



LOOK WHO'S *Talking*

**Making
home assistants
work for you**

By Kristin Marand

>> THANKS TO THE UBIQUITY of automated home assistants, talking to your appliances is becoming the new normal.

Just four short years ago, touchscreen technology was the latest thing in home automation, allowing homeowners to control lights, thermostats, and security devices from a single platform or smartphone.

Now you can program entire scenes that are pre-set to synchronize multiple elements — set up a dinner mode to dim the lights, lower the blinds and put on some mood music, for example — from any handheld device, or use voice commands with the help of assistants like Google Home or Amazon Echo.



LEFT & ABOVE: Vivint doorbell-camera

WE'VE BEEN WORKING ON IT FOR YEARS, TRYING TO GET RID OF CLUTTERED REMOTES AND HAVE EVERYTHING ON ONE REMOTE.

Local companies that specialize in home automation offer a range of products that help homeowners control a variety of applications, but their expertise lies in integrating all your automated apps, using a central control platform.

Laurence Rosenberg, president of The Accurate Technology Group, likens a control platform to a symphony conductor.

"We take all those devices and we work them off a platform so they all work in harmony. You have one app that can control all those devices, but then it also has algorithms and logic so it can be programmed so you hit one button. We call it one-touch living," he says.

Sean Banks, of K&S Electronics, says integrated home automation is fully customizable, and the technology is becoming easier to use.

"We've been working on it for years, trying to get rid of cluttered remotes and have everything on one remote. Now, we're trying to get rid of cluttered apps on your phone," he says.

It seems everyone is buying the new home assistants from companies like Google and Amazon. However, you can't expect assistants to do the job of an integrated platform.

"Those work with singular things like an automated door lock or some light switches, but that is single automation, not integration," Rosenberg explains.




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Control4 panel with Amazon Echo

**VIDEO DOORBELLS
ARE A GREAT
CONVERSATION
STARTER, AND
THEY'RE SIMPLE,
INEXPENSIVE
DEVICES THAT
PROVIDE COMFORT
AND PEACE OF MIND.**

While security has been a significant part of home automation for decades, security and surveillance have become increasingly popular of late.

"I think residents are tired of the petty thefts of the vehicles,

Think of home assistants as a complement to an automation platform, enhancing the experience of an integrated system, Banks adds.

"It just ties into existing automation systems. It gives you the added feature of voice command; that's all it's really doing for you."

While voice-command devices have been around for a while, they have rapidly grown in popularity, in part because the technology has improved and is now more reliable. Rosenberg says people are also more accepting of smart-home technology these days.

"I think people feared the unknown, didn't really understand what it was in the past and were scared of technology. And now, technology's just evolved into everyone's life so much that that fear of the unknown is gone and it's more now an interest in the unknown," he says.

breaking into garages, that kind of thing," Banks says. "We've seen a huge increase in security over the last year."

Rosenberg says video doorbells are a great conversation starter, and they're simple, inexpensive devices that provide comfort and peace of mind.

The technology is constantly evolving and Banks and Rosenberg stay abreast of the best new additions, with a focus on those that make customers' lives easier.

The greatest advantage to having an automated home is the ability to create pre-sets for everyday tasks. Turning off lights, lowering room temperature and locking the doors can be done by pressing a single button or simply by saying, "Goodnight, Alexa."



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