rodent damages
- ❑ Foreign object damage (i.g., drill shavings or coaxial braid filaments)
- ❑ User error because the installer didn't take the necessary time to educate the end user

It helps for a dealer to know what he's up against. But too many checks on this list will probably turn away most dealers. There are those who enjoy a challenge, however, and a job takeover challenge can certainly pay dividends.

As we've mentioned, a successful job takeover guarantees client loyalty and triggers a word-of-mouth campaign that simply can't be bought. It also can generate excellent portfolio material. Think before-and-after photos that reflect neat wiring practices. In addition, accepting and executing job takeovers indicates to the customer that a dealer is operating on a higher technical and competence level than the competition.

Set Yourself Up to Succeed

In order to reap the benefits of successful job takeovers, a dealer must have the proper systems in place to complete these often-difficult jobs. Not every staff member is ideal to place on a job takeover. Here are a few characteristics that a job takeover worker should have in his skill-set:

- Ability to calculate series and parallel circuits/calculate

wattage and power.

- Basic understanding of transistors, diodes, resistors, capacitors, inductors, and transformers.
- Ability to hook up a relay.
- Ability to read a schematic.
- Understanding of the difference between double- and single-pole or throw/normally open or normally closed.
- Knowledge of RS232 and 485.
- Ability to reliably terminate/punch down Cat 5, 5e, 6 wires to an RJ45 jack and socket.
- Ability to terminate RG6, RG59 and maybe RG11 to an F-connector or a BNC connector.

Good job takeovers candidates are often experienced electronics technicians, telephone installers, electricians who have control experience, experienced installers with an electronics background or system designers.

There is also some prerequisite equipment that a JT installer must possess before attempting a reclamation project. The following are must-haves:

- Cable toning and tracing kit.
- Multimeter.
- Cable wire map tester with time-domain reflectometry.
- Power receptacle circuit checker.
- Rf channel signal analyzer.
- NTSC color bars and crosshatch video signal generator.
- Oscilloscopes.
- Spectrum analyzer.
- Decibel meter.
- Frequency analyzer.
- Circuit breaker locator.
- X10 analyzer.

Determining Price

Even if a dealer decides to take on a job takeovers, the customer may not be willing to take on a new dealer. Remember that they are already weary of wasting money on their system. Discussing price will be a difficult endeavor.

A dealer needs to spend many hours analyzing the system, or he won't know what works and what doesn't. And, of course, the customer needs to know what the future holds.

No matter, the client will never be ready to hear the verdict. It's a good idea to charge an hourly rate and cost of materials. Occasionally, the customer will insist on knowing what it will cost beforehand. In this case, it's a good idea to sell a system analysis in which the system is surveyed and problems are rectified. Charge appropriately for a system analysis report and proposal for remediation. This can take several days of search and rescue, including locating available documentation, wire-tracing, hook-up verification, and software programming review. **CE Pro**

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