



HOME AUTOMATION : INSIGHTS FOR BUYERS



Rakesh Sachdev

Our editor met up with **Rakesh Sachdev** Managing Director of Acetech Technologies (P) Ltd, one of the most experienced persons in the Home Automation industry in India. Here are some excerpts from the interview.

Tel. : +91-22-28203820 / 21

E-mail : rakesh@acotech-india.com

www.acotech-india.com

Editor : What are the common misconceptions people have about home Automation.

Rakesh : There are several floating around. The most common one is that Home Automation means controlling only from iPad and smart phones and that you have to be tech savvy to control the home automation. This is not true. We have designed Home automation for 3 generations where the older generation, tech-phobic people and servants can control by merely pushing buttons on the wall mounted keypad. We have made it much easier than using traditional mechanical switches. If they can use a TV remote then they can use our lighting remote as well. In fact anybody who can push a button can use Home Automation. You can leave the iPad and smart phones to those who are comfortable using them

Editor: Is there a difference between Home Automation and a Smart Home.

Rakesh : They are terms that are used interchangeably but they are not the same. Home Automation means

you have Lighting Controls, Curtain Controls, Audio –Video systems, motion sensors etc and they all work via remotes or iPads or smart phones. In a smart home they all talk to each other and triggering one can trigger other ecosystems of the group. For example opening the door with your fingerprint can switch off the alarm system, turn on the lights leading to your bedroom, play your favourite music and switch on the AC in your room if the room temperature is above say 27 degrees.

Editor : Would you advise open protocols or proprietary protocols for the buyer.

Rakesh : There are certain people who are creating a false propaganda and misleading buyers. There are almost no systems on open protocol that are recognised names. There are protocols like Zigbee, Z Wave, KNX, EnOcean which are adopted by many manufacturers so the buyer has a choice, but by no means they can be called open protocol.

Editor : Should the buyer be concerned about the protocol used ?

Rakesh : When you push a button on your keypad or remote the information travels to the actuator which actually switches on the light or dims it depending on the information sent. It is of no consequence to the buyer whether this info was sent on protocol A B or C. Most proprietary protocols have interfaces for integration with third party devices. When you buy the front-end and the back-end of the same company you have a single point of responsibility. On the other hand if you are installing a KNX system and the integrator is mixing and matching products from several companies there may be compatibility issues. Moreover no single manufacturing company will own responsibility for any failure. Buyers should beware of this situation in future.

Editor : Most buyers are faced with the dilemma, Wired or Wireless ? What do you suggest ?

Rakesh : Till date the general rule has been to use wireless for retrofit situations and wired for new installations. Inels has good inexpensive wireless solutions that are worth looking at even for new projects. These can be scaled to wired solutions and you can even control from your smart-phone even though one is using RF technology.

Editor : Which are the main segments of buyers ?

Rakesh : We have 3 market segments. The high-end home owner who wants everything possible. The aspirational customer who wants home automaton



on a budget and generally decides to have just the Living, Dining and Master bedroom automated. The largest segment is the builder / developer who can add value to his property by selling Smart homes. We have some really cool solutions for builders which are upgradeable by the end user once he buys the flat / bungalow.

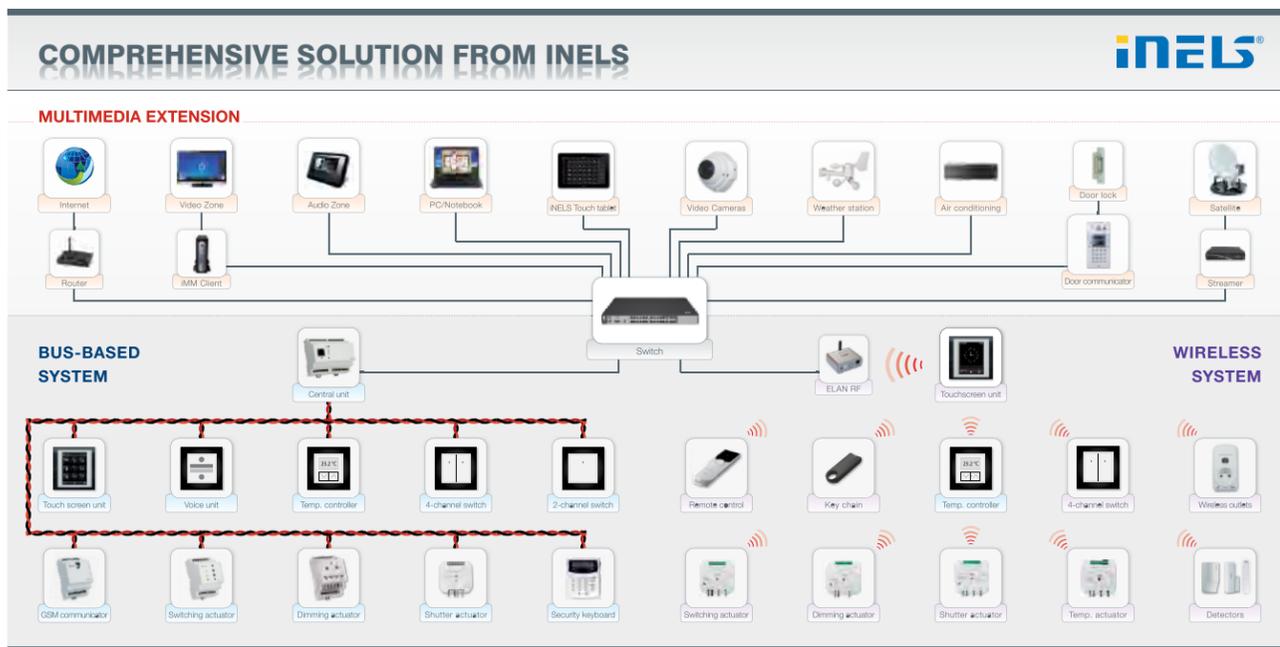
Editor : Do you have solutions for the physically challenged ?

Rakesh : Yes of course. I remember we designed one home for a lady who used to move on a wheel chair. Her doors were automated and she was able to open the doors by pressing a button on the fob she wore as a pendant. Button 1 was for door 1 and so on. The fourth button opened all the doors at once in case of emergency. In the bathroom we fixed

a Panic switch with a string. Pulling the string would open all the doors, sound an alarm and send mobile alerts to care-givers. We also gave her the usual lighting and curtain control via smart phone. The AV, Lighting, security and door controls were all integrated and controlled from the iPad. The garden sprinklers and bathroom boilers were scheduled to come ON and a fixed time and switch OFF after the specified period. We had also set reminders for feeding the dog.

Editor : Hmm. That's interesting. So how does a buyer select the system integrator ?

Rakesh : What your Smart home can do hinges on the capabilities of the system integrator. Most SI's are content with offering some standard solutions and do not stretch themselves for the client. They are



generally lazy, money-minded or simply not competent enough to give the client a bang for his buck. There are many out there that do not follow a proper process for project management, do not believe in documentation and create a mess at the end of the day. It would be a good idea for the buyer to assess the SI on his capability to deliver complex tasks, check the documentation he follows, find out about his team and years of experience.

A system integrator has to be well versed in Lighting Controls, Shade Controls, Wi-Fi, AV systems and Home theatres, AV Storage and distribution, Communication systems, Alarm Systems, Access Control, Entrance Automation, CCTV and HVAC controls.

Editor : You have a tie up with Inels from Czech Republic. Why did you choose this brand.

Rakesh : We made a thorough study of the market and what the customer needs. We found that the buying needs and motivations of installing a HA system in Europe are very different than that of India. Inels has the most comprehensive solution in the world. You can have wireless system, wired system and a bridge between the two. Inels is the only company that has a Gyro mouse to control the home while viewing the options on your TV. It is one of the few companies that has RGB colour control from touch screen and the first company to have a Rf light bulb and Rf wireless detectors that talk directly to the touch screen. Then there is the in- built multimedia and so on...

Editor : Do you have solutions for Hotel Rooms.

Rakesh : Of course we do. We have some very cost effective solutions which the hotels can import directly as they are entitled to concessional import duty.

Editor : So what is the future of the smart home ?

Rakesh : 5 years from now you will see a lot of standardisation would have been done. Big players like Google and Microsoft will be active players. The light bulbs will have android or RF chips built into it. You will be able to directly address the light bulb from your smart phone without any intervening hardware.

E-mail : rakesh@acetech-india.com
Web. : www.acetech-india.com