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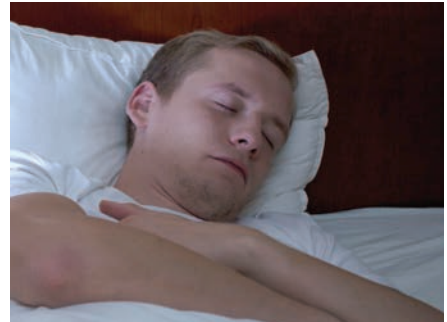
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ERA HEADQUARTERS OFFICE

Phone: 312-419-1432

Fax: 312-419-1660

Email: info@era.org • URL: era.org

Chief Executive Officer:

Walter E. Tobin

wtobin@era.org

Editor:

Neda Simeonova

nsimeonova@era.org

Consulting Editor:

Tess Hill

thill@era.org

Advertising Manager:

Stephanie Tierney

stierney@era.org

Cover:

Katherine Green

In Bits

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SPRING 2017

ROBOTS AMONG US

**Technology's Impact
and Influence
on the Evolution
of Human Life**



In 2016, using various main stream news sources, I began capturing interesting technology developments that I thought would be important drivers of the ongoing demand for electronic components. My objective was to build out some material to share during the TTI Breakfast Briefing at EDS to support my optimistic projections for the electronics industry. I wasn't far into the project when some common themes became obvious. There is a lot going on in the world that will significantly change how we live in the world tomorrow. For instance, the next wave of automation has its sights set on jobs well beyond the manual, highly repetitive manufacturing jobs that the last wave crashed over. The observations that follow are delivered as a tenured individual working in the electronic component supply chain, not as an employee of TTI, the component supply chain company I work for.

Mainstream media is full of news on tech advancements clumped under a couple of mega, overlapping categories: the advance of automation, the proliferation of medtech and the emergence of artificial intelligence. Countless articles on these topics can be found in obvious places like Wired Magazine, Scientific American and Popular Science Magazine. But they are just as common occurrences in the pages of Forbes, Fortune, Newsweek and Vanity Fair. This is equally true for virtually every newspaper. All are full of arresting images of robots that look and move like people, and robots that are performing intricate surgeries on peoples' hearts, joints, eyes and even brains.

Automation deployment

In many ways, robotics is the ultimate physical manifestation of automation. As mentioned, robots in manufacturing are nothing new. Nor are robots in service industries ... think ATM machines, which do the work of bank tellers, kiosks that do the work of airline ticket counter people, or self-serve gas pumps that arrived in the '60s to replace millions of gas station attendants. What is in the news is the accelerated deployment of automation that displaces human workers in grocery stores, fast food restaurants, bars, hotels and many other people-intensive, service-oriented businesses.

Self-driving cars are another modern-day news staple. A self-driving car is simply a robot with wheels. They are among us already, and the big auto companies are firmly committed to the concept. Leading the charge are the new

It is safe to say that the not too distant future of ground-based, personal transportation is going to be autonomous, electric and shared.



About Michael Knight

Michael Knight is a senior vice president of TTI Americas, a Berkshire Hathaway subsidiary, and is responsible for product management, corporate marketing and sales for key vertical markets. Michael has worked in the electronic components industry since the mid-1980s. Prior to TTI Americas, he worked for a number of distributors and component manufacturers, including a manufacturers' rep firm in Northern California. He has held a variety of national and global leadership roles in sales, marketing, operations and general management. In the late 90s, Michael launched a successful tech start-up in the semiconductor materials space.

app-based companies that are revolutionizing the industry — like Uber and Lyft — who see the technology as a way to remove the half million-plus people who drive for them from their business models. At this point, it is safe to say that the not too distant future of ground-based, personal transportation is going to be autonomous, electric and shared.

But even these companies are likely to suffer some disruption in the process as autonomous flying cars are racing to market in parallel with their earthbound counterparts. Right now, a trial is being run in Dubai of an autonomous flying taxi service using vehicles manufactured by a Chinese company. Whether it rolls or flies, both forms of vehicles have the same obstacles and requirements before becoming the de facto way we move around — the accumulation of enough safety data to satisfy the government bodies that need to rewrite the related rules, regulations, standards and laws that are necessary to integrate these people-moving-robots into the public space. Today, only California, Michigan

(continued on next page)

COVER STORY: Robots among us

(continued from previous page)

and Florida have proposals in motion to legalize the use of fully driverless vehicles for transportation of passengers.

Alongside this is an effort to bring autonomous trucks and ships to our roads and waterways. The technical and regulatory challenges are probably going to be more quickly overcome than those for cars, so chances are we'll have self-driving long-haul and delivery trucks among us even sooner.

Impact on employment

The unemployment ramifications of the self-driving vehicles are staggering. For example, there are more than 3.5 million people in the U.S. who drive a truck of some sort for a living, according to the American Trucking Association. It is the number one full-time occupation in most states in our nation. The average

annual salary of a truck driver per the Bureau of Labor Statistics is \$40,000, which is higher than almost half of all tax filers. Beyond the drivers themselves, there is an infrastructure of businesses built to support the industry that is going to be squashed. A prime example is the nationwide network of truck stops. These businesses employ an estimated additional 5.2 million people. And beyond truckers, there are millions of more people driving taxis, limos, shuttle buses and ambulances, with infrastructure businesses behind them employing millions more, all of whom face the same future.

What about all the people in the auto insurance business? One of the core promises of self-driving vehicles is that they are inherently safer than human driven vehicles. They are immune to the four major causes of accidents: distraction, drowsiness, drunkenness and driver error. In fact, the future may very well be accident and death-by-vehicle free (a concept widely promoted by both Toyota and Volvo), in which case insurance will no longer be required. Even if there remains some need for it, if all the vehicles are owned by the vehicle manufacturers or transportation companies, which is exactly what is predicted, then the insurance will be carried by them, and the cost is certain to be a fraction of what it is today. In the U.S. alone, this will be very disruptive for the \$150-plus billion insurance industry, according to the Insurance Industry Institute.

How likely is this to happen? The technology and regulatory piece of the puzzle aside, the personal math will make us ready and willing, and industry will make us able. Our cars are not in use 95 percent of the time. Assuming an average new car cost of \$33,560 (per Kelley Blue Book), which will lose 60 percent of its total value in the first five years, some simple math shows the following:

During five years, a typical car is used 91 days or a total of 2,190 hours at an upfront, out-of-pocket cost of \$20,136 (60 percent of the \$33,560 assuming that cash was paid, a lot more if the car was financed), which works out to a baseline cost of \$9.19 per hour. Add to that the average annual operating cost of a car (gas, maintenance, insurance, etc.) of \$8,698 (per AAA), which works out to be \$19.85 per hour used. Add it up, and we are on average spending at least \$29 an hour to own, operate and garage our personal vehicles. The new transportation paradigm is centered on the idea of paying only

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COVER STORY, CON'T

6 Spring 2017 | The Representor



Michael Jacobsen
President
Jacobsen Associates, Inc.

With so many ERA members, it is not easy to get to know every rep, manufacturer and distributor in the business. "Someone You Should Know" is The Representor department that gives readers the chance to learn about fellow ERA members, including how their time is spent both in and out of the office.

Meet Michael Jacobsen, president of Jacobsen Associates Inc., a second-generation, family-owned and operated company located in Horsham, Pa.

The Representor asked Michael a few questions about his time in the rep business and his experiences with ERA. Here is what he had to say.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I live and grew up in the northeast suburbs of Philadelphia. I am a graduate of Bloomsburg University located in northcentral Pennsylvania. I majored in marketing with double minors in business administration and economics. I spent my years prior to joining the rep business working in advertising.

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace?

I am a bit of a history buff and am fascinated with World War II, the Civil War, Ancient Rome, as well as Norse and Roman mythology. I like to draw and paint, enjoy playing golf, and spend as much time as I can at the Jersey shore.

How long have you been an ERA member and how long in the rep business?

Jacobsen Associates, Inc. (JAI) has been a part of ERA for more than 35 years. I joined JAI eight years ago and ERA shortly thereafter. I really enjoy being in the rep business. I like the flexibility of being able to manage my time and yet have the ability to change direction on a moment's notice. I enjoy working with the principals, customers, distributors and getting to know other reps throughout the industry. It is such a great group of people, and I feel honored to be a part of it.

How did you become interested in being a rep in the electronics industry?

I grew up in the industry. Some of my earliest memories are of putting our company address labels on principal literature. I remember when my father first started the business in our home; we transformed our living room and front porch into a suite of offices. We had an interview for a product line, and my father had to lock our Irish Setter in the Suburban in our back yard so they wouldn't hear him barking. We got the line and still have it to this day.

The first 10 years of my career were spent working in marketing and advertising. After college, I wanted to establish myself outside of the family business and I did well, working my way up to running the advertising department for a business credit card company. We designed those wonderful credit card solicitations you get in the mail (you are welcome). In 2008, the company went from more than a 1,000 employees down to less than 100. I was one of the last to go before they closed doors. I had

several opportunities to continue working in advertising, but JAI's business was expanding. I had always had a strong desire to be in business for myself and thought it presented a great opportunity.

What have you found to be most rewarding about the rep business?

There is no doubt that the rep business is a huge challenge. Technology changes at such a rapid pace, and Michael Knight's presentation at the latest ERA Conference in Austin, Texas, certainly highlighted that fact. You have to find ways to differentiate yourself and continue to evolve in this business. I enjoy meeting with fellow reps throughout the country, creating lasting friendships, and learning best practices from one another, as well as through the many resources ERA has to offer.

Briefly describe your rep firm.

JAI is an interconnect, passive and electromechanical rep firm with a design-in focus covering the Mid-Atlantic and Chesapeake markets. We are a second-generation, family-owned and operated company, and we are proud to say that we represent companies that have been with us for more than 30 years.

What recent innovations, best practices and/or changes has your company made?

Over the past few years we have redesigned our website, line card and created a LinkedIn company page. We developed principal-specific banner ads embedded into our emails. We have created email and direct mail marketing campaigns and utilize resources such as EverNote, DropBox, Constant Contact, Hoovers and Lexis Nexis. We are always exploring new ways to promote the companies that we represent and finding new ways to communicate effectively and efficiently with our customers.

What have you learned and/or what contacts have you made through ERA that have had the greatest positive impacts on you and/or your business?

I really respect the leadership in ERA. They have done a tremendous job to revitalize the organization. Events such as EDS and the ERA Conference provide so much opportunity to get to know fellow reps and learn from one another. It's hard not to respect self-made individuals who are willing to share their great ideas.

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Preparation is essential

by John Beaver



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Whether you are playing in the World Series, running for President of the United States or interviewing for a new line, the outcomes will all have two things in common. Number one is that there is no prize for second place. And number two is that, although preparation won't guarantee your success, the lack of preparation will almost certainly guarantee your failure.

I have had the opportunity to interview for some very powerful and lucrative product lines over the years. When it was a line I really, really wanted, I usually got it, and the way I got it was preparation.

The first part of preparation is to understand the audience to whom you will be presenting, and also to understand who will be the decision-maker. You want to be sure that your presentation addresses the concerns of the audience so they won't throw up roadblocks. But you especially want to be sure that you address the concerns of the decision-maker.

The decision-maker could be the national sales manager or vice president of sales who is thinking, "Will hiring John put me on track to hit my forecast and make my bonus?" It could be the

regional manager who is thinking, "My territory is foundering. Will hiring John turn things around so I can keep my job?" Or it could be the president who is thinking, "The venture capitalists who financed this company want to get this company ready for sale so they can take back their equity. Will hiring John help me make the company more salable?"

How do I find out? I ask questions before the interview, carefully but purposefully, to find out whom I need to give special attention to and what they need to know to be comfortable giving GSA Optimum their line.

What are the elements of a good presentation? With your audience in mind, these are the things you need to be sure to cover.

1. How does this line fit with the other lines on my line card? If it is not synergistic to our current products, what could we do to offer to build some additional synergistic lines around it on our line card?

2. How will we reinvest the commission from existing sales in the territory to build this manufacturer's sales? And in the rare case where we take on a pioneering line, what can we do to build

sales without existing income?

3. We share what we have learned about their company and their competitors, so they know we have done our homework.

4. We talk to our own current customers who might be candidates to buy this product to get market information about whose product they currently buy and, we hope, what they pay. We can present the prospective principal with market intelligence they didn't have and demonstrate our value.

5. We include our company's history of growth, but we remember to spend most of our time talking about their needs instead of our history.

6. A pie chart showing the markets your rep firm serves is pretty much expected in any good presentation, and they will probably want to know how their product fits with your top three or four lines. If you don't include it, they may take a guess at how well your firm fits their product, and they may guess in a way that is not to your advantage.

7. My salespeople need to be in the room. They aren't just hiring me. They are hiring my sales team, and they need a chance to know the people who will be presenting their products. (I'm also proud of my team, so I like to show them off!)

8. Let them know that you will give them a bound copy at the end of the presentation so they don't need to take notes, but don't give it to them until the presentation is over. If they are flipping through the pages of your presentation, they are not listening to you. And don't cheap out on the bound copy. If you can't do spiral binding and color printing in your office, have a local office supply store like Staples or FedEx print the bound copy.

9. Stand up to present. You can't slouch if you are not sitting down!

10. Send a thank-you email immediately, and ask what else they would need to know in order to hire your firm.

11. And mail a thank-you note by postal mail the same day you send the email. You will probably be the only rep who does, and that could be a tie breaker.

Remember, it isn't good enough just to be the best. You have to effectively communicate that you are the best, and the best way to communicate professionalism is by demonstrating that you have carefully prepared for this meeting. Unless you happen to be interviewing for a line that GSA Optimum also is interviewing for — in that case, I totally recommend that you wing it.



John Beaver

John Beaver founded GSA Optimum, Oakdale, New York, in 1984. The metropolitan New York/New Jersey independent manufacturers' representative firm has 33 employees covering Maine to Virginia out of its four offices. The agency specializes in electro-mechanical, electronic and electrical components. This growth can be partly attributed to his successful acquisition of six firms. In 2015, he began his tenure as a MANA Board member. He is also an active member of ERA and NEMRA. As a member of ERA, he serves as a national delegate and is the chairperson of ERA's New York chapter.

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**Save Feb 25-27, 2018,
for ERA's return to Austin, Texas, for its
49th Management & Marketing Conference!**

Optimism versus pessimism: Which camp are you in?

We just returned from a GREAT 48th ERA Management and Marketing Conference in Austin, Texas, where we experienced RECORD attendance with record first-timers. There was a great “buzz” about ERA and about our industry — so much so, that we will be DOING IT AGAIN in 2018!

The ERA Conference will be back in Austin at the AT&T Conference Center, Feb. 25 -27, 2018, so block out the dates and register early for what is going to be another great conference designed by YOU — our valued ERA member volunteers.

We had more than 60 ERA member volunteers who helped plan the 2017 conference. Do you want to help make 2018 even better? Join the Conference Planning Committee as we put 2018 together!

Along with all of this optimism at the conference, there was a great deal of uncertainty, perhaps even pessimism, about our industry, the political landscape, world affairs, rep commissions, “manufacturers going direct,” the role of field sales and engineers, branch offices, etc. These are real and serious issues for all of us to wrestle with as we run our perspective organizations.

How do we, or should we try and “balance” both emotions ... walk the fine line so to speak between optimism and pessimism? We all need to be open and honest with our organizations, our employees and even ourselves as to what persona we take on and present to the world.

On one hand, we need to run our businesses to the best of our abilities while all of these issues and challenges are coming at us

at light speed — if we even see them coming. How many do we miss and have to catch up and address after the fact? On the other hand, we need to be aware of the impact that our persona has on all whom we touch — our families, our “work families,” supplier partners, reps, channel partners and our customers.

If we walk around like the voice of doom, spreading negative vibes to everyone we come into contact with, we impact many folks, per-

haps without even knowing it. In some cases, this pessimism may cost us an order, a supplier, a relationship with our rep/channel partner or even a customer! No one likes to hang around or listen to pessimistic folks — they bring even the best of us down.

So, WE decide what camp we are in for 2017. Are we folks who try and overcome what is thrown at them and join the “Make Lemonade out of Lemons” camp, or are we the “Angels of Death” camp that spreads pessimism, fear, uncertainty and doubt to all they touch?

Personally, I want to make lemonade in 2017. At the same time, I am not naïve. These are real and serious issues that we are facing, no question about it. All of us are in the same boat with perhaps a few different versions of the same issue. It is time for us to try and bottle the excitement and esprit de corps that most felt at the conference and USE IT in the real world to address our challenges. We can start by working closer together as ONE INDUSTRY to do what is right for our partners and customers. If we can keep both happy, we will be OK!

Let’s make lots of lemonade in 2017!



by Walter E. Tobin
ERA CEO
e: wtobin@era.org
p: 617-901-4088

Along with all of this optimism at the conference, there was a great deal of uncertainty, perhaps even pessimism, about our industry, the political landscape, world affairs, rep commissions, “manufacturers going direct,” the role of field sales and engineers, branch offices, etc.

SAVE THE DATES!
ERA's conference is coming back in 2018 on Feb. 25-27 in a return to Austin, Texas, at the AT&T Conference Center.
Details coming soon!



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mikes@epitechnologies.com

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tomm@esareps.com

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jeff@huntsingergroup.com

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jdevine@lwpower.com

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tcollette@larsenwi.com

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Membership collaboration and involvement drive ERA forward

2017 will be an exciting year for ERA, and I feel most fortunate to take over as president during such a dynamic time for our association.

2016 saw a surge in membership as we added 95 new members, increased the ranks of representatives and manufacturers, and welcomed 11 distributors as this new category of membership was introduced. A number of world class distribution organizations joined to demonstrate their support for and belief in the value of manufacturers' representatives. We thank each new member for their support and look forward to delivering value to all who have joined our ranks.

The rep value

In the upcoming editions of *The Representor*, you will be seeing a series of articles centered around the theme, "Why Reps?" where manufacturers and distributors will share their perspectives on why and how the manufacturers' representative model provides value to their organizations.

Often, we talk about articulating the reps' value proposition and have a task force, in fact, working on data that can be presented to C level executives to help reinforce that value. The articles to follow will use the voice of industry leaders as they share with us why and how they have thrived working with manufacturers' representatives. Stay tuned for more to follow as we help reinforce that message through the perspectives of some very successful organizations.

Membership collaboration

2017 also will bring greater collaboration and local programming driven by all three of our constituent members. One of

our goals this year, and those to follow, is to increase the opportunities for member participation as we grow the deliverables to our membership through involvement by our membership. The best way to serve members of our association is by having members who serve!

Conference Committee

Many thanks to our 2017 Conference Committee who delivered a program rich in valuable content which drew a record crowd to Austin in February. The feedback from attendees has been received and reviewed, and all indications are that we are continuing to develop a strong momentum and delivering real value through our conferences.

ERA also has welcomed both a manufacturer and distributor to its Executive Committee (XCOM) as we've expanded the structure of our committee. Ken Bellero of Schaffner

and Chris Beeson of Digi-Key joined the XCOM effective in February and already have begun to provide input and guidance to our team. Both Digi-Key and Schaffner are best-in-class examples of organizations that support and value the rep model. We appreciate their willingness to serve and look forward to them helping shape our efforts to move ERA forward.

There is lots in store for 2017 to be sure. The best way for us to succeed together is through the participation of our members. We certainly face many challenges, but we are strongest together, so please raise your hands, get involved and help us drive OUR association forward in ways that serve our members and our industry! We welcome your participation!



by David Norris

Norris & Associates, Inc.

ERA President

e: dnorris@norrisrep.com

We certainly face many challenges, but we are strongest together, so please raise your hands, get involved and help us drive OUR association forward in ways that serve our members and our industry!



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www.metrotechreps.com

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www.pacentengineering.com
paul@pacentengineering.com

Prime Manufacturers Representative

www.pmr-rep.com
mwasiluk@pmr-rep.com

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www.sjassoc.com
info@sjassoc.com

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smhtmnco@aol.com

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www.sylvestersales.com

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Two ships may pass in the night but not commission-free

In certain industries, sales reps are accustomed to fighting tooth and nail to recover commissions from manufacturers, both during and after their representation. And in situations where the rep procured sales before termination that do not close until after — when a new rep is in place — the hunt for commission dollars can grow fierce, even cutthroat.

Surely, the upper crust world of yachting is above such unseemliness. The millionaire and billionaire customers occupying this segment of the social strata must dictate a more dignified and genteel marketplace. Double-dealing and selling behind the back of another are simply intolerable practices when the products involved are glistening, 64- and 78-foot luxury vessels. Surely?

As a recent California case demonstrates, visions of sales reps finding smooth sailing when seeking to recover commissions on yacht sales must be tossed overboard. The defendant on the winding voyage is the Taiwanese yacht manufacturer, Ocean Alexander Marine Yacht Sales or “OAMYS,” and the plaintiff cast adrift is Newport Beach yacht dealer Orange Coast Marine.

The sales of two ships procured by Orange Coast are at issue here.

Sale No. 1: The Halberda crossing

Orange Coast was appointed an independent dealer of OAMYS boats in Southern California with the right to receive a 6 percent commission on the total sales price of all sales to customers in the territory. When a Southern Cal customer named Halberda upgraded from his existing 47-foot Riviera to a new 64-footer from OAMYS, the commission payable to Orange Coast was complicated by his trade-in.

The commission on the cash portion of the deal was paid immediately, but as an OAMYS email made clear, the commission on the trade-in portion would await the sale of the Riviera boat. It took over a year for the trade-in to sell, reaping about \$635,000, and Orange Coast waited patiently for its payment. During this interim period, Orange Coast was terminated and replaced with a captive OAMYS dealership.

With the termination, OAMYS demanded that Orange Coast remove from its website statements claiming it was the exclusive dealer of OAMYS boats. The website statements

remained four months later, leading OAMYS to view this as leverage when Orange Coast finally inquired about its commission on the Riviera sale. OAMYS responded that it owed no further commission payment but would consider some “courtesy payment” if Orange Coast promptly changed its website.

Although Orange Coast then complied, no payment followed. Several months later, OAMYS answered a further Orange Coast inquiry by informing that fees were paid to an outside broker in connection with the Riviera sale.

Sale No. 2: The Smith passage

Well after the termination, an Orange Coast salesperson who previously sold the Smith family a 64-foot OAMYS yacht knew they were in the market for a replacement. The salesperson happened to meet an OAMYS manager at a shipyard and learned of a new 78-footer on its way, news he shared with the Smith mogul. Soon, the Orange Coast representative was taking Smith to the Lido Boat Show to tour the vessel, but not before he negotiated a four percent commission deal with OAMYS.

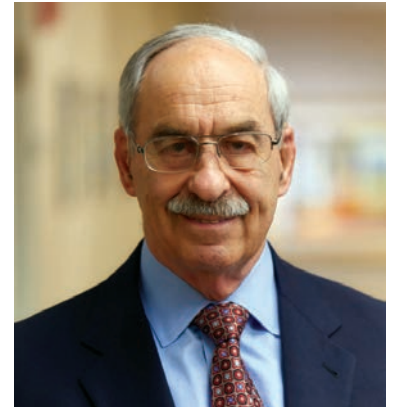
The OAMYS manager blocked the ship off from other attendees so the Orange Coast rep could make his sales pitch to Smith. The rep did his job well, and Smith told him the family was ready to make an offer, using their existing boat as a trade-in. Here is where it gets good.

Because the Orange Coast rep did not have a sales contract on him, he scurried to get one at the office located three miles away. Not long after he left, Smith called him to say he would no longer be “involved in the negotiations.” Instead, the Smiths would deal with OAMYS directly.

The next call, of course, was from the OAMYS manager to say he would be unable to pay more than three percent on this sale. After Orange Coast refused the deduction, the purchase directly from OAMYS proceeded, and no commission payment was made.

The ensuing squall

Orange Coast filed suit in Orange County to recover the unpaid commission on both yacht sales. OAMYS defended not on the



by Gerald M. Newman
ERA General Counsel

Gerald M. Newman, partner in the law firm of Schoenberg, Finkel, Newman & Rosenberg, LLC, serves as general counsel to ERA and is a regular contributor to The Representor. He participates in Expert Access, the program that offers telephone consultations to ERA members.

Gerry co-authored this article with his partner, Adam Glazer.

You can call Gerry Newman or Adam Glazer at 312-648-2300 or send email to gerald.newman@sfnr.com or adam.glazer@sfnr.com.



Adam Glazer

(continued on page 23)



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Dan Jakubowski
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Michael Pecar, CPMR
mpecar@mikepecarsales.com
248-608-2660

Mike McAuliffe Sales Inc.

Mike McAuliffe
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248-545-7177

TMC - Technology Marketing Corporation

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mfolk@tmcc.com
248-592-0814

R. C. Merchant & Co., Inc.

J. Brook Merchant, CPMR
bmerchant@rcmerchant.com
248-476-4600

R. O. Whitesell & Assoc.

Brad Thinnies, CPMR
brad_thinnies@whitesell.com
248-348-5454

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954-752-1700

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Contact: Pat Walsh
jp@cbxelectronics.com
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Contact: Barry Farber
bfarber@hhpai.com
407-468-0841

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Contact: Keith Bonucchi, CPMR
kbonucchi@sacs-rep.com
813-855-6542

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Contact: Mark Dietrich
mdietrich@conleyrep.com
407-365-3283

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Contact: Ric Carreras
carreras@panamtech.com
954-587-3769

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Contact: Glenn Oliver
goliver@sesrf.com
321-591-0349

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Contact: Doug Martell
doug@ctsrep.com
727-789-4802

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Contact: Rick Tally, CPMR
phnixhqs@cfl.rr.com
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Contact: Brian Gunnin
bgunnin@sunrep.com
813-884-4805

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Contact: Al Johnson, Jr.,
CPMR, CSP
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For details on the association and its members, go to

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(The ERA chapter of each rep firm is listed in *italics* after the company name.)

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Embracing seven key principles of ultra successful people today

What does it take to be successful today? There are certain principles that have worked through the centuries for entrepreneurs and people who want to get ahead and be successful. As you study these and look at people who are successful you can see certain traits that emerge over and over.

Here are seven traits that continue to emerge when you look at people who succeed no matter what:

Always learning

I have had the opportunity to visit 37 countries around the world and see very successful people in many walks of life. I noticed that people who are most successful are constantly learning. Most of them are great readers. Some learn best from listening to quality audio, and others are constantly going to seminars and enhancing their education. Even though they know a lot and have studied a lot, they are always open to learning new things that can help them in their business and their lives.

Make it a part of your life to always learn from mistakes and stop beating your head against the same wall. I like to call this "smart persistence" in that you are persistent, but you don't keep repeating the same mistakes over and over.

Relentless pursuit of excellence

Let's face it, sometimes life is tough. Sometimes you get knocked down. Sometimes you skin your knee and even bleed. Successful people understand that this is just part of the way things work on this planet. They don't like the pain any more than anyone else; however, they are willing to be relentless and keep going no matter what happens to them. They learn from mistakes so they don't have to repeat them. They get up and go after it again relentlessly.

Make it a part of your life to always learn from mistakes and stop beating your head against the same wall. I like to call this "smart persistence" in that you are persistent, but you don't keep repeating the same mistakes over and over.

Provide value for others

Life is ironic in that the way you get ahead is by focusing on others rather than yourself. We are all born to exist in our own shell where we breathe only for ourselves, we sleep only for ourselves, we have internal communications, and it is natural to focus on ourselves. However, those who are successful make it a point to think of the needs of others and always wonder how they can help. It is one of the ironies of life that as you focus on others, you help yourself more.

Find ways that you can add value to others and help them. This is the key for you to achieving what you want for yourself.

Physically fit

Although there are exceptions, generally people who are successful are aware that they have to maintain good physical health. They know that the body they have is the house they will live in. Ultimately, you have to be responsible for your health. This means you have to be smart about what you put in your body, how you exercise, how you maintain appropriate stress levels, how you sleep, and other variables that are part of the health equation.

Get the professional help you need and relentlessly practice healthy living. If your body (the "house" where you live) falls apart, you will not be fully successful. You don't want to be the richest man in the cemetery.

Learn from setbacks

Part of the formula for living is that you are going to have setbacks from time to time. Successful people learn from these setbacks. I like the way my friend, Willie Jolley, says, "A setback is just a setup for a comeback."

Look at each setback that you face (and you

(continued on page 34)



by Terry Brock

Terry Brock is a marketing coach who helps business owners market more effectively leveraging technology. He shows busy professionals how to squeeze more out of their busy days by using the right rules and tools.

You can reach Terry at 407-363-0505, by email at terry@terrybrock.com or through his website at terrybrock.com. Also, look for Terry on Twitter @TerryBrock.

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(continued from page 7)

Are you active on social media? Do you follow ERA? Have ERA updates via social media been helpful to you?

We are active on several social media platforms, and we do follow ERA on LinkedIn and Facebook. The ERA updates are helpful in that they provide a continuous education whether it is regarding changes in the industry, technology advancements, succession planning or principal/representative contract language. It is absolutely essential to continuously evolve in this business, and we appreciate the resources ERA provides in helping each and every one of us succeed.

What is one interesting fact that people may not know about you?

I have backpacked through different parts of Europe three times. ■

LEGALLY SPEAKING: The hunt for commission

(continued from page 15)

grounds that it (or a third party) actually procured the sales instead of Orange Coast, but on the grounds that the suit was barred by the running of California's two-year statute of limitations for oral contracts.

Had the court agreed the contract was oral, OAMYS would have prevailed. However, both the trial court and the appellate court recognized that the four-year statute applicable to written contracts controlled.

Although the parties plainly entered into a written Dealer Commission Agreement for the sale of Halberda's yacht, OAMYS argued it did not govern because it lacked two material terms, leaving their relationship governed by oral promises. OAMYS seized upon the Agreement's failure to state that the Halberda trade-in had to be sold in Orange Coast's territory and its failure to spell out that payment was due on the actual sale of the Riviera.

The appellate court found neither omission "even remotely material." First, the commission due Orange Coast was owed in the total sales price paid by Halberda for the new OAMYS vessel, and the amount owed on the trade-in was only "a component of that commission." Second, OAMYS confused Orange Coast's attempt to accommodate the delay in selling the trade-in with the basic terms of the Dealer Commission Agreement, specifically its provision that 6 percent of the total sales price was due on the new OAMYS yacht.

Of note with respect to the Smith purchase, OAMYS' defense did not include any argument that Orange Coast did not procure Smith as the buyer of the 78-foot yacht, or that the parties' agreement did not call for compensation to Orange Coast upon its sale. Instead, OAMYS essentially contended that because it successfully boxed Orange Coast out by preventing it from actually negotiating the sale or completing the paperwork, no commission was owed.

Not surprisingly, OAMYS was unable to cite any legal authority in support of its argument, and the appellate court did not consider it for very long. The court ruled "that a salesperson cannot be cheated out of a commission by the unimaginative expedient of having him or her cut out of the actual negotiations once the salesperson has done the real work of actually finding a ready willing and able buyer."

Quoting long-standing California law, the court noted that "otherwise, one might employ an agent to interview persons, and secure them promises of contracts and then, by having another one 'close' the contracts, deny the agent the fruit of his labor." The conclusion reached was "that if an agent (or broker) is the inducing or procuring cause of the contract, he is entitled to the commission, even though the principal takes it out of his own hand and completes it." Finding that Orange Coast unquestionably found Smith, the buyer for OAMYS' yacht, the appellate court determined it plainly earned its commission.

Charting the way

This same rule has potentially broad application to other reps who find business for their principals and are then terminated in response or otherwise denied the resulting commissions. Equitable, common sense principles will generally protect the rep's right to compensation for successful sales efforts, unless the contract is unusually manufacturer-friendly. If the practice of cheating reps out of their hard-earned commission dollars is a tub that won't float even in the elite yachting industry, then legal remedies are equally applicable to industries where such misconduct is more traditionally found. ■



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Elotek Systems, Inc.

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Trembly Associates Corp.

Gary Mulryan
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Pete Petrou
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**For information about ROCKY MOUNTAIN ERA
membership, programs and activities, go to rmera.org.**

ERA BOARD ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

During its March meeting, the ERA Board of Directors elected new officers for the 2017-19 term. They are: chairman of the board - Dan Parks, CPMR, of West Electronic Solutions; president - David Norris of Norris and Associates; senior vice president / fiscal and legal - Chuck Tanzola, CPMR, of the Fusion Sourcing Group; senior vice president / education - John O'Brien, CPMR, of Coakley, Boyd and Abbett; senior vice president / membership - Kathie Cahill, CPMR, of Net Sales Company; and senior vice president / industry - Bob Evans, CPMR, of EK Micro. Evans is a new member of the association's executive committee. Parks succeeds the outgoing chairman, Paul Nielsen, CPMR, of Brainard-Nielsen Marketing, who concluded 12 years as a national officer. The continuing executive committee members are: Ken Bellero of Schaffner EMC, the manufacturer delegate; Chris Beeson of Digi-Key Electronics, the distributor delegate; and ERA CEO Walter Tobin, who serves as an ex officio member.

FOUR MAJOR AWARDS PRESENTED AT ERA CONFERENCE

A number of major ERA awards were presented at the association's 2017 Conference, held in Austin, Texas, in late February. Two were previously announced, and two were surprises.

The conference was the first opportunity to present the 2016 Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award to Dan Parks, CPMR, of West Electronic Solutions. Parks has served on the ERA Executive Committee since 2011 and is the association's new chairman of the board. The Ray Hall Award was established in 2004 to honor the retired CEO who had served the association for more than 40 years. The annual award recognizes individuals who exemplify the spirit of ERA through their commitment to serving and advancing the professional field sales function.

The Jess Spoons - ERA White Pin Scholarship, announced in December, was presented to Buzz Reynolds of Performance Technical Sales, who was recognized for leading the Carolinas ERA efforts to re-establish the Dixie chapter. The award is named for the late Jess Spoons, an ERA Hall of Fame member and the long-time White Pin Group coordinator.

The first of the two surprise presentations was to outgoing ERA Chairman Paul Nielsen, CPMR, of Brainard-Nielsen Marketing. He received the Key Award, honoring his 12 years of volunteer service as a national officer and many additional years as a Chicagoland-Wisconsin ERA chapter leader. Nielsen is only the 36th recipient of this award in ERA's 82-year history. He told the conference attendees, "My time working with ERA is probably the smartest thing I've done professionally. I've learned a lot and met some great people whom I will count as friends long after my career is over."

The second surprise announcement was the first annual Tess Hill Award, presented to its namesake in recognition of her 52-year association with ERA. CEO Walter Tobin has said, "The Tess Hill Award will be presented annually to an individual who has worked tirelessly to advance the initiatives and spirit of ERA." In accepting the award, Hill thanked the CEOs, staff members and countless volunteers she has worked with, and she stressed how fortunate she has been to know three and even four generations of some ERA rep families.

EDS BREAKFAST PROGRAM SLATED

ERA and ECIA (the Electronic Components Industry Association), the two co-sponsors of the EDS Summit, will host their annual breakfast program at the event on Thursday, May 18, at the Mirage Events Center in Las Vegas. The breakfast is open to all EDS attendees. At press time of this issue of *The Representor*, the program guest speaker was not yet confirmed, but EDS attendees can make reservations any time before April 28 by emailing info@era.org.

ERA SCHEDULES 49th CONFERENCE IN 2018

ERA's 49th Management and Marketing Conference has been scheduled to return to Austin, Texas, on Feb. 25-27, 2018. The venue will again be the AT&T Conference Center. ERA CEO Walter Tobin says that the 2018 Conference Committee is being formed, and program planning will begin immediately.

MRERF ANNOUNCES UPCOMING CLASSES

The Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF) will conduct Certified Sales Professional (CSP) classes in Boston on May 16-18, in Denver on Sept. 11-15 and in Chicago on Oct. 9-13. MRERF's Manufacturers Best Practices courses are slated May 22-24 in Denver and Sept. 25-27 in Kansas City, Mo. The next Certified Professional Manufacturers' Representative (CPMR) courses will be held in Austin, Texas, on Jan. 7-12, 2018. For details on all programs, go to mrerf.org. (Also see the MRERF ad on the back inside cover of this issue.)

COMPONENTS

Chuck Tanzola, CPMR

Fusion Sourcing Group
Ithaca, N.Y.

ERA Senior VP/Fiscal & Legal

Impressions and observations from the ERA Conference

I've just returned from the 48th ERA Management and Marketing Conference in Austin, Texas, and I thought I would devote this quarter's article to discussing my impressions and observations about the state of the industry from the meeting. The theme of this year's conference was "Collaborate, Differentiate, Accelerate," and it is in the spirit of this theme that my observations fall.

Collaborate: The complexity and interconnectedness of the marketplace increases on a daily basis, blurring historical boundaries and challenging industry "norms." Typically, non-technology companies are actively engaged in utilizing and developing new applications and uses for technology products, and in many cases even the new technologies themselves. Traditional competitors are cooperating in more ways than ever before. One trend in the components segment I heard about from my fellow conference participants was that their manufacturers are increasingly looking to broaden their product offerings through these cooperative arrangements.

For the rep, this "broadening of the product line phenomenon" has led to the proliferation of the subsequent "overly synergistic offerings" result. It is unclear how far this historical electronics industry boundary will be blurred in the future. However, at the very least, it is being tested more than ever before.

Differentiate: "Know your value proposition" was a phrase I heard often in discussions at the conference. Whether distributor, manufacturer or representative, the realization that we need to provide, and as importantly, demonstrate value is at the forefront of everyone's mind. I don't think this is a surprise to anyone, but one new thought I brought home from Austin was the concept of finding unexpected value in unexpected places. For me, and I suspect maybe for others, accompanying this newfound awareness is the renewed call to vigilance in merchandising value delivered. It's always show time!

Accelerate: In my notes from Jon Petz's keynote presentation, I have written, "The shelf life of innovation is shrinking." This is a statement with which I readily agree, and it probably does not need much defense. The industry is moving faster than ever, and the associated pressure that this puts on all of us is well known. The good news for today is that unlike the prior articles I have written over the last few quarters, industry demand seems to finally be following suit. In surveying people both at, and subsequent to, the conference, one phrase I have heard repeatedly is, "We're building a backlog." So, in conjunction with all the busyness everyone in the industry I talk to seems to be experiencing, maybe we are also starting to see some general industry progress as well. Time will tell.

I welcome your comments and feedback. If you attended the conference, I would love to hear your thoughts. If you didn't attend, you will get another chance next February, and I encourage you not to miss it. As always, I can be reached at ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com. See you all in Las Vegas at EDS.

ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

Gary Ponto, CPMR

GP Marketing
Kirkland, Wash.

Overview of changes and opportunities in the AV and security markets

Q1 seems to be a strong start to 2017 for contractors and distributors in the AV and security markets. However, the business has shifted from bid work to negotiated work within a contractor's existing customer base that is now pulling the trigger on projects that have been on the back burner for the past couple of years.

This is creating a challenge in launching new products into the market as most contractors are following up on bids in which they have already proposed products for their projects. Even if the newer product adds features and benefits, we are seeing a push back from contractors and distributors to change from what they have sold in the past. Most manufacturers are looking for immediate market penetration with a new product which is making some relationships difficult at times for the reps.

Adding to this market confusion are all of the mergers and consolidations happening currently. Even when one company buys another and makes no changes, the market is uneasy not knowing if and when change may be coming.

The CCTV market is seeing a huge reduction in margins as companies are entering the market at very low prices and selling "kits" through retail outlets. "Starter" software recording packages are being given away for free in the commercial space to try to commit a customer to a brand. Contractors are not happy with any of these marketing strategies by these companies.

AV contractors seem to be seeing a shift in their market too, “Huddle / Collaborative” spaces, at least with their larger customers, are becoming the norm. We are seeing more requests for training on products that apply to these types of deployments. We are also seeing a large requirement for sound masking systems in office spaces. Where background music systems were once the norm, sound masking is becoming the new norm. With building construction changing, privacy is no longer a given when having a private office or work space.

In closing, I would say that the market is strong but changing. Distributors that were never in the AV space are now looking at AV as a way to grow their business. Security and data have flattened, and AV is a new space for them. With Samson purchasing Harmand, D&M Pro being purchased by inMusic, and many others, distribution definitely sees opportunity in a changing market for them. We will see how this plays out in the next six months.

I recently read an article by Frank Hurtte in The January/February issue of *Industrial Supply* magazine. I am going to blatantly “borrow” some of his article because I think it is extremely important to us as reps and to our distributor customers. It is also something that we encounter on almost a daily basis: SCAMMERS.

We all get calls at home or on our cell phones with offers, opportunities or something like this: “Hello, this is Jack from Windows. Your computer has a problem, and I’ll help you repair it.” I trust that we all have learned to just “hang up” and move on. If we don’t, the cost and aggravation can be huge.

We represent some products that seem to attract these scammers. The products are relatively expensive and easy to dispose of, like SLA batteries. They can be sold as scrap for the lead content. The scammer really does not care about the cost. They charge them on a stolen credit card and by the time the distributor finds that out, it’s too late. The batteries or other items are delivered, probably to a rented facility and long gone. As reps we see requests, sometimes from multiple distributors for the same items, and the red flag goes up. We will contact the players and advise them to verify the request.

Mr. Hurtte makes the following comments in his article that deserve a mention.

“It can’t be stated strongly enough, these people are crooks. What’s more, a few of them are criminals of the worst kind: intelligent, well financed and organized.”

“The new breed of scammer knows how to use Google keyword searches. They know who you are.”

He further suggests, “Don’t assume everyone knows the ground rules. Review the topic regularly. Never allow sellers to step outside the normal credit approval policy.”

Here are some points he makes to help you identify these scammers.

- “Poorly written emails are your first line of defense.” Many originate from developing countries from people who speak poor English and are probably working from a script. If in doubt, it is probably best to just hit the “delete” button.
- “The email comes from a generic email account.” Some of these emails will come from impressive companies, universities or other impressive accounts. If they have a generic email account like “Hotmail” or “Gmail” or other generic email account, view them with skepticism right away. Always verify, verify, verify before responding.
- “The customer is from outside of your normal territory.” You should wonder why they are contacting you.
- “The customer has never done business with you before.” Why are they suddenly asking for a quote or simply to purchase without a quote?
- “Never call the number provided on the email.” I might add to this that it is also probably not wise to respond to the email either. That could add to the problem because many of the phone numbers are “rip-offs” as well.
- “Never accept a certified check.” Many people believe bank-issued certified checks are as good as cash. In reality they are one of the most commonly counterfeited financial instruments in the world.

Back to the old cliché, if something seems too good to be true, it probably is. We all need to be smart and exercise caution in our everyday business and personal interface with not only our customers but those who are intent on “ripping us off.”

MATERIALS, ASSEMBLY, PRODUCTION & SUPPLY

Troy Gunnin

Sun Rep
Tampa, Fla.

**Learning how to identify
and deal with ‘scammers’**



Chapter News reports the local activities of the 22 chapters of ERA. The chapters sponsor educational and training workshops, local trade shows, legislative and industry projects to enhance the professionalism of individual members and to advance the goals and mission of the national association.

CAROLINAS

The Carolinas Chapter is continuing its monthly networking breakfasts throughout the spring.

The chapter recently held the annual DTAM meeting. More than 25 reps and distributors were in attendance. ERA Conference Committee Chair Holly Myers, CPMR, of Wallace Electronic Sales presented a review of the recent conference where 15 chapter members were in attendance. The chapter also held a drawing to determine three \$1,000 scholarship winners.

Buzz Reynolds of Performance Technical Sales was recognized at the DTAM meeting for receiving the Jess Spoons White Pin Award and for his efforts in the Chapter of the Year award for membership services.

CHICAGOLAND - WISCONSIN

In January, the chapter held a largely attended round table with MANA CEO Charles Cohon. The discussion was about reps adapting to changes in the industry. More than 40 members attended the session. Cohon provided a podcast from the event, which is available on ERA's social media pages.

The chapter's April 7 round table was an ERA RepProtect update. The session offered networking with peers over breakfast and provided details about the new ERA member service. Byron Spencer, CEO of Norman-Spencer International, was the guest speaker.

EMPIRE STATE

The chapter is pleased to have been recognized as Chapter of the Year in the marketing services category based on the delivery of the DTAM report and program. The chapter thanks the chair, Rick Wray, and the chapter board for continuing to make this a must-attend annual event with relevant content.

Empire also co-hosted a Hockey Night at the Rochester Americans AHL game in March. The chapter sponsored the event for the first time with the local chapter of the SMTA. Empire's members have requested new events and are looking forward to mingling with colleagues at SMTA.

FLORIDA-SUNSHINE

The chapter is planning a DTAM presentation in April, with a possible combined program to include a presentation from a member of the ERA consulting staff.

INDIANA KENTUCKY

Indiana-Kentucky's recent program in March was titled, "The Future of the Industry and Its Impact on Reps, Manufacturers and Distributors." ERA CEO Walter Tobin was the guest speaker and gave a presentation on the topic.

NEW ENGLAND

The chapter has big news, besides another Super Bowl victory. New England ERA recently elected the following to the chapter board: Vice President Adam Anderson of Norris Associates; Vice President Fiscal, Mike Walsh of Coakley Boyd and Abbett; and Vice President Member Services, Julie Carr of MacInnis Company.

The chapter says that their collective energy and enthusiasm is already resulting in positive plans for the remainder of the year. The new members were instrumental in planning the first in decades 2016 chapter holiday party. Members gathered at Waxy O'Connor's, in Lexington, Mass. Waxy's will be the chapter's new home for future events.

The chapter's next event is planned for May 3. The "Technology Swap Shop Update" breakout presentation from the recent ERA Conference will be presented to reps, distributors and manufacturers. The chapter also will be honoring Norman MacInnis, who was recently awarded the honor of ERA Life Membership at the National ERA Board Meeting.

NEW YORK

The chapter's own Art Rea was recently awarded Life Membership in ERA at the national board meeting in Austin, Texas.

The 13th annual IEEE Long Island Systems,

Congratulations, ERA Chapters of the Year!

Four ERA chapters have been selected as the Chapters of the Year for their 2016 activities and projects. The award recipients and their entries, by category, are:

- **Education** – **INDIANA-KENTUCKY** for its program on cyber security;
- **Membership and Member Services** – **CAROLINAS** for its re-establishment of the Dixie chapter;
- **Marketing Services** – **EMPIRE STATE** for its annual Rep-Distributor Forum and DTAM reporting project; and
- **Special Projects** – **NEW YORK** for its first annual industry golf outing.

Each award recipient receives a full-tuition scholarship to ERA's Chapter Officer Leadership Training (COLT) program. The Chapter of the Year judges, who reviewed all entries and selected award recipients, are: George Alecci, national delegate (Pacific Northwest); Ben Barden, past national delegate (Northern California); Mike Kunz, CPMR, national delegate, (Spirit of St. Louis); plus ERA CEO Walter Tobin. The Chapter of the Year program is coordinated by Bob Evans, CPMR, chair of ERA's Chapter Leadership Council.

Applications and Technology (LISAT) conference will be held on Friday, May 5, at Farmingdale State College in Farmingdale, N.Y. IEEE has invited New York ERA to participate in the exhibition portion of the conference.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

The chapter held an event titled, “Engineers and Supply Chain ... Preferences and Perceptions of Sales Professionals” in February, drawing 62 attendees. ERA CEO Walter Tobin was a guest speaker along with a panel offering insight on the topic.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The chapter’s own Larry Brown and Art Henderson were recently awarded Life Memberships in ERA at the national board meeting in Austin, Texas.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

On March 23, the chapter hosted an event with Sasha Strauss as the guest speaker. The topic was related to branding.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

The newly re-established ERA Southwest

Chapter conducted a meeting at the ERA Conference in Austin, Texas, on Feb. 28. At the meeting, the chapter confirmed four officers and two directors, including: President Jim Moore; Vice President Eric Zepp; Treasurer Mike Boswell; Secretary Tobi Cornell; Director of Austin Rob Curtiss; and Director of Houston Jeff May. The chapter planned for two events to be held in June and November for all ERA members (including reps, distributors and manufacturers).

Southwest also plans to hold a few informal breakfast meetings. The chapter held an officers/directors meeting on March 14 to discuss and begin planning the upcoming events. This newly formed chapter looks forward to growing.

SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS

At its March meeting, the Spirit of St. Louis Chapter honored Bob Dillon for his 58 years of service to ERA. Bob has held numerous officer positions in the local chapter, as well as a position with ERA National. He has been the chapter administrator for the past 27 years, after his retirement from the rep industry. Bob retired as chapter administrator in January. The chapter thanks Bob for all of his years of service to ERA.

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For details and an order form, go to era.org.

ERA's 48th Management and Marketing Conference claimed the checkered flag in Austin!



ABOVE: At the "Drive to Excellence" theme party, slot car racing was a popular feature. The first-place winner, Billy Moore of Pinnacle Marketing, took home a gift card and the ERA truck that decorated the center of the track.

BELOW: (Left) Awards presented at the conference included the Jess Spoons - ERA White Pin Scholarship to Buzz Reynolds of Performance Technical Sales.

(Center) ERA Chairman Paul Nielsen, CPMR (at right) of Brainard-Nielsen Marketing presented President Dan Parks, CPMR, of West Electronic Solutions with the 2016 Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award, and Parks then surprised Nielsen with the ERA Key Award.

(Right) The first annual Tess Hill Award was presented by Senior Vice President / Education Kathie Cabill, CPMR, of Net Sales Company, to long-time staff member Tess Hill.

(See News Beat in this issue for details on these awards.)



ABOVE: Four Austin-area design engineers — (l. to r.) Andy Regimbal of Dell, Ken Krakow of Roku, Jean Anne Booth of Unaliware and Mike Kasperian of Atlas Wearables — were interviewed by ERA CEO Walter Tobin in the second of a two-part general session focusing on demand creation.

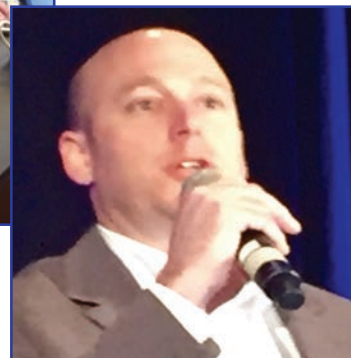
"What a great event! Thank you, all, for the blood, sweat and tears that made it a fantastic experience for all. Everything seemed to be flawless. I look forward to attending next year!"
— Alex Cox, CPMR, O'Donnell Associates North





LEFT: Full classrooms were a common sight among the 13 breakout seminars offered.

BELOW: Zach DeVillers, CPMR, of Brainard-Nielsen Marketing was one of 28 breakout speakers, moderators and panelists.



LEFT: Attendees raved about Jon Petz's keynote that focused on the conference theme, "Collaborate, Differentiate, Accelerate! Drive to Excellence."

BELOW: To demonstrate the value of collaboration, Petz "levitated" four attendees.



"This was truly a great event. Manufacturer, rep and distribution members should all be attending ... So many interesting breakout sessions that I could not make them all."
— Bob Garcia, Ferrari Technical Sales



LEFT: Gordon Hunter, executive chairman of Littelfuse, Inc., was a general session speaker on the subject of new energy markets.



ABOVE: Colin Puckett, senior marketing manager of Amazon Business, delivered a highly-anticipated presentation on his company's current and future sales models.



ABOVE: Conference Committee Chair Holly Myers, CPMR, (left) of Wallace Electronic Sales, and Jenni Brown of Quell were among the large crowd networking at the Welcome Reception,

"It's been years since I've attended an ERA meeting and decided to go this year at [Walter Tobin's] urging. He was right. I needed to attend and truly benefited. Still trying to shake out all I learned and boil it down to some practical 'take-aways' as thanks to you and your team, there was a lot to absorb."
— Linda Torjesen, PEI Electronic Sales

COVER STORY: Robots among us

(continued from page 6)

for what we use, and the cost per use being a lot less than the cost to own and use.

Humanoid robots

Just as common in the news are articles about advances in the development of robots with legs and arms, instead of wheels and wings. There are so many consumer-oriented advertisements featuring lifelike robots that one can only conclude that these constructions have grabbed hold of our collective imagination and tapped into some sort of deep societal desire. Google for one has been investing heavily in companies that are developing self-learning and self-replicating robots for use in manufacturing and in companies that build robots that lift, walk, run and even jump like humans. In Japan, there are many examples of big, well-known companies investing heavily in humanoid robots that are designed to take care of an aging population.

Robots that look like, and move like humans, are intended to do one thing ... take on the work that historically only human beings with their wide range-of-motion joints and manually dexterous hands could do. The early versions of these “helpers” are already among us, vacuuming floors, cutting grass and delivering food. It won't be long before human shaped machines are among us as well. Core technology advances in ultra-low power, superfast semiconductors, lightweight, high-energy density batteries, haptic sensors, skin-like materials and artificial intelligence will evolve the machines to the point that we begin to refer to them as “creatures.” In fact, discussions that include really smart, well connected people about robots' rights have already begun as have discussions about what happens to our culture and our economy if tens of millions of us lose our jobs to robots in a relatively short time.

In prior cycles of industrialization, largely centered on new waves of automation, we've had time to redeploy people into the new jobs that were needed to build, maintain and operate the new automation technology that our companies created. I read a striking analogy that the coming wave of automation will be like compressing the time line for that last period of the industrial revolution into the lifespan of a beagle. And to add to the strain, the related new job creation is likely to be a lot smaller, as much of the technology is designed to be self-maintaining and even self-replicating. So, the threat to widespread employment, including the so-called white collar jobs (even selling), is greater and more pervasive than in past cycles.

The same really smart people are talking about how to deal with the disruptive nature of extensive job loss created by technology. One concept that seems to be growing in popularity is the idea of a guaranteed basic level of income for those who are displaced. This would be funded by collecting a tax on robots that is equivalent to the tax that workers would have paid on their income if they had not been displaced by robots.

Personally, I am troubled by this as I think welfare can have really harmful, long-term effects on a person's view of self and one's psyche. Much of my thinking on this is heavily influenced by the writings of Thomas Sowell, and in particular his book, “The Vision of the Anointed,” which is a researched-based dissection on the impact of social programs on our citizens and our economy. People find meaning, purpose and a sense of worth in the act of working to sustain themselves and their families. A society of people who no longer work for a living, in my opinion, will be dysfunctional and not utopic as many who write on this subject envision.

But in the end, a couple of things are likely to slow down this big wave that is building. One, is the simple fact that new technologies historically mainstream at a slower rate than any of those whom are close to it, and/or would derive the most immediate benefit from it, expect. The underlying reasons for that (which it would take another article to explore) have not changed.

Another source of drag is the fact companies invest in automation in order to improve their products and their productivity, and in doing so they (often by design) eliminate jobs for people. Those jobs are the source of money which people spend on the products and services that are often produced and/or supported by these very same companies. If those workers aren't reemployed, in a very real way, those companies are

(continued on page 34)

Electronics Representatives Association



ERA Officers

Chairman of the Board:
Dan Parks, CPMR
dan@westelec.com

President
David Norris
dnorris@norrisrep.com

Senior Vice President/Fiscal & Legal:
Chuck Tanzola, CPMR
ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com

Senior Vice President/Education:
John O'Brien, CPMR
jobrien@cbane.com

Senior Vice President/Membership:
Kathie Cahill, CPMR
kcahill@netsalesrep.com

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Bob Evans, CPMR
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A book review and recommendation by Dan Beaulieu

The Trust Factor: The Science of Creating High-Performance Companies

by Paul J. Zak

Copyright: 2017 Amacom

Price: \$24

Pages: 248 with Index

It's all about trust

Yes, this is a book about trust, and yes, it does deal with what your associates, partners and customers think about you and how you can make trust the most important element of your relationships with them.

Here is the key: According to author and neuroscientist Paul J. Zak, the way to make your employees more productive is to trust them and to allow them to use their own judgement in doing their jobs. In fact, for most people, establishing true trust in them raises them to a new level. He goes on to say that trust is more effective than money when it comes to raising performance, which is something I have always believed.

There is an old saying that people die for a piece of cloth (read flag) rather than for money and that is the essence of what I believe Mr. Zak is talking about.

The thing about this book is that it talks about things we in management have always known but have not characterized. For example, as most sales managers know, motivating salespeople is all about campaigns, setting high goals and rallying your sales team to make those numbers and achieve that goal. People want to know they are doing important work. We are not in a "leave your brains at the door and just do your job" environment. Instead, we have to encourage our people to think. We want their brains as well as their brawn no matter what their job is.

You will get a kick of how Mr. Zak uses the acronym OXYTOCIN to describe the elements of building trust.

Ovation - which stands for appreciation.

eXpectation - which stands for creating strong but achievable goals.

Yield - which stands for letting your employees take control of their work.

Transfer - which stands for letting the workers decide who they want to partner with.

Openness - which stands for sharing everything in full transparency.

Caring - which stands for honestly caring about your associates as you want them to care for each other.

Invest - which stands for investing in employees' careers.

Natural - which stands for being honest with one another even when it means sharing vulnerability.

If you think about it, all of these elements should always have been the building blocks to successfully running any company or any organization. Our companies should all be built on trust as should all of our relationships. I thank Mr. Zak for bringing this out in the open so clearly in this fine book.

Dan Beaulieu is the president and founder of D.B. Management, LLC, a consulting firm specializing in all aspects of sales, marketing and branding with a focus on rep-principal relationships. His latest book is The PCB 101 Handbook which can be purchased online by emailing danbeaulieu@aol.com. Dan is also the author of "It's Only Common Sense," a weekly sales column appearing at pcb007.com. Dan can be reached at 207-649-0879.



COVER STORY: Robots among us

(continued from page 32)

killing off some portion of their customer base. As that realization sets in, that too will take a little energy out of the wave.

For those of us in the electronic component supply chain, in the near term this future is full of new customers and business expansion. We need to be aware of it, thinking about it, and prepared to service it in new ways as it will emerge in nontraditional places, and may not come to market in traditional ways, but in strange new ways. As citizens of the world, we need to be aware of the tech-based things coming, thinking about them, and factoring those thoughts into our expectations of our governments. The societal ramifications are vast, and we will need really smart, really informed people in government and advising government if we are to have any hope of surfing this wave in a way that moves us closer to utopia, versus being drowned. ■

Note: The audio and PowerPoint file of Michael Knight's presentation at the ERA Conference (on which this article is based) is available to ERA members and conference attendees on ERA's website at era.org.

TECH TOOLS AND TIPS: Successful people

(continued from page 21)

will have them in life), and view it as part of going to school in this game of life.

Help others

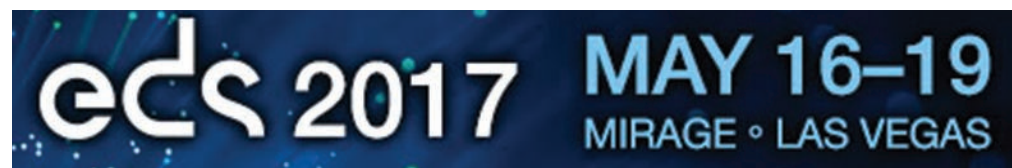
There are multiple reasons why you should help others. First of all, you are helping another person to overcome his or her challenge. Also, I am a strong believer in the free market and living your life your way. I have found that you can achieve your goals by helping others to achieve theirs. Often, the payback of helping others doesn't come from the person who you helped. When helping others, somehow the Karma of life smiles, and the payback for your actions comes from an unknown source in the future. This is uncanny, but many people see it happen over and over. As you exercise your "helping others muscle," you perfect those skills that are important for your own success in life.

Embrace 'new'

In contrast, people who are not successful are often longing for some imagined period of bliss in the past. The reality is that this time in the past also had its challenges. The human mind tends to forget about the disadvantages of the past and instead only remembers what it perceived as good. The best way to live life is to have a fresh, youthful vision for new opportunities surrounded by new challenges. This is the way life works. Make it your practice to embrace new, and keep learning with a childlike sense of wonder.

So there you have it. Make it your goal in life to embrace these principles of successful people. Keep learning and keep growing so that you embrace new opportunities as they become available.

Please share this with your community. This is a message that the world needs to hear particularly at this moment in time. Share this on your social media networks and help others be successful in their own lives. ■



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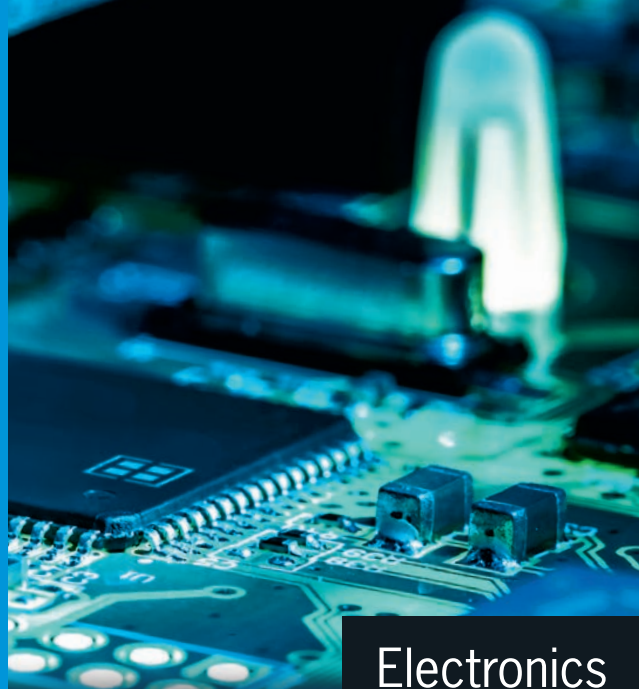
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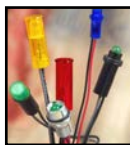
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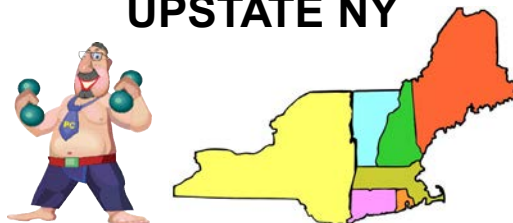
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