

What Every Technician Should Know:

How to Evaluate Your Structured Cabling Installer

Choosing the Contractor

A key decision in the data center network is choosing a contractor for the installation. Some key questions that need to be addressed before selecting a contractor are:

1. How long has the contractor been in business?
2. Is structured cabling the contractor's core business?
3. What percentage of the contractor's business is from structured cabling?
4. Does the contractor install fiber optic cable and hardware?
5. Does the contractor have a market expertise in data centers or server farms?
6. Does the contractor have adequate insurance and bonding?
7. Does the contractor belong to professional organizations, such as BICSI?
8. Is the contractor certified by any manufacturers? Is that certification current?
9. Does the contractor have approvals and licenses from unions as well as safety and construction boards?
10. Which manufacturers does the contractor represent?
11. Does the contractor offer references?



Key Areas of Expertise

The fiber optic contractor should be able to work with the customer in each structured cabling project through these three key areas:



1. Network Design

A good contractor should be able to assist with the design process. The contractor should be able to help the customer:

1. Choose the correct optical fibers (OM3, OM4, OS2)
2. Choose the correct optical cables (outside plant, inside, riser, plenum)
3. Choose the correct hardware (high-density, connector type)
4. Choose the correct vendors
5. Understand standards (TIA-942)

2. Installation

A good contractor should also be able to assist throughout the installation process. The contractor should be able to help the customer:

1. Purchase, receive, inspect and bring components to the work site
2. Choose the components that they have been trained to install
3. Install the cabling system according to the manufacturer's standard recommended procedures.

The technicians actually doing the installation should be trained and certified by manufacturers of the products being installed or by industry associations such as:

1. BICSI
2. FOA (The Fiber Optic Association)

Certification is important and protects the end user.

3. Post Installation

The contractor should be able to:

1. Complete testing and document the results.
2. Effectively troubleshoot any issues discovered during testing.
3. Perform restoration work as required.

All of these items must be discussed with the contractor before work begins. The contractor and customer need to agree on what is covered in the scope of work. For example, testing may be included, but troubleshooting and restoration may not be included. It is good to have a clear understanding with the contractor on what items will be covered.

