

DON'T CALL IT A SMART HOME



**Jan Vitrofsky—
a trailblazer in
advanced electronic
solutions for
both commercial
and residential
spaces—thinks that
tech-infusions and
wellness have been
overplayed in our
daily lives. So where
do we go from here?**

BY OMAR SOMMEREYNS

D“PEOPLE DON’T WANT smart homes anymore—people want *dumb* homes,” says Jan Vitrofsky, founder and CEO of HEDSouth, with a cheeky smirk.

But people still want control within their households, right? And convenience and efficiency? Yes, but no, Vitrofsky continues. We’re over-saturated with digital screens and technology, he insists. It’s gotta all stop somewhere.

But didn’t he create a company that helps businesses and homeowners streamline their entertainment, health and wellness, lighting, shade, and smart-home-control systems throughout Florida? Isn’t what he’s saying antithetical to his own business?

“OK, here’s the deal: The terminology of smart homes has been played out already. OK? It’s been going on forever;” he tells **AQUA**.

OK.

“Now, a dumb home doesn’t mean there aren’t any systems that are easy to operate and well-integrated, but people want less technology in their homes. And I’ve noticed that this is especially true in the upper luxury market because many of these people have already built a home; they’ve already done it—and they don’t want all the tech anymore.”

“They want to simplify their

lives and have an easier way of doing stuff with technology,” he adds. “So I like saying that we’ve become dumb-home specialists, and that makes people chuckle because everyone referred to us is all about how great we are at doing smart homes.”

FOCUSING ON INNOVATION

Vitrofsky’s background in the electronics industry—and the people he crossed paths with throughout his career—have positioned him to stake a leadership claim in providing innovative electronic solutions to both commercial and residential clients.

“I grew up taking stuff apart and putting it back together,” he says. “And because I had an older sister and it was the ‘60s, I got into music.” Stereo systems captivated his curiosity further. Shunning college, he got a job at a gas station, saved up funds, and bought his first system.

“I really vibed with the people who ran that stereo store,” he says. So he got a job there, working his way up until he was recruited by the eminent Henry Kloss, an audio engineer and entrepreneur who had invented (along with Edgar Villchur) the first acoustic suspension loudspeaker.

“Henry had also come up with the concept of the big-



screen TV, but this was before surround sound, when the biggest TV you could buy was 25 inches,” Vitrofsky recalls. “So, he invented this thing that had a six-and-a-half foot screen, and I took a job at his company for \$15,000 a year to be an assistant in the sales department, and eventually became the national sales manager.”

He got nationwide exposure traveling around the country—teaching people how to sell the home-cinema experience. He stayed at that company for three years but then decided that he wanted to be an entrepreneur and start his own business. “And my thought,” he says, “was the best place in the world to do that was New York.”

By the time he’d moved south to the tropics and set up shop in South Florida in the late



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'90s—HED stands for “Home Entertainment Design”—he was confident he could dominate the market here.

Since then, he's gathered an impressive list of heavy-hitter brands and private clients, from ABC and CBS to Sony, Disney, and even the White House, along with several luxury residential projects (usually brought to him by an architect, a builder, or an interior designer). His installations always feature the vanguard of consumer electronics and luxe labels, including Sonos for music seamlessly playing in every space, Sony for high-end video entertainment, Lutron for lighting and custom motorized shades, and Crestron for complete, easy-to-use control interfaces that can be accessed both on- and off-premises.

THE PILLARS OF WELLNESS (IN YOUR HOME)

As defined by Vitrofsky, home automation is “taking technology and making the quality of life in your home simpler and better.” But he's driven by more than mere automation: “How do you take human beings, put them inside a piece of real estate, and how does that space or environment affect their quality of life?”

Just under seven years ago, a company in New York called Delos approached him. “They had developed the WELL Building Standard™ [a benchmark for health and well-being elements inserted into buildings], and they had started doing this kind of narrative in the commercial world. Then, they made the move into the

luxury residential sector. And I'm one of the grandpas of that business. So I worked with them to develop a platform of wellness for the home.”

Vitrofsky identified a set of pillars that need to be addressed to create a holistic sense of wellness within one's household: air, water, lighting, and circadian rhythms. “These key pillars are essential for wellness within a residential environment,” he says. “It's all about the air you breathe, the water you drink, the lighting you sit in, and the color temperature associated with your circadian rhythm for sleep and comfort.”

And this brings us back to the concept of dumb homes that Vitrofsky likes to throw around. Because for some—maybe many—people these days, wellness may imply convenience,

efficiency, and automation with technology—just not *too* much of it. Too much of anything's generally not healthy anyway. “Everything in moderation,” as the old adage goes.

“Wellness, too, was such a hot topic during and right after the pandemic that what transpired was something called ‘well-washing,’” Vitrofsky points out. “Everyone was getting hip to wellness. Wellness was the thing. There were even wellness television sets. There was wellness this, wellness that. Everybody was putting the wellness narrative into their product. And that has somewhat diluted the reality of what, from a health perspective, wellness is all about.”

During the South Florida summer—as residents shut themselves in amidst unbearably muggy heat and heavy rains flooding the streets—Vitrofsky thinks it's critical to assess what home wellness means to you, individually. “People down here rarely open their windows so the quality of the air they're breathing inside their homes is recirculated stuff,” he says. “Part of the wellness there could be having the cleanest possible air going through their AC system.”

Jumping off that, Vitrofsky thinks that finding a balance between a relatively smart home and more organic aspects is vital to finding your sense of wellness in your residence.

“The best way to do that is to aggregate technologies together under one user experience,” he says. “So having a simple-to-operate interface that controls the lights, the music, the thermostats—all of those things, all within that one app—should help you enjoy a better quality of life.”

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