

Easier home electrical planning

Helping any new home owner reach decisions regarding product selection and the layout of their electrical installation can be a trying and time consuming task.

“From the moment you start putting together an installation plan there can be all sorts of problems. Maybe the client wants an extra socket somewhere, or wants to upgrade from the traditional plain white fittings. Before you know it the plan’s changed, the take off’s wrong and the counts are out and it’s costing you money,” says Schneider Electric’s BJ Hughes.

“With the new PDL Planner software, these problems disappear, the design is finalised a lot quicker and your customer ends up with a fit-out that suits their needs better. They’re also happy to spend extra if required to get their electrical plan right as they can see the benefits of additional fittings more easily.

The new Windows-based PDL Planner software package is available for an annual fee of \$250 and is designed to speed up not just the planning process but also quoting, ordering, and archiving.



Driving the PDL Planner’s development and introduction for Schneider Electric are BJ Hughes and Hayden Williams

“All you do is enter a plan or drawing of the house into your laptop and drag and drop fittings exactly where they need to be. These can be easily moved around, added to or

deleted as you and your client clarify where furniture and facilities will go along with the attendant outlets, switches and accessories,”



says Hughes, Schneider Electric’s national wholesale channel manager.

If you are working with a builder constructing pre-designed homes you simply create a re-usable template once for each house plan, call it up for every new job and your base design is ready in seconds to put before your client.

Hughes says most of the planning can be done before a walk-through so when you arrive on site you can show the home owner clearly where everything should go then adapt the plan as needed.

“Just in time alone, you’d save the annual licence fee on the first installation.”

Contractor Rob Bos of Bos Electrical has been involved with PDL Planner since the concept was developed. He says he saw the potential right from the start.

“When we first heard about Planner from Schneider Electric we were actually looking at getting a CAD system, but you’ve got to be an engineer to drive it. With PDL Planner we can do what we wanted to do a



By dragging and dropping selected product items onto the plan, the Bill of Materials is updated and the installation costs are adjusted and displayed automatically

lot easier and without CAD training.

“It’s saved a huge amount of time as we can begin plans before the walk-through. It gives us more control as it’s easy to make, amend and store plans, so everything’s sorted on the plan before the sparkies start. The onscreen presentation and the printouts look professional, it’s a lot faster and saves a lot of time putting the plans together.”

Hughes says Planner helps demonstrate to homeowners how fittings will work in their homes and all different circuit types can be displayed together or as layers, and printed separately. With product options only a click away including pictures of the entire PDL range of domestic products, you can show and advise new home builders how they can make their homes more complete and they can make better informed decisions more quickly.

He says because Planner is fully interactive clients can easily visualise features in

their new home and are more confident to make decisions. Much of this confidence comes from seeing how the price of the installation changes on-screen every time they add or remove a product from the plan.

"You are in full control of pricing on every project," says Hughes. "When you set up each job, you select the margins you want and what the customers see is the installed price with cabling and labour estimates already incorporated. With pricing fixed and more transparent, customers also feel a lot more in control and they buy more."

Costs for non-PDL products such as downlights can be entered into the Planner software, so one invoice can be sent for the entire job.

A key feature for contractor Kevin Rasmussen is the bill of materials which is compiled as products are added to or changed in the plans.

"It's a huge time saver," he says. "At all times customers know exactly what they're spending and if they want to change anything later on everything changes at the press of a



When customers can see the product options and locate them where they want them, they can better visualise their new home. With cost estimates immediately available they can select any PDL range and sell themselves up to a higher value design



required for paper-based systems.

Rasmussen says that Planner helps them look good in front of their customers offering modern electrical solutions for modern homes.

"It's a lot more professional. The biggest thing is the customer feedback we get. Because it looks very professional they go away with their name on the plan thinking they're a bit special and they show their friends. That's definitely good for business."

Hands-on solution

The development of the software was driven in response to needs expressed by electricians.

"Contractors are an essential part of our industry and we wanted to help them by putting together a 'hands on' tool," says Hughes.

"PDL Planner has been designed and built by electricians, not by IT people so it's a user friendly product for real world situations. At every stage we kept asking

ourselves: could the typical guy drive this?"

"We know that when it comes to the hands on stuff, sparkies have it under control. The idea was to come up with something that would help save time on planning and administering jobs, add value and improve efficiency. We believe that Planner addresses these issues."

PDL Planner can be fully customised to suit the specific needs of any contractor in less than an hour and a half – this includes setting up supplier and wholesaler information. Available through lease agreement for \$250 per year the PDL Planner software comes complete with training, maintenance, technical support and upgrades at no extra cost. ■



All PDL accessories designed for residential use are available for selection in the PDL Planner

button including the Bill of Materials. That stops you getting to the job and saying 'oh no, we're two of these short.' With the BOM feature alone we'd easily save an hour and a half on each job."

This is especially helpful where the new modular Modena and Strato ranges are used. All the components required for pre-assembly are automatically included so nothing is missed.

Additional Features

Planner does not replace existing software packages or systems such as accounting, estimating and quoting programs, but is designed to work alongside or integrate with them.

As well as making it easier to formulate installation plans, Planner offers a number of other features.

"Data can be exported to other programs like our quoting module and it fits in really well with our current system," says Bos.

Plans can also be archived and re-used as template models, speeding up future projects and reducing the amount of storage

For more information contact ask at your nearest electrical wholesaler or contact:

Schneider Electric Customer Care

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