ASK BO

Keep It Straight!

By D.A. "Bo"Conrad, RCDD

Rules for properly labeling cables BEFORE installation are covered in this datacom tutorial.

Q. What is the proper methodology for labeling cable before a pull?

A. Some installers pull cable without labeling either the boxes or the cable. Their justification is that it takes more time to do the labeling than to identify the cables later via the "tone and probe" process.

Don't believe it! Properly labeling each cable

1. reduces redundancy,
2. ensures proper location and application,
3. helps direct the cable through the proper sleeve in the IDF, and
4. routes the cable along the ladder racking to the assigned patch panel or IDC cross connect (110, BIX, 66, or Krone LSA).

Labels are even more vital when all of the cables are the same color or the drops have different outlet quantities. Without them, spaghetti messes are sure to occur.

PULLING TECHNIQUES

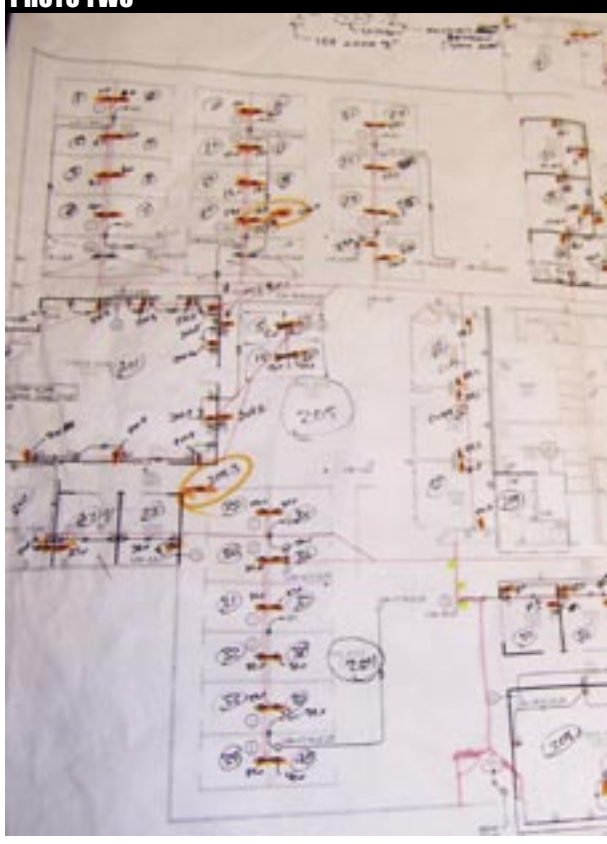
My favorite technique is to pull the cables from the workstations—8 to 12 at a time. Pull the longest runs first. It allows you to better calculate the number of pulls necessary for each location.

Instead of stacking boxes in the IDF, move used boxes to the hallway or to shorter-pull locations.

Most manufacturers offer a method for

PHOTO ONE

PHOTO TWO



calculating the amount of remaining cable. This requires you to look at both ends of the cable for the footage/meter markings in the pull box or on the spool.

Blueprints and specifications will dictate the labeling scheme. The pattern should follow ANSI/TIA/EIA 606 Administration standards. SEE PHOTO ONE

Accordingly, the first number should dictate the closet location. Then there should be a dash mark and a number identifying the work area's specific outlet location.

For example, "1-218.2.D3" means IDF (Telecommunications Room) "1"—WA Work Area "218", ".2" location in the room, and ".D3" outlet.

WHO DOES THE LABELING?

In addition, it's a good idea to specify different color cables with matching jacks: Blue, White, Grey and Green. This eliminates the need for a fourth number.

ONE lead technician (or two for large projects) should be responsible for labeling and cutting cables. Remaining techs can do the pulling.

If more than one person is labeling and cutting, use painters tape to mark each outlet in the room or cubicle per the blue prints. This helps eliminate the need to hand off blueprints between techs. SEE PHOTO TWO

Referencing the blueprints or tape, mark each cable AND pull box/spool with a Sharpie, identifying the work area where it is being pulled from. SEE PHOTO ONE

IS IT A 6—OR A 9?

To maintain a consistent 18- to 24-inch length, place the end of the cable near your elbow. Mark the cable in your hand vertically downward.

Here's how to avoid confusing your 6s and 9s: Make two dashes underneath the number to identify the bottom of the marking. SEE PHOTO THREE

Tape multiple cable pulls together. Even when this taped end is cut off in the IDF, there will be enough excess to find the markings.

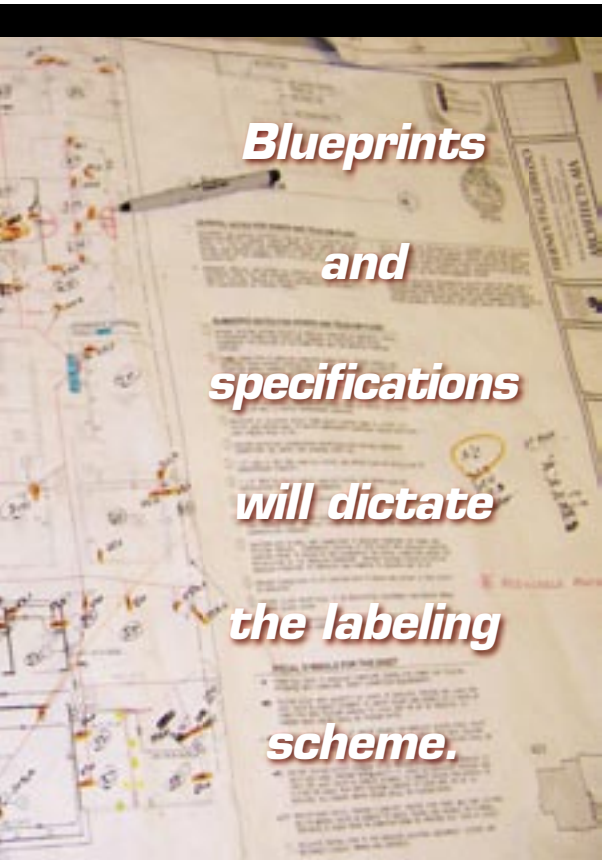


PHOTO THREE

Got Questions About Datacom?

Bo Conrad, a BICSI-certified instructor, will answer them. To have your question answered in ***Power Outlet*** e-mail us at **Poweroutlet@rexelusa.com** and put "Ask Bo" in the subject line.

PHOTO FOUR

PHOTO FIVE

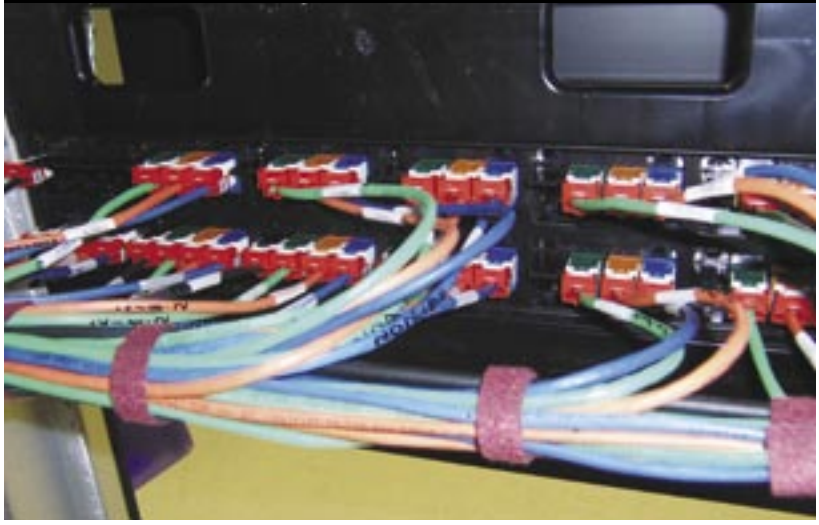


PHOTO SIX

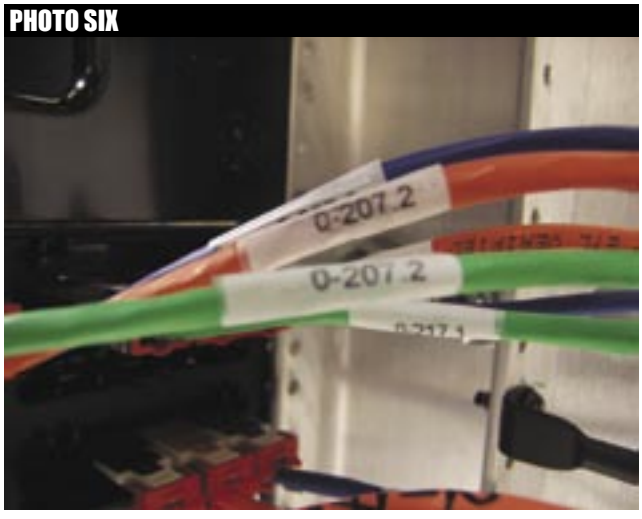


PHOTO SEVEN

After a pull, allow enough access at the work area for a service loop and routing down the wall (or power pole) plus 12 inches. **SEE PHOTO FOUR**

If the lead technician marks the cable work area end in the same manner, the label ID will be facing you when you pull it from the cutout or electrical box.

USE ONE LABELING APPROACH!

Consistency is vital. Different labeling techniques can cause major confusion in the field. **SEE PHOTO FIVE**

Some specifications require that cables have a Mylar-wrap label before final walkthrough. Having the cables pre-labeled make this process much easier! **SEE PHOTO SIX**

Also, having a systematic method for labeling the cables helps to finalize the labeling process for the front of the patch panels. **SEE PHOTO SEVEN**

Conrad, a BICSI-certified trainer, has a bachelor's degree in engineering and an MBA. His company, Crossbow Communications (www.crossbowcom.com) is licensed by BICSI to conduct the Professional Cable installer program. See other "Datacom Q&A" questions (and answers) online at www.rexelusa.com.

MORE 'ASK BO'—ONLINE

See Rexel's online E-Zine for more answers from Bo Conrad on datacom and telecom topics. Find the E-zine at www.rexelusa.com/ezines.aspx. Navigate to the "Ask Bo" online archives (which have different questions and answers from what has appeared in the magazine) by clicking on the link you'll find at the URL above.