

Commercial
INTEGRATOR

SOLUTIONSERIES

**MEET THE
2015 CI
Industry
Leaders**

TOP 5 K-12 INTEGRATORS



Why are K-12 schools and districts in good hands with your integration firm?

Last fall, Signet Electronics used an opportunity in its home state to deliver a powerful message of what the company can offer K-12, responding to and posting a PDF link to the *Massachusetts Task Force Report on School Safety and Security* presented to the administration of then-Gov. Deval Patrick. Noting its 40 years of experience, the integrator hit upon the leading issue K-12 clients continuously face and marketed “The Signet Solution” featuring five layers of a district-wide, electronic safety solution.

Signet spells out up front that it “will phase in your systems-solutions over multiple budget cycles.” Without getting into specifics, the five layers address actionable response to: notify; validate/escalate; monitor, command and control; record; and access remotely.

Denver-area Beacon Communications experienced a surge following the Columbine tragedy in 1999 that really hasn’t slowed as the integrator continues to prove its value to the K-12 community. “What they wanted

from us was to be able to talk to the rooms, and listen and monitor each of the rooms,” says semi-retired managing partner and CEO Michael Hester. “Intercom [sales] went through the roof. We’ve sold about 800 school systems — over 50 a year for 17 years.

“We serviced and we serviced and we serviced, and we responded to everybody.”

—MICHAEL HESTER,
BEACON COMMUNICATIONS

“We serviced and we serviced and we serviced, and we responded to everybody,” Hester says. “So now, when jobs come to bid, and schools do still have to bid, the spec says, ‘It shall be Beacon,’ and the phone number is there.”

“We are investing heavily in training. Well-trained employees are able to replicate consistent installation over and over. Our customer services staff works together very

closely to continue to improve the training experience for the customer,” says Ray Bailey, president, Lone Star Communications

What challenges are you facing in 2015?

Sharp’s Audio Visual recently became a SMART Technologies Certified Training Centre in three provinces, underscoring its expertise in SMART Boards for collaborative learning environments and various teaching styles of today’s classrooms.

“It is very hard to find people to provide the level of service that our customers have come to expect. As a result we have addressed this by providing training from the day an employee starts and to continuously train,” says Bailey of the task of finding talent.

“[We] just expanded into Texas, Alabama, Tennessee. With new territories come new challenges,” says Julie Solomon, marketing manager at CCS Presentation Systems, adding that the firm is “working to consolidate services and operations between locations.” CI

Reported by Arlen Schweiger

THE TOP FIVE	No. of Locations	No. of Employees	Years in Business	Total Commercial Integration Revenue 2014	Revenue Under Contract Percentage	Number of 2014 Installs	PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE* DERIVED FROM											
							Corporate	K-12	Higher Ed	Health Care	Hotels/Casinos	Restaurants/Bars	HOW	Government	Retail	Sports Venues	Museums	
Beacon Communications Englewood, Colo. beaconcom.com	1	80	17	\$14,000,000	15%	150	5%	20%	5%	60%	—	—	—	10%	—	—	—	
CCS Presentation Systems Scottsdale, Ariz. ccsprojects.com	26	350	24	\$110,604,497	15%	5,517	65%	15%	5%	3%	5%	—	—	15%	—	2%	—	
Lone Star Communications Grand Prairie, Texas lonestarc.com	1	71	24	\$19,126,090	9%	27	—	22%	—	78%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Sharp's Audio Visual Calgary, Alberta sharpsav.com	7	140	92	\$50,000,000	10%	DNP	35%	20%	21%	5%	2%	—	3%	16%	—	—	—	
Signet Electronic Systems Norwell, Mass. www.signetgroup.net	3	131	41	\$31,800,000.00	81%	DNP	—	35%	5%	30%	—	—	—	30%	—	—	—	

*Percentages provided by firms and may not add up to 100. DNP = did not provide.