

Details and FAQs about “The Simulator”

Why should we use the Simulator and the Portable Showroom?

The portable showroom is a hardware platform that supports two software products, the Simulator to help the client understand how things work and the Approximator to help construct a budget. While the Approximator can also run on a laptop or tablet, the Simulator requires the portable showroom to be effective. While the entire package is much less than an actual physical showroom or even a collection of touch panels, it is an investment that requires some consideration. This document should help by discussing how the landscape of our industry has changed to make the simulator and portable showroom a productive choice.

First- consider the showroom

The traditional Showroom is becoming obsolete

There was a time when our industry emerged from the classic retailer selling consumer electronics and became the retailer installing consumer electronics. There was also the custom installer, installing consumer electronics. Back then, most of the potential clients came into a store looking for products and discovered they could have more. Usually, “more” meant music in many rooms of the home. Then “more” meant they could have a home theater. The showroom within the store was a powerful tool. If you were a “Custom Installer” back then, you quickly learned that a showroom helped you get certain products that you could not get otherwise.

Those times have changed. Thanks to AVAD , its cousins, and the internet, there are no exclusive products as we enter the golden age of systems integration. We are no longer installing retailers, we are designers and contractors.

Perhaps this analogy will help?

There was also a time when the window unit air conditioner, a consumer electronics product, was the way you would cool your house. You can still buy the window units as a consumer electronics product, but no client would ever buy two dozen for their new home. They will spend more on the infrastructural “Central Heat and Air” system that is designed to last the life of the home.

Now ask yourself, do your clients scurry on down to the heating and air showroom to audition their compressors and air handlers?

If you expect to be successful installing what everyone can buy on the internet or at Wal-Mart, you are going to be disappointed.

The opportunities exist and will remain in the world of the large “integrated systems”. The “products” that were once sold on retail shelves have now become the “system components” in these larger “Integrated Systems” and they no longer interest the potential client. Therefore a visit to a building to view the components that will go into their home would be about as compelling as a visit to the “camshaft store” to select the parts for their Mercedes.

It is not unusual for the client to never hear a speaker or see an image until the day they move in. In my own career selling over 37 million dollars in 17 years, I never had a showroom and none of my clients ever saw or heard what they were getting until they turned the system on. I used to envy my colleagues with the cool showrooms until I realized that not having one might have contributed to my success.

Then - consider the client

“People rarely buy what they do not understand”

Rush Limbaugh

We are so used to what we do, that we often do not realize how many of our clients do not understand what they are getting until they move in. Not only does this hamper the sales process, it almost guarantees a disconnection between what they thought they were

getting and the actual result. The Simulator portion of the portable showroom fixes that by involving them in a realistic simulation. The results are amazing. It is often like watching children at play.

Many potential clients are afraid of technology and they have formed what is called an “organizing metaphor” in their mind. Organizing metaphors are the templates we use to make snap decisions. “You get what you pay for” would be an organizing metaphor. Unfortunately for us, many potential clients have an organizing metaphor that is telling them that these systems are hard to use.

Psychologists have discovered that you cannot remove an organizing metaphor by telling someone it isn’t so; you have to identify and replace the metaphor with another. Technically, this is termed a “Mind Shift”. Sometimes it is called the “Ah Hah” moment or a “moment of clarity”. We all have them when something that has been there all along becomes suddenly apparent. That is what happens when the client drives the Simulator software on the portable showroom. As long as you do **NOT** do it for them, it will work. You literally never touch the screen during the Simulator session. You get them started with simple instructions and choices and then watch them take over. Within a few minutes, you will not be able to take it away from them; it is that seductive.

This is equally powerful with specifiers who rarely see the end result. When they “get it”, they become advocates for your systems.

Finally, combining all of that with the busy schedule of the potential clients mandates that these larger systems are sold at a conference table while viewing plans and drawings. It is usually a table at their office or home or perhaps their architects’ office. It is rarely at your place. That is why portability is so important.

Finally - consider yourself

The Simulator forces you to stick to the “systems” mentality. It does not allow you to wander off or descend into details that will sabotage your efforts. Our inside knowledge of several hundred dealers exposes the fact that those that sell the most are “conceptual” in their dealings with a client. We have tested the personalities of almost 2,000 dealers and the results indicate that our industry does not represent a proportionate subset of our culture. Our dealers are 250% more likely to fall into the categories that revel in the details. While these personality types are necessary for getting things done, they are handicapped in the sales process.

We have developed a set of tools that protect you from yourselves.

More Questions

Can you configure the Simulator to demonstrate my products?

The System Simulator focuses on the interface and the result. There are no images of specific speakers and not labels on the TVs. The keypads and touch panels are photo realistic and accurately scaled. They will display the manufacturer’s name if that is the way it would really look.

It is simple to determine if the Simulator is equipped to demonstrate what your products can do. It is most effective when used to demonstrate how a variety of “disciplines” or “Master Categories” can be controlled in an integrated system.

Can you customize the artwork on the Touchpanel screens?

Yes, but there is an extra charge. We encourage you to start with the standard artwork because the cost and delay of customizing the touch panels may not be necessary. The client’s rarely base a decision to buy on the graphics in the touch panel. Do you think they refuse to buy a BMW unless they can customize the dashboard?

How long will my Simulator take?

Unless your product is new to the industry or to us, the set up of a simulator is rather simple once we have you logo. It is the hardware that sometimes adds to the waiting time. Immediately after a big event, the time extends to a month or two depending on you place in the queue. Between shows, it can be as fast as three days if you choose the "Conference Room" version of our hardware.

Can all my salespeople use it or is it just for my most experienced people?

Your best salespeople need it the least. If someone is selling over two million dollars a year, it might be best to focus on the Approximator to increase their productivity. While it will certainly help, the improvements will be more incremental.

The Portable Showroom and Simulator will enable you to quickly make a new salesperson productive. If it only accelerates the process by two or three months, it will have paid for itself. If it resurrects the potential of an existing salesperson you have invested time and money in over months or years, it will quickly pay for itself.

The key is to use it. It will not go out and demonstrate itself. We are still working on that version and it will be very expensive.

What if I do not have a portable showroom? Will the System Simulator run on my laptop?

Technically, it probably would on the newer machines, but it would lose much of its effectiveness. First, it does require two screens and next it requires that the client TOUCH the interface to get the psychological results. Unless you are going to use a mouse in the actual installation, a computer is a feeble way to use this software.

Does it come in colors?

The custom "Splash Screens" and Touch Panels can certainly be in any color. The hardware colors can be customized as well, but there is an extra charge and the finish will be powder coated only. The standard is the glossy black of the "Xtreme Truck Bed Liner" finish we now use.

What if I think I can build one myself?

That would make you a competitor because only a fool would spend the over \$250,000 and three years we spent to develop this for anything other than a product to offer to the industry. To attempt to emulate this in order to save some money on a tool that would only be for personal use while neglecting what you truly do for a living would be unfortunate.

Can I change the appearance of the virtual home and its rooms?

No, you can't and we won't. It would be faster a perhaps cheaper to actually build the room in the physical world. The three dimensional environments took a team of artists months to create using "Maya" and "Lightwave", the same software that Pixar used for Toy Story. Everything you see is a separate movie being played in Macromedia's Flash Player. The ceiling fan in the master bedroom is a good example. It is actually a nine second movie playing at 30 frames per second. The rendering time per frame is 35 minutes, using really fast computers. The rendering time for the entire nine second movie was 158 HOURS. Still want to build one yourself?

We are working on a smaller MDU version and a Commercial Systems Version.

What if you improve it?

If you own a Portable Showroom, we will update you with any new software and upgrades at no charge during the first year.

What if my manufacturer comes out with a whole new series of touch panels or keypads - What if I change from Crestron to AMX?

They will that is their job; this is one of the ways the Portable Showroom quickly returns your investment. During your first year, any changes mandated by a new product are free and updates will be delivered as soon as we develop them. During that first year, you are also

Can I get it exclusively?

Not generally. There are exceptions and we will develop custom versions for multiple unit purchases. This is a tool; it is not sold to you to resell to others. It does not represent continuing revenue to us the way a dealership for a specific product might be to a manufacturer. It only represents an occasional purchase. D-tools, Horizon, SRS, AutoCAD, Visio, and even Excel are tools used in a similar way. Do they offer exclusives?

How much does it cost- what if I buy more than one?

The actual "System Simulator" is \$2,400. It is included with the each of the "Portable Showroom" platforms. There are three and they are described in a separate document. They vary in price from \$4,807 to \$10,707 depending on hardware and Approximator combinations. Here is a snapshot of the pricing- a full size version is at the end of this document. Additional units with the same software are much less. They vary in price from \$3,740.33 to \$7,499.94

Type	Application	Comments	Retail Pricing						
			Initial Units				Additional Units with Same Software Set		
			Equipment Retail	Simulator Only	Plus Approximator - Industry Standard	Plus Populator Access - Customizable	Simulator Only	Plus Approximator - Industry Standard	Plus Populator Access
Classic- Hybrid	For either conference room with external display or with matching display unit and transport cases for field demonstration	Most Flexible, effective screen diagonal of 32.5 (346 sq inches) with combined Resolution of 2000/1500		\$ 7,591.00	\$ 9,347.10	\$ 10,707.10	\$ 6,524.33	\$ 7,499.94	\$ 7,499.94
Classic - Host Only- Single Unit -No Transport Cases - For static "conference room" installation with future portability option	Touch Enabled Host Side Only -Flat Screen Display and Audio Provided by Dealer - No Transport Cases	Display Quality Up to Dealer, Audio Quality up to the Dealer		\$ 5,713.25	\$ 7,469.35	\$ 8,829.35	\$ 4,646.58	\$ 5,622.19	\$ 5,622.19
Classic - Display Upgrade- with two transport cases	Separate Display - with two cases, now that that the units will be traveling	Second unit and both cases for use in a conference room or in the field	\$ 1,943.00						
Truly Portable Showroom - proprietary connectivity, steel construction, always two units	Designed for true portability with lightweight soft-sided cases.	Most Durable, effective screen diagonal of 32.5 (346 sq inches) with Resolution of 2000/1500		\$ 7,214.00	\$ 8,970.10	\$ 10,330.10	\$ 6,147.33	\$ 7,122.94	\$ 7,122.94
"Rise" Conference Room Version	Stationary Conference Room for External Flat Screen and Audio Provided by Dealer	Best resolution on 19" TP, Flat Screen size and resolution is up to the Client		\$ 4,807.00	\$ 6,563.10	\$ 7,923.10	\$ 3,740.33	\$ 4,715.94	\$ 4,715.94

Is there a special deal for CEDIA?

Of course, we spend a lot of money to be here and we want to capitalize on it by helping you decide. If you actually commit during CEDIA (by 9-9-2007), you will get 7% off whatever you buy and three free standard Approximator "single screen laptop" programs in either the Industry Standard Approximator or the Custom-Populator Approximator. The Approximator offer is available only if you buy an Approximator as part of your Portable Showroom or a Stand Alone Approximator. After CEDIA and until 9-20-07, the 7% still applies, but the Approximator offer expires when the CEDIA Expo ends.