



DIRECT ACTION

■ Working directly with architects like Hogarths has resulted in stunning installs like this Kensington home featured on Channel 4's Grand Designs

In the company's second article on working with architects and interior designers, Amina highlights how this approach is paying dividends.

Last month's article considered the importance of key influencers such as architects and interior designers to the CI industry. This article looks at ways of engaging with this community for mutual benefit. For Amina, it is a complex sales and marketing process with our direct customers being specialist AV installation companies. However, our indirect customers, end users who are making decisions on their homes and commercial properties, are influenced by those professionals employed from an early stage of the process to ensure the resulting property is of the highest standard practically and aesthetically. Despite the best efforts of the CI industry there is still a huge amount of ignorance amongst consumers and influencers, as to what is possible in terms of discrete technology particularly for the home. After a decade of marketing efforts and the sales of tens of thousands of speakers since the Amina team first invented the plaster over speaker in 2001, 95%+ of the population are unaware that invisible sound is an option.

Amina has increasingly focussed marketing efforts on those key influencers who have the ability to create awareness in a broader market through creating a 'pull' from the end market as well as a 'push' through installers. The challenge is how to increase awareness of discrete technology? Amina believes that those who care passionately about aesthetics should be our 'best friends' and as such are key players for the future.

An important part of the process for Amina is to take the message to the influencers and this is done in a number of ways. One of the most productive ways is to offer industry body approved CPD (Continuous Professional Development) seminars. Amina offers RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) and BILD (British Institute of Interior Designers) approved seminars on 'Understanding and Specifying Invisible Sound Solutions'. These are offered both on site, for larger practices and as open seminars which can also be combined with other seminars such as CEDIA's 'Designing Integrated Future-Ready Homes'. This latter option provides the wide eyed excitement on the possibilities opened up by invisible sound and immediate access to the practical solution of how to move a project forward in terms of support product and installation. The real success of this approach is the way conversation opens up into discussing actual

projects, conversations that would not otherwise have taken place creating a valuable sale opportunity.

In addition Amina focuses on going to where architects and interior designers are, rather than waiting for the influencers to find the product themselves. This approach includes attendance at exhibitions such as 100% Designs and Ecobuild. Amina recognises that attendees are not visiting the events to look for invisible sound, or even home automation, frequently not being aware of the options that exist. The art form is to engage effectively with attendees and few can resist the temptation to feel the speakers! Amina has secured several major projects including a prestigious hotel spa and high-end residential development as a direct result of initial contact made at such exhibitions. This approach needs a long term mind-set as business resulting from such engagements can take months or even years to materialise. The jaw dropping excitement at the idea of invisible sound, much less present at CI trade events, is very much in evidence at such exhibitions and a great way to start a relationship.

Another direct approach successfully utilised is to work with industry databases identifying those projects where invisible sound is likely to complement residential or commercial developments where aesthetics are key. Once suitable projects are discovered, key influencers are identified and contacted. This approach has led to requests for CPDs, submission of drawings and plans for advice on speaker selection and positioning together with requests for demonstrations and details of Amina installation partners. Sometimes it is not the project that was originally targeted that turns out to be the one for which Amina is eventually specified, but without the relationship the opportunity would have been missed entirely.

This approach takes patience, but is an essential element in growing the available market for invisible loudspeakers and CI solutions. Increasingly Amina is seeing successful installers, with whom we work, partnering with designers and architects and thus generating more than sufficient profitable business to cease any conventional direct marketing.

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