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SPRING 2019

How to Reach the Distracted Customer

**2019 ERA Conference keynote speaker
Curt Steinhorst discusses the great challenges
we face in a constantly-connected world.**

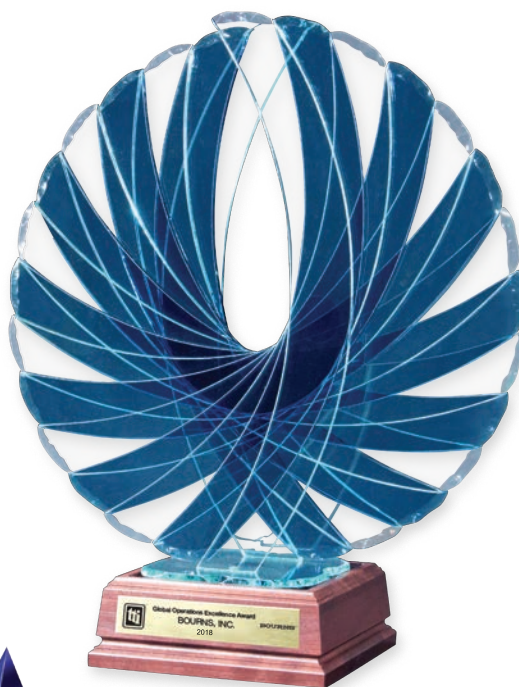


Inside:
Highlights from the 2019 ERA Conference pages, 8 & 22
From the Top, page 15
Where Are They Now?, page 17

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 **COVER STORY:**
How to reach the distracted customer
by Curt Steinhorst
- 8 **FEATURE ARTICLE:**
Highlights from the 2019
ERA Conference
by John Hutson, CPMR
- 22 **FEATURE ARTICLE:**
Scenes from ERA's 50th Anniversary
Conference

COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

- 7 **SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW:**
Kevin Davis
- 13 **EXECUTIVE COMMENTARY:**
'You're gonna need a bigger boat!'
- 15 **FROM THE TOP:**
Moving ERA forward
- 16 **WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!**
- 17 **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?:**
Bruce Anderson
- 19 **LEGALLY SPEAKING:**
Not so fast!
Rep's statutory rights are protected
from getting contracted away
- 21 **MEMBER SERVICES**
- 25 **DISTRIBUTOR UPDATE**
Smartsizing electronic distribution,
from Long Island to the world
- 27 **MARKETING GROUP DIGEST:**
 - Components
 - Materials, Assembly, Production & Supply
- 29 **NEWS BEAT**
- 30 **CHAPTER NEWS**
- 33 **BUSINESS BOOK REVIEW:**
GAP Selling: Getting the Customer to Yes:
How Problem-Centric Selling Increases Sales by
Changing Everything You Know About
Relationships, Overcoming Objections,
Closing and Price
- 35 **EDS AD SUPPLEMENT**

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SPRING 2019

How to Reach the Distracted Customer

**2019 ERA Conference keynote speaker
Curt Steinhorst discusses the great challenges
we face in a constantly-connected world.**



In the age of distraction, human attention is a scarce commodity.

At the recent ERA 50th Anniversary Conference in Austin, Texas, keynote speaker Curt Steinhorst addressed the pressing issue of reaching an increasingly distracted customer at a time when technology developments have fundamentally altered the way people work, engage, communicate and relate to one another.

According to Steinhorst, the latest research shows that despite all available communication options, people are increasingly harder to reach and digital distractions play a huge role.

“We check our phones every 4.3 minutes and we receive more than 200 emails per day,” Steinhorst said. “We go home and we spend 60 percent more time connected to digital [devices] than we do in a conversation with our significant other.”

In the era of distraction, there is no place or activity that is safe, he explained. Even when people go to places to be entertained, like the movie theater, they find themselves back on their devices. “In fact, nine out of 10 people when watching TV today are actively using a second device,” he added.

Distraction is a massive problem that has no age boundaries. Surprisingly, according to Steinhorst, millennials are not the generation spending the most time connected to digital devices in a given week. While research indicates that Gen Xers are spending the most time on social media every single week, when it comes to TV watching, baby boomers exceed all age groups.

So how does digital connectivity translate to connecting with customers?

While there have never before been so many access points to connect with customers as there are today — phone, email, social media, etc. — there is also that much more competition for customer attention.

“We have never had so much within our immediate reach, but we have never been so immediately reachable. We have never been so connected or so interrupted. We have never had so much information or so little space to



process any of it. This is what we mean when we say we have never been so distracted,” Steinhorst stated.

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any of it.*

According to him, “there is nothing more valuable than our attention.” Ultimately, however, technology has created a radical shift in the way people make decisions about their attention. One of the great challenges people face in a constantly-connected world is how to grab, capture and keep the attention of a shifting customer base. More importantly, how do they manage their own distractions and capture the attention of others who work alongside them?

“The way we know that [attention] is valuable, is by how offended we get when people won’t give us theirs,” Steinhorst said and added: “We know that attention is

evidence of what matters. The truth is, while we value it, there are three areas that we often undervalue.

“The first one is we value our customers’ attention. But do we value it in the way that they value it? People often ask, how do I get my customer’s attention and what I often ask in return is ‘Are you getting it or are you

(continued on next page)

COVER STORY: 2019 industry forecast

(continued from previous page)



Curt Steinhorst
Founder
Focuswise Inc.

Curt Steinhorst is the bestselling author of “Can I Have Your Attention? Inspiring Better Work Habits, Focusing Your Team, and Getting Stuff Done in the Constantly Connected Workplace.”

He is on a mission to rescue us from our distracted selves. After years studying the impact of tech on human behavior, Steinhorst founded Focuswise, which equips organizations to overcome the distinct challenges of the constantly-connected workplace.

Diagnosed with ADD as a child, Steinhorst knows intimately the challenges companies face to keep the attention of today’s distracted workforce and customer.

For more information, visit www.curtsteinhorst.com.

stealing it?’

“Second, we want customers’ attention but we don’t realize that often the most effective way of getting it is by better managing our own.

“And third, we severely misunderstand how [attention] actually works.”

So how does attention work? How do people make sure that they put their attention on what matters?

At any given moment, people have endless options competing for their attention. The problem is that they can’t do all of them.

“Our brain is actually hard-wired to decide what we are going to pay attention to based on what’s most pressing,” Steinhorst explained. “The primary system in our brain makes us pay attention to new, surprising, novel, interesting, things that would make us die, or things that would make us thrive. That’s how our brain works.”

However, according to him, technology has eliminated the boundaries and complicated how people manage attention with customers, family, kids, providing infinite availability to explore new things all the time.

Places are another factor that shapes people’s attention; however, technology has altered that as well. People can be on vacation and working; on a beach, working; at a family event, working; at a baseball game, working; and people can be at work, but not working. All this is also having an impact on people’s relationships with their customers, Steinhorst explained. One of the key reasons for that is that everyone is trying to do more.

“The volume of what people have to manage has never been higher,” Steinhorst said. “On average, people today are consuming 500 percent the amount of information as someone in 1990. If we put too much in our short-term memory, nothing moves to long-term. Despite that fact, we

see an acceleration. But how much more can we get done? We don’t have an accelerated relationship with time. And when we try to, we end up with some significant consequences [because] we are not wired to be able to accomplish work in that manner.”

Thus, Steinhorst suggested that people have to recognize the need to take time in order to actually be efficient with time.

“When you try to do two things at the same time, the quality of the work goes down and our ability to differentiate importance is lost,” he said. “If we start to understand what creates frustrations in a world where all is available all the time, it changes what we expect with how we are going to

put in our attention and where we are going to put it.”

He added, “In the face of infinite competition, confusion reigns.”

So how do people deal with all this confusion? Steinhorst recommended that people shift from the belief that their only value proposition is being available and responsive. If not, he warned, they will actually lose what makes them competitive and what makes them valuable in the process.

Thus, there must be a shift in the critical role that sales reps play to capture customers’ attention. The number one responsibility of sales reps today is to help their customers identify what matters; number two is to save their attention for what matters the most; and number three is to actually reaffirm that they matter.

“Your value proposition has never been more clear if you value your own and your customers’ attention,” Steinhorst said. “Access is the enemy of ingenuity. We have to find time when we are reliably unavailable by simply creating intentional times and places throughout the day to be fully unplugged in order to prioritize and assign what actually matters today.”

Technology has eliminated the boundaries and complicated how people manage attention with customers, family, kids, providing infinite availability to explore new things all the time.

This article was written by Neda Simeonova, editor of The Representor.



Kevin Davis
President
Techni-Source Corporation

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 Kevin Davis, president of Techni-Source Corporation, located in Mesa, Ariz.

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

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I live in Scottsdale, Ariz., and I am 52 years young. I am one of the few Arizona natives. I live with my wife, Jennifer, and our two children Katelyn (age 7) and Chase (age 5). I have four children with two of the four living with us. Ryanne (age 24) lives in Brookings, S.D., and Rhett (age 22) works as a line man for our power company in Chandler, Ariz. Both older children are from my first marriage. I have run Techni-Source Corporation as President since 1996 when I took over for my father at the age of 31. Last year, I celebrated 30 years in the rep business. Prior to that, I worked for Motorola from 1984-1988 while attending college at Arizona State University where I earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Marketing.

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace?

I play hockey three times a week. I like to ski, hike and golf. I also enjoy doing things with the family like attending events, festivals and vacations. I like to cook at home, but also enjoy dining out and listening to music, as well as watching sports.

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

Techni-Source has been in business since 1987 when my father, Ken Davis, founded the company. He was western regional manager of Sprague Electric company (Acquired by Vishay around 1990). Sprague made a decision in 1987 to go rep and my father hired all the reps in the Southwest and then put himself on in Arizona. I left Motorola and came on board in 1988. I made the decision to join ERA in 2017 and I am happy that I did. I became vice president of the Arizona Chapter of ERA shortly after joining, and since then our chapter has been recognized with Chapters of The Year awards for its activities.

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

My father got me interested when I was in college. He taught me a lot about the rep business.

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

I like the fact that I have the freedom to go out every day and make my own schedule and meet lots of different people. It is freedom over most jobs which makes the business so enjoyable and successful. I believe that if you are pulling into the same parking space every

day and are told what time you have lunch and breaks, or told what to do every second of every work day, job satisfaction will not be there and you will watch the clock to get out of there. I found that at Techni-Source I am always trying to slow the clock down during the day to get more done, while at Motorola, I was looking to speed things up.

Briefly describe your rep firm.

Techni-Source is a highly respected manufacturers' representative firm celebrating 30 years in business. We represent select electronics component and connector manufacturers, and are responsible for the sale of their products in Arizona; Clark County, Nevada; New Mexico; El Paso, Texas; and the Mexico border areas of Nogales and Juarez.

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

Our CRM system has really helped us do more with less. We have eight people on staff, but we can accomplish the work of a 12- to 14-person firm. We don't hold staff meetings on Mondays anymore. We used to spend from half to a full day every Monday getting organized, but now everything is done on the fly and paperless through the CRM. This gives us up to 20 percent more time with 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 have met a lot of great people in my local market as vice president of the Arizona Chapter that I would not have met normally. I feel more comfortable reaching out to them. Also, I have met a lot of great people all over the country through ERA National. People feel more comfortable referring new lines to you if they know you. You really can't have enough friends in this business.

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

I try to keep up with LinkedIn and Facebook and I have Techni-Source sites on both. I think they are great tools for the trade.

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

I enjoy doing IT work and fixing things. I have learned that as soon as you fix someone's computer one time, you are now their IT person for life!

I also have dabbled in beer making!



Highlights from the 2019 ERA Conference

ERA asked 2019 Conference Committee Chair John Hutson to share his insights about this year's 50th Anniversary Conference, including what were some of his personal and professional experiences at the conference in his role as conference chair; how will the knowledge and new business connections gained during the conference impact his business; and what are his key takeaways from the event? Here is what he had to say.

What was the highlight of this conference?

Wow – this is a very difficult question for me to answer.

I struggle with this question because my role as conference chair was such an incredible experience both personally and professionally that providing a single highlight is extremely challenging.

Personally, I get a tremendous sense of reward in being part of a team that creates something from scratch as part of a project. This experience is even more rewarding when the team is as dedicated to a project as this planning committee was to ERA's 50th Anniversary Conference. My position as conference chair allowed me to work with all the members of this team. To see the results of their efforts come together and be on full display over two and a half days instilled in me a tremendous sense of pride. This was certainly a personal highlight for myself and I encourage all of you to consider being part of future ERA Conference Planning Committees.

On a professional note, a highlight of this year's ERA Conference that resonated with me can be tied directly back to the "Embracing Tomorrow" part of the conference theme. Many of the general and breakout sessions had a very futuristic theme and I always like to hear what others think about how the future is going to affect how we do our jobs. Much was shared about what the manufacturers' rep firm of the future might look like and what will be expected of them; what the salesperson of future might look like and what skillsets will be required for their success; and what changes the future might bring to the roles and responsibilities of the manufacturers' rep, manufacturer, and distributor in order to best sell product to the customer. I found the diverse perspectives around what changes the future might bring relative to these interrelationship topics to be incredibly valuable. And the conference provided me the opportunity to reflect on what changes I should consider now to assure that my organization is well positioned to adapt to these changes tomorrow.

Were there any parts of the conference that you found especially useful for your business?

ERA's focus on education as a core component in its' goal to set high standards for professionalism in our industry is always front and center at the conference and this year was no different. The conference program continually provides

opportunities to be better informed and enlightened of best practices and trends that are taking place in our industry. Although I always like to hear from professionals about certain topics, the fact that so much of the learning opportunities come from industry peers is very special.

This year, I was particularly impressed by the prognostications around the importance of data, automated intelligence, virtual reality, and changes to the manufacturers' representative's role in marketing to be very insightful. These perspectives left me convinced that we are going to be doing things differently in the very near future and the conference has me thinking of changes that I need to be considering now to assure that my organization is best positioned for success when these changes come. This was certainly worth the price of admission.

How will the conference impact execution of your job/business?

I have a long list of things that I learned from the conference that I am excited to implement, but how much the conference impacts your business depends on how willing and disciplined you are to execute on a manageable number of your takeaways. This is so important, because after the conference, we all return to the tactical part of our business that is our hamster wheels and we have a hard time addressing some of the strategic lessons that were learned. I hope that this article reminds attendees to take a strategic time out, review their notes, and consider a timeline for the top things that they have learned.

I see the ERA Conference as the best professional learning experience that our industry has to offer, and therefore I try to bring as many team members as I can. Although I find that there are many advantages to having my teammates participate, our ability to attend all breakout seminars and get different perspectives on all that the conference has to offer is the most valuable. This requires an immediate download that we have after the conference closes, along with a follow up once we get off our hamster wheel. If possible, I encourage attendees to bring other members of their team and to make sure that providing for the same collective download is done. I always find the feedback to be very interesting.

How would you rate the quality of the networking at this event?

MacInnis Group continually tries to support as many industry events as possible on a local, regional, national and international basis with networking in mind. We are very much in the people business and networking remains a very important part of what we do. However, networking is not just shaking someone's hand, or getting their business card. The true magic of networking is when an introduction is reinforced by the

sharing of knowledge. Out of all the events that we participate in, no other event provides the opportunity to network at this level by design.

Be it the all-inclusive cocktail reception, round table assignments for keynote and general sessions, the interactive breakout seminars, the fun that is had at the networking dinner, or all of the time in between, ERA strives to create an environment where everyone is encouraged to make introductions, ask questions and share their experiences and ideas; be engaging. As a result, I am convinced that no other event provides as much opportunity to network with top professionals in our industry at the level of intimacy as does the ERA Conference.

Personally, I can think of multiple individuals that I had the opportunity to meet at ERA conferences that are not just colleagues, but friends. I don't know if I ever would have had such an

(continued on page 11)



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benefits the Carolinas ERA Scholarship
Fund and the American Diabetes
Association. For details on the 2019 event,
scheduled Oct. 11, go to carolinasera.com
or contact Annette Paden
at apaden@sacs-rep.com.

FEATURE ARTICLE: Conference highlights

(continued from page 9)

opportunity elsewhere.

What is it about the breakout session that make them so popular?

The breakout sessions continue to be one aspect of our conference that probably stands out the most. You know that it was a great conference when 100 percent of those who responded to our post conference survey said that they would highly recommend the ERA Conference to a colleague and that the most common complaint was that the breakout sessions were so good that the respondents wish that they could attend them all.

This was not always the case. We only have so much time, and to add breakout sessions requires that we take time from somewhere else. In fact, the first ERA Conference that I helped plan in 2013 had six general sessions, but since that time, in response to the post conference feedback, the Conference Committee reduced that number to five and then to four. It is interesting that as much feedback as we get about disappointment in not being able to attend enough breakouts, we continue to get feedback asking for more.

I firmly believe that the breakout sessions continue to be a key part of the conference's success because of the degree of interaction that is considered in their planning and encouraged in their delivery. A high level of participation from the attendees is a key element for a successful breakout, and the willingness of some of the industry's top minds to lead breakouts has been a major contributor to the breakout sessions success. At the end of the day, however, the breakout sessions are all about content, content, content — and the credit for this belongs entirely to the creativity, diversity, experience, and professionalism of the Breakouts Planning Sub-Committee. Working with them was truly an amazing experience.

Who would benefit from attending the conference?

In the past, the ERA Conference was attended predominately by rep owners, along with some manufacturing members, but that has certainly changed to some degree. The addition of distributor members has contributed to a more diverse attendee list. However, I feel that the real driving factor as to who benefits from attending the conference is the content.

On the surface, the content of the conference has become very relative to anyone who has a vested interest in how to successfully participate in the field sales function of electronic parts and services. As a result of this content, anyone who needs to or wants to better understand and contribute to all aspects of a field sales team has much to benefit from attending an ERA Conference. I always try to bring my team members who are active in sales and distribution management, contribute to the long-term strategy of the organization, or have not been to an ERA Conference and wish to do so.

What is involved in the conference planning process? .

The planning process for the ERA Conference begins before the prior conference ends because the following conference chairperson is already planning to align their team. After the post conference survey results are digested and a list of volunteers is created, the chairperson strategically picks four reps and four manufacturers/distributors to co-chair the four sub-committee positions — Keynote, General Sessions, Breakout Sessions, and Sponsorship. This group, along with a few others, makes up the core Conference Committee.

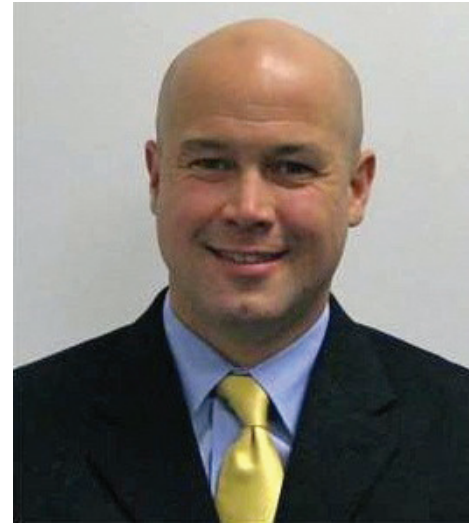
After the core committee is established, the chairperson assists the sub-committee co-chairs in picking their sub-committee members, at which point a series of core committee and sub-committee conference calls are scheduled.

It is during these sub-committee calls that the content for each sub-committee is created, while the progress of these calls is reported by the co-chairs back to the core committee for further discussion and review.

This structure allows for the delegation of responsibilities and the entire process has been incredibly streamlined. When you add the professional support of ERA Events Coordinator Erin Collins and the rest of the ERA staff, the commitment in time is minimal and your participation can be very rewarding.

I have answered questions at length regarding how invaluable ERA's conference has been to my organization and our industry, but I have neglected to recognize the generous support of the conference sponsors.

This year's 50th Anniversary Conference brought in a record number of sponsors. This allowed us to spend money on world class speakers and support the entire event from start to finish. Without all of you we would not have a conference and the entire ERA membership is grateful for your support. ■



John Hutson, CPMR

President

MacInnis Group

John Hutson, CPMR, is president of MacInnis Group and 2019 ERA Conference committee chair. He joined MacInnis in 1992. Prior to that, he held a sales engineer position at the Tyco Printed Circuit Group.

Hutson has held numerous New England Chapter level positions, is presently chapter president and has been involved on the past two ERA conference committees. He has a B.A. from Syracuse University, and an M.A. from Wesleyan University.

During his free time, John enjoys skiing in the winter, golfing in the summer and travels year-round.

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'You're gonna need a bigger boat!'

"You're gonna need a bigger boat!"

This statement was made to Quint as Captain of the Orca, the shark-hunting boat in JAWS. It remains as one of the all-time great ad-libbed lines. If you have never seen it as it was out 44 years ago (Yikes! Am I dating myself?), go find it on the web and watch it.

Several folks reminded me of this line during our 50th Anniversary Conference in Austin back in February. The funny reference was to the fact that our conference was SOLD OUT once again this year with the audience in the room approaching 400! Many of the attendees came up to me with congratulations while noting the SRO atmosphere. However, they also "cautioned" me to not become a victim of our own success; not to lose that "secret sauce" that makes our conference so special and somewhat unique. Our conference offers attendees the opportunity to choose the breakout topics that THEY want to listen to as opposed to a one-size-fits-all agenda.

We certainly are looking to take this advice to heart while we walk the tightrope during the planning session for our 2020 ERA Conference, scheduled for Feb. 23-25. But exactly how do we pull this off? An interesting dilemma for us for sure!

All of us at ERA are most appreciative and quite humbled at the resounding turnout at our conference. As we often say, it is YOU, the ERA members, who make ERA the great organization that it is. Your investment in time and precious treasury do not go unnoticed. More importantly, your active participation in our conference "hands-on" format allows for many lively discussions at both the General Sessions and the Breakout Sessions. Trust me when I say that your passion and commitment is never taken for granted.

All of us at ERA are most appreciative and quite humbled at the resounding turnout at our conference.

As we often say, it is YOU, the ERA members, who make ERA the great organization that it is.

Our conference is perhaps one of the most tangible services that ERA provides to its members. It provides a venue that is casual and informal, allowing for small and large reps, distributors and manufacturers to mingle and discuss common issues. As we often learn, regardless of the size of our company, our issues are the same. Even if we are competing reps or distributors in the same territory, or manufacturers with the same products/technology, we can often quickly get on a common ground, share best practices

on how we may have addressed this issue ourselves and learn from each other as fellow industry citizens. It allows our company presidents, VPs and sales personnel to actively interact with and learn from each other. In many cases, this one-of-a-kind event provides us the opportunity to meet industry folks that we would never meet due to geography or competitive challenges.

So, how can you help, you ask?

Our planning process for the 2020 Conference has already begun! We are positioning our different conference committees and sub-committees who will guide us in selecting the best content for our general sessions and breakout sessions and providing speaker recommendations. We are looking for volunteers to help us put on another great conference - with real and applicable content delivered by OUR ERA experts! The hours are long and the pay is lousy, but the reward is priceless!

So, do we really need or even want a "bigger boat"? It is really up to you as you guide our committee into the 2020 Planning Process - come help us figure out how to keep our boat the same size while delivering another great event!

Your captain.



by Walter E. Tobin
ERA CEO
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Save the date for next year's ERA Conference - February 23 - 25, 2020!

Moving ERA forward

Let me begin by thanking the ERA Board of Directors for the distinction of being elected your president — I am truly humbled; and in recognition of the trust inherent with this honor, I will work hard with you, the Executive Committee (XCOM), our CEO, and the entire talented ERA staff to continue to strengthen the association.

Speaking of the XCOM, let me also welcome Cameron English, CPMR, of English Technical Sales Southwest; Dave Fitzgerald of WESCO Sales Group Inc.; and Tom Griffin, CPMR, of Catalyst Sales Inc. as they join the committee. I look forward to your collective insight, and working with each of you.

And, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the significant contributions of Dan Parks, CPMR, of West Electronic Solutions and Kathie Cahill, CPMR, of Net Sales Company, whose terms on the XCOM have come to an end. You have both served with wisdom, distinction, and faithfulness — and I speak for the entire association in extending our sincere thanks and appreciation to you both. While your terms on the XCOM have ended, your contribution to our association continues.

Impressions from Austin

As I write this, I've just returned from the ERA 50th Anniversary Conference in Austin, Texas, where we "Celebrated the Past" while learning to "Embrace Tomorrow." This conference continues to be one of the premier networking and educational events in our industry; and our association should be very proud of both the product and the devoted efforts of the large team of volunteers and staff who put the conference together. Thank you all for a job well done!

A number of takeaways from the conference are running through my head: What better questions can I ask? How do I get the distracted customer's attention? How do I apply data analytics more effectively? What is

your non-verbal communication telling me? (More importantly, what are my non-verbals saying to you?) I'm sure I will need some time to process these and other thoughts, but two things from the conference stand out to me.

First, when we celebrate the past, it is the people and relationships in our industry that are the focus of our attention.

Second, as we embrace the future, it is the accelerating rate of change in the technologies of tomorrow that dominate our thoughts. I

invite you to take a look at the conference opening video — available on the ERA website. I think you'll see what I mean.

I believe ERA must continue to move forward as an association, facing the inherent challenges in front of us ...

Embrace the future: ERA objectives

With these two points providing perspective, I believe ERA must continue to move forward as an association, facing the inherent challenges in front of us with the following objectives and priorities.

1) Focus on our mission and relationships; prioritizing and never losing sight of providing value to the people of the 600-plus member companies of our association; including on the national level and through our unique local chapter structure.

2) Work to strengthen the operations infrastructure of our association; including providing staff development and growth opportunities as appropriate; widening volunteer opportunities and engagement points for our members; and building our financial base within the guidelines of our association by-laws to position us to both capitalize on future opportunities and weather future storms.

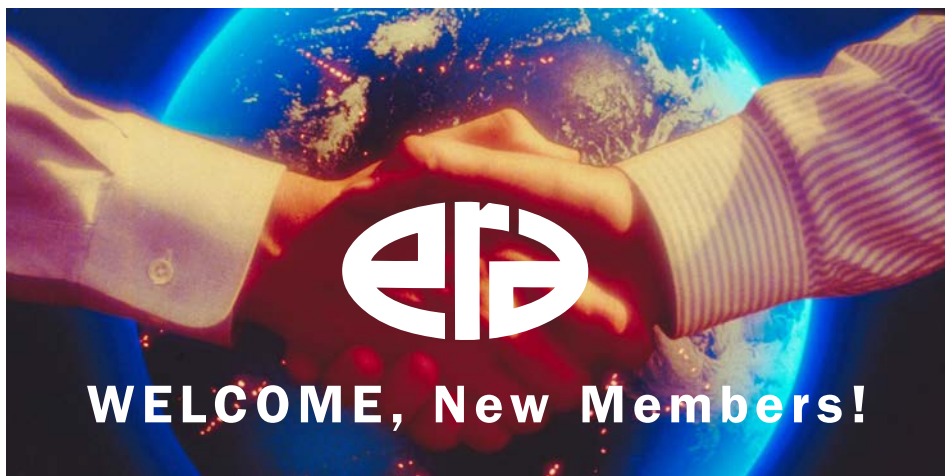
3) Continue to be a good industry citizen — globally; seeking to work collaboratively with complementary organizations such as ECIA, EDS, MRERF, electronica and others.

The XCOM has been working on all of these issues (and others); and will continue to

(continued on page 24)



by **Chuck Tanzola, CPMR**
The Fusion Sourcing Group Inc.
ERA President
ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com



These companies joined ERA since January 2019.

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

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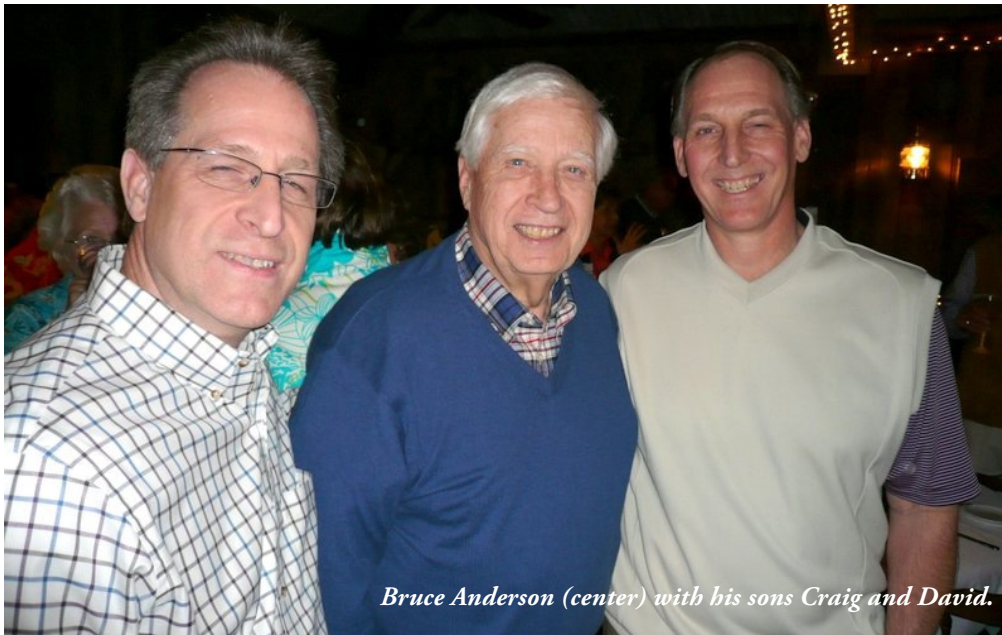
Most classes run for **six weeks** and include 12 two-hour lessons (that's **24 hours** of instruction!) for just **\$79** per course. To view the entire catalog ... read all the details about each class and instructor ... and then register, go to **ed2go.com/era**.

Recognizing past industry leaders

ERA has had a limited number of iconic leaders, just as in the world of politics and business. This column is designated to salute their efforts and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to ERA, our proud trade association. We are honored to recognize Bruce Anderson who epitomizes the perfect rep in the eyes of many. Keep reading and you will find out why he's a "Hall of Fame" recipient.

— Harry J. Abramson

Where is Bruce Anderson now...



Bruce Anderson (center) with his sons Craig and David.

ERA asked me to let you know what old reps do. So, I am writing this on my 84th birthday from Bonita Springs, Fla. Hope you will not be bored. I was born and raised in the Chicago area, received a B.A. in economics from Ripon College where I met my wife Ann, then received an MBA from Indiana University, followed by service to our country as a Nike missile battery commander. In 1960, my father offered me a job in his five-year-old rep firm selling electronic components. The transistor had just been developed. We were off on a wild ride of success and growth!

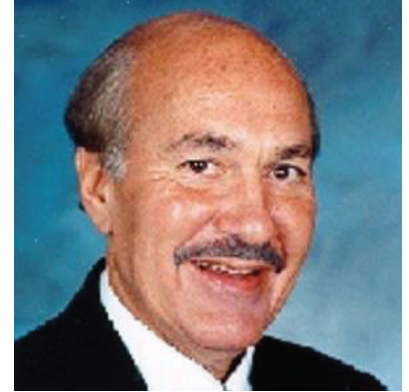
My father encouraged me to get involved with ERA, which I did with the Chicagoland-Wisconsin Chapter. I also attended the first Business Management Institute at the University of Illinois. I was present at the second annual ERA conference in 1964 and every successive one until my retirement in 2000. The ERA conferences made me aware of the advantages of continuing education, networking and success by giving back. While our firm grew and

prospered, I received great satisfaction from my friends, colleagues and industry involvement. A "rep study group" evolved where we met annually to exchange information on our successes and failures, borrowing from each other to improve our organizations.

I served as president of the Chicagoland-Wisconsin Chapter, and then chaired both the National Business Committee and two annual conferences. I was later elected as the vice president of ERA National, and served 12 years on the Executive Committee (XCOM) going through the chairs to president and chairman. At the same time, I was a board member and president of the EDS Show Board. During this period, my sons, Craig and David, joined our growing firm.

At the 1984 ERA Conference held in London at the White Pin Dinner, we raised \$250,000 which was used as seed money to create the Manufacturers' Representatives

(continued on page 24)



by Harry J. Abramson
Founder (Retired)
Electronic Salesmasters Inc.

Harry Abramson founded Electronic Salesmasters Inc. in 1972. He established industry notoriety by virtue of his firm's peak performance, hundreds of articles and speaking appearances at ERA's national conferences and chapter meetings and sister trade association MANA. He has an electrical engineering degree from Temple University and entered the electronics industry as an engineer at RCA in Camden, N.J.

His ERA involvement includes serving as vice president of the Components Group and president of the Ohio Chapter. Under his leadership, the chapter was awarded the National Chapter of the Year Award. Abramson recently was recognized with ERA's prestigious Life Membership Award.

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Not so fast!

Rep's statutory rights are protected from getting contracted away

Just when independent reps seem to have grown familiar with the sales rep protection statutes enacted in most states to help level the playing field with their principals, more and more of their contracts seem to get drafted with the aim of stripping those protections away. But are provisions inserted into rep contracts limiting sales rep statutes enforceable?

Before answering, a quick refresher is in order.

State legislatures who have passed these statutes recognize the important function sales reps play in their economies and have taken thoughtful steps to protect their commission streams upon termination.

California's statute, for example, expressly notes "that independent whole-sale sales representatives are a key ingredient to the California economy." Because sales reps "spend many hours developing their territory in order to properly market their products," the California legislature recognizes that they "should be provided unique protection from unjust termination of the territorial market areas."

A common theme among the states with sales rep protection acts is incentivizing their principals to timely pay commissions due. More accurately, the state statutes that have "teeth" disincentivize principals from withholding commissions after termination by enabling such principals to be found liable for double or triple the amount of withheld commissions, plus attorneys' fees.

Perhaps to get around these protections, manufacturers often insert language into rep contracts making them subject to the laws of a different state, which is often a state with no sales rep protection act, a weaker act or one that is not applicable. A Massachusetts rep,

for example, expecting to be protected by her home state's strong rep statute when a dispute erupts, can end up sorely disappointed should her rep contract be governed by the laws of Delaware, which has no rep statute.

Efforts to protect the sales rep protection statutes

Fortunately, many legislatures have grown wise to this maneuver, and have taken measures to prevent reps from losing the protections contained in their home state statutes upon signing a principal's heavy-handed contract. While sales rep protection statutes vary state to state, most contain a provision invalidating any contract term that would negate or limit the rights provided or would make the contract subject to the laws of a different state.

The New Jersey rep statute employs language similar to many others: "A provision in any contract between a sales representative and a principal purporting to waive any provision of this act, whether by express waiver or by a provision stipulating that the contract is subject to the laws of another state, shall be void." Clauses like this ensure that what a state legislature giveth, a manufacturer cannot readily taketh away.

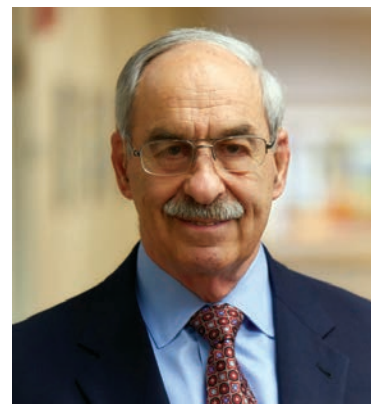
The facts presented in Hedding vs. The Pneu Fast Co.

The importance of these provisions was highlighted in a dispute decided earlier this year after Minnesota sales rep Curt Hedding, the owner of Hedding Sales & Service, contracted with The Pneu Fast Company, an

While sales rep protection statutes vary state to state, most contain a provision invalidating any contract term that would negate or limit the rights provided or would make the contract subject to the laws of a different state.



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by **Gerald M. Newman**
ERA General Counsel

Gerald M. Newman and Adam J. Glazer are partners in the law firm of Schoenberg Finkel Newman & Rosenberg LLC, and they serve as general counsel to ERA. They are also regular contributors to The Representor, and participate in Expert Access, the program that offers telephone consultations to ERA members.

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



Adam Glazer
ERA General Counsel

(continued on page 26)



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ERA's 50th Anniversary Conference

"Celebrate the Past, Embrace Tomorrow."



Part of the 2019 ERA Conference Core Committee: (L to R) Todd McAtee, Mouser Electronics/TTI; Tom Vanderheyden, TTI Inc.; Terri Straube, Straube Associates Inc.; Paul Dosser, Digi-Key Electronics; Holly Myers, CPMR, Genie Group; John Hutson, CPMR, MacInnis Group; Mike Swenson, CPMR, Mel Foster Company; Ken Bellerio, Schaffner EMC Inc.; Brian Flynn, Sager Electronics; Bryan White, CPMR, Catalyst Sales Inc.; and John O'Brien, CPMR, Coakley, Boyd and Abbett Inc.

ERA's 50th Anniversary Conference, held Feb. 24-26, drew record-breaking attendance. Almost 400 reps, manufacturers, distributors, suppliers and consultants gathered at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in Austin, Texas, to "Celebrate the Past. Embrace Tomorrow" and dedicate two full days to learning, sharing best practices and networking.

The conference agenda included a welcome reception, an opening keynote, four general sessions, 16 breakout sessions and an 50th Anniversary party.

The 2020 Conference Committee is now forming under the leadership of the new ERA Conference Chair, Mike Swenson, CPMR, and the 2020 ERA Conference is scheduled on Feb. 23-25, 2020, for a return to the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center in Austin. Save the date and watch for early registration and conference details coming soon.

Top: Attendees at the 2019 Conference Welcome Reception

Center: Holly Myers, CPMR, of Genie Group (left) and Chuck Tanzola, CPMR, of Fusion Sourcing Group (right).



Conference survey evaluation shows that 100% of 2019 Conference attendees would recommend the ERA Conference to a colleague!

Bottom left: ERA's legal counsel Gerry Newman (left) and ERA's chairman of the board Dave Norris of Norris & Associates Inc. (right).



Bottom right (L to R): Hugh Shyba of Westech Associates, Paul Pacent of Pacent Engineering Corp., past ERA Sr. Vice President/Membership Kathie Cahill, CPMR, of Net Sales, and ERA's Sr. Vice President/Industry Bob Evans, CPMR, of EK Micro.





Top left: ERA Conference Committee Chair John Hutson, CPMR, of MacInnis Group

Top right: Committee Chair John Hutson, CPMR, delivering the 2019 ERA Conference opening remarks to a packed house.

Bottom left: Linda Clemons, an expert in understanding body language, presenting the General Session "I See What You Are Thinking: The Power of Nonverbal Communication."

Bottom center: Keynote speaker Curt Steinhorst presenting "Can I Have Your Attention? Reach the Distracted Customer."

Bottom right: Jim Moore, president of Fralia Co. & Associates, and his band The Empty Pockets at the Monday night Anniversary Party.



Top: ERA CEO Water Tobin (left) and ERA's Website Administrator Katherine Green (center) presented Dave Norris of Norris & Associates Inc. with the 2018 Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award.

The Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award was established in 2004 to honor the late Ray Hall, who served as CEO of ERA for almost 40 years.



**2019 ERA
Conference
feedback: More
than 79.41%
of conference
attendees said the
event delivered
excellent value for
their investment.**

Bottom left: Kathie Cahill, CPMR, of Net Sales Company (right) presented the Third Annual Tess Hill Award to Bob Evans, CPMR, of EK Micro.

Bottom center: Mike Swenson, CPMR, of Mel Foster Company (right), presented ERA's Lifetime Achievement Award to Mark Larson of Digi-Key Electronics (left).

Bottom right: Mark Motsinger (right) presented the 2018 Jess Spoons White Pin Award to Ellen Coan, CPMR, C C Electro Sales Inc. (left).

FROM THE TOP: Moving ERA forward

(continued from page 15)

do so over the coming days, weeks and months. We also welcome your input.

Closing thoughts – and off to EDS and Las Vegas

As I move to a close of this article, I also move to thoughts of the upcoming EDS Summit in Las Vegas the week of May 6th.

From multiple discussions with colleagues about EDS, I can tell you that the weather will be gorgeous (probably). The elevators will be easy to navigate (probably not). All of the presentations you attend will be stimulating (you decide); every committed action item will be accomplished (or not); and you will win in the casinos (odds are against it). If this seems to be a bit “tongue in cheek,” it is. However, from those conversations, and years of personal experience, I can tell you that, in all seriousness, relationships will be made and built in Las Vegas (for sure), but only if you are there.

That’s it for now – I think this weekend I’ll watch my favorite movie – Fiddler on the Roof (with the sound off). #Tradition #IfIWereRichMan

As always, I can be reached at ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com and welcome your comments and feedback. If you attended the ERA 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.

Oh, and see you all in Las Vegas at EDS! ■

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Bruce Anderson

(continued from page 17)

Educational Research Foundation (MRERF). The XCOM asked me to get it started. We recruited an education doctoral student, Marilyn Stevens, and provided her with an office in our building. Dr. Stevens completed her doctoral studies in continuing education and became the Executive Director of MRERF. I was president and Ray Hall used his contacts to recruit 40 other industry associations to become members of the foundation. This led to the CPMR program, where I served as president earning my own certification. My sons, Craig and David, followed my lead.

After retirement in 2000, Ann and I purchased a home in Bonita Springs, Fla. We spent half the year in Florida and the other half in Illinois. Besides travel, boating, golf and making many new friends, we did volunteer work. Ann helped raise money over an eight-year period to build a hospice facility for the community. My cause of choice was Habitat for Humanity where neighbors formed a group to raise funds for H4H building homes for families in need in our area. I was assigned the task as construction supervisor for 80 “nail pounders.” We built as many as six homes in a four-month season. It was very rewarding at the end of a day when you can step back and see what you have accomplished. Other activities included programs for local veterans in need, raising funds for after school educational programs, and securing and improving land for low income housing. The late President George H. W. Bush discussed the “Thousand Points of Light” in support of volunteerism. They are everywhere! Participating in them is a very gratifying experience for an old rep.

The highlight has been the circumnavigation of the eastern half of the U.S. (5,000 miles) on my own boat. On several legs we were assisted by fellow boaters and ERA members: Gene Foster, Tim Coakley and Dave Locke with their wives. In April this year, I will complete my final cruising leg on my circumnavigation of the earth by ship.

I have maintained a relationship with Sumer Inc. They kept me on as non-executive chairman, bouncing ideas off of me and occasionally asking my advice. Sadly, my son David recently died which drew me closer to the firm again. Meanwhile, two of Craig’s sons have joined the firm: that makes Sumer Inc. a fourth generation firm! Is that a record for ERA?

My wife, Ann passed in 2010 after a five-year battle with cancer. She was my light, my compass and a terrific “first lady.” I now live with my partner Judy and plan to move into a retirement facility in Naples. Come see us when you are in southwest Florida. ■

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Smartsizing electronic distribution, from Long Island to the world

Moving from one business location to another generally involves upsizing or downsizing. However, in the case of Peerless Electronics Inc., a distributor of electromechanical and passive devices, their recent move involved smartsizing.

Moving can be exhausting for businesses regardless of type or size. Decision-makers have to balance vision with reality in considering the entire process. There is also much to consider: projected expenses, interminable planning, on-the-fly adjustments, contingency options and concerns about key people. The potential for downtime, interruptions in service and a litany of other vital items must be planned for. Moving is a challenge and requires thoughtful planning and a strategy to ensure success.

Peerless Electronics experienced a number of challenges while also dealing with fast-changing markets, governmental flip flopping and the ever-present need to stay ahead of the competition, but the 74-year-old distributor was motivated to achieve a seamless transition. That's where smartsizing became a solution for the company.

Carpe diem

Peerless Electronics Chief Executive Officer Robert M. Levine explained the strategy behind the move. "The impetus for smartsizing originated with becoming an employee owned company (ESOP) in 2012. We reassessed how we conducted business and implemented a plan to achieve better business today and in tomorrow's world. Smartsizing our processes, procedures and operations were at the forefront, including switching to an integrated ERP system. The final step was the physical move to a facility that enabled us to incorporate more advanced automation into our warehouse."

Armed with a goal and a purpose, Peerless' leadership seized the day and took a long, hard look at its future and the industry's future as well. The scope of the vision was expanded to modernize the distributor's identity, including image and logo modification, positioning and branding, in the same way that they were modernizing facilities and capabilities.

Smartsizing ins and outs

Smartsizing an organization that was one of the founders of the electronics distribution industry following World War II required careful ergonomic streamlining with an emphasis on quality and total customer satisfaction. Efficiencies were realized ranging from warehouse and office space to trying on new marketing protocols for size, and an invigorated



Designed by Pressfoto / Freepik

web presence — all of which would benefit from the redefined identity and clarified mission.

"Smartsizing became a reality early on in our process of evaluation that went far beyond a physical relocation," Peerless President Bill Gallucci stated. "We needed better utilization of space, so an initial goal was to identify and utilize the appropriate size space. It was important to have space that was dedicated and efficiently designed to electronic distribution needs in order to achieve maximum efficiency. Similarly, we extended smartsizing on all fronts, including our positioning within the distribution industry, in our vertical markets, to our customers and end users and to our own people. This included revitalization of our messaging, our mission and our brand."

Out with the old, in with the new

The Peerless executive management team considered several geographies, scoured available locations, but ultimately elected to relocate within the Long Island area. Smartsizing dictated that any new facility needed to be:

1. Conveniently located to enable Peerless' long-standing, highly skilled employee owner (ESOP) work force to commute quickly and easily.
2. Capable of being repurposed for a modern distributor of electromechanical and passive devices and to accommodate time and labor saving practices proprietary to Peerless.

(continued on page 28)

Illinois manufacturer of nails and staples used in power tools. Hedding's nine-state sales territory included Minnesota and Ohio, and his rep contract called for Ohio law to govern.

Hedding was to receive a 10 percent commission for the first year on new accounts, and 5 percent thereafter. This meant that when Hedding brought in the major home improvement chain Menards as a new Pneu Fast account, it was entitled to receive 10 percent of the first-year sales, and then 5 percent of continuing sales.

Although Pneu Fast never paid more than 4 percent, Hedding continued growing the account, and expanded it into additional states. In a not uncommon response to a rep's hugely successful efforts, Pneu Fast terminated Hedding effective immediately — without explanation or a chance to cure.

Hedding responded by filing a one-count complaint in Minneapolis federal court alleging his termination violated the Minnesota sales rep statute. Pneu Fast moved to dismiss, pointing to the rep contract language calling for Ohio law to govern.

Unique among sales rep laws, the Minnesota statute is aimed at limiting the circumstances under which rep agreements can be terminated. Under the act, a manufacturer needs good cause to terminate a rep, and must give the rep at least 90 days' notice before the expiration of the agreement or 60 days in which to correct the stated reason for termination. A manufacturer lacking good cause to terminate must either renew the rep agreement or notify the rep at least 90 days before it expires of its intent not to renew.

Hedding's complaint alleged Pneu Fast violated the Minnesota rep statute by lacking good cause to terminate, failing to notify Hedding in advance of termination and withholding commissions upon termination.

The Minnesota statute was modified in 2014 to add language stating that its protections cannot be "circumvented" by subjecting a Minnesota rep to the laws of another state or by requiring the rep to waive any of its provisions. Any such attempt "is void and unenforceable."

After quickly determining that Pneu Fast's termination of Hedding did not comply with Minnesota's sales rep statute, the court had to consider whether to apply that statute or the Ohio statute, as Pneu Fast argued. Ohio's rep statute offered no comparable protections so a determination that Ohio law applied would end Hedding's suit.

Courts traditionally honor contractual choice-of-law provisions, but parties do not enjoy "unchecked power" to select the governing law, particularly where the legislature "expressed an intent to protect its citizens with its own laws by voiding" such choice-of-law provisions. The court explained that the state law chosen by the parties must give way where it is contrary to a fundamental policy of a state, and that state has a significantly greater interest in the issue.

Such was the case here. The court found that the Minnesota legislature clearly expressed its intent to "prioritize the statute's protections over parties' choice-of-law," and that Minnesota had "a clearly-defined policy of protecting its sales representatives from agreements purporting to waive the protections" of its rep statute.

Any other finding "would allow Pneu Fast to accomplish precisely what the Minnesota Legislature intended to prohibit when it enacted the 2014 Anti-Waiver provision. That is, it would allow Pneu Fast to circumvent the requirements of" Minnesota's rep statute "by discarding Minnesota law altogether in favor of the laws of another state."

Based on Minnesota's strong interest in protecting its sales reps, the court concluded that "the parties' Ohio choice-of-law provision is null and void," and the Minnesota rep statute would apply. Finding that Hedding adequately alleged a claim for breach of that statute, the court denied Pneu Fast's motion to dismiss.

Accordingly, Hedding's case continued, and he would have the opportunity to take discovery and seek to hold Pneu Fast accountable for the commission underpayment. The court's ruling applying the Minnesota statute to protect a Minnesota rep meant Hedding would get his day in court. ■

Staring at a blank sheet, or more accurately a blank screen, is how I begin to write these articles. Well not really, the real start is the research that goes into gathering material to fuel the content. Looking at periodicals, online blogs, talking to other folks in the industry and reflecting on my own experience are all sources of inspiration.

Looking at all those inputs again this month, the story seems to remain the same. Component lead times, while beginning to show some improvement, are still extended beyond normal. The MLCC market is disrupted by “End-of-Life” scenarios as the manufacturers rationalize their product offerings and selections. The automotive industry, both internal combustion and electric, and the cellular telephony industry continue to drive volumes that impact the rest of the world’s ability to procure components. We are hearing that relief may be in sight; time will tell.

So I am going to take this opportunity to talk about something else. Anyone who attended the ERA National Conference this past February knows exactly what I mean when I say, how about that conference? Kudos to Conference Committee Chair John Hutson, CPMR, of MacInnis Group who led the team that put together this conference. Untold hours of time dedicated by the conference committee members yielded a fantastic tribute to the previous 49 conferences held by our organization. The time spent in Austin was extremely valuable and sent all attendees home with unparalleled content and takeaways; not to mention the networking with fellow players in the electronics industry. Thank you to everyone involved, and thank you to all attendees for your support and for taking the time to come to Austin. We’ll see you all in Austin next year, Feb. 23-25.

I just read an article in the March issue of *Automotive Engineering* titled, “New Co. vs. Old Co.” It discussed the impact that the progression of electrified, connected and autonomous vehicles will have, not only on the auto makers, but the OEMs supplying components for the vehicles. It also discussed the need to maintain the ability to supply the current components for today’s vehicles while funding the research and development for the new components needed moving forward. Essentially keeping the “Old Co.” funded and running smoothly while finding a way to fund and develop the “New Co.” all the while plotting a way to transition and stay profitable. It’s kind of like hitting a moving target.

This dilemma faces not only the automotive industry but most manufacturing industries. Think about the impact that technology is having on the aircraft industry, appliance industry, communications (new cell phone every year), healthcare, and the list goes on.

The “New Co. vs Old Co.” certainly is present in our industry. Having gotten my start in distribution, the progression has been dramatic. In the early years, inventory was pretty simple. The expected life cycle for components, especially in the replacement market, was pretty long, and you could establish and maintain inventory levels with reasonable assurance that the product would move off the shelf in a fairly predictable timeframe. Not so today.

Life cycles are much shorter, especially in the “consumer” world where it’s a throw-away world. The industrial market is better, allowing electrical and industrial distribution to perform in a more conventional distribution model. Electronic OEM distribution performs a strategic function in the supply chain of insuring that needed components get to the OEM in a timely manner to insure an uninterrupted manufacturing process.

This progression in distribution has been both “catastrophic” and rewarding. Catastrophic for those distributors who chose to remain in the “Old Co.” mode and continue in that format until they locked the doors, rewarding for the progressive distributors who embraced the “New Co.” format and explored and found ways to thrive in the environment.

The rep community falls into much the same format. I have fond memories of many good rep friends who continued in the mold of “that’s the way we have always done it” and unfortunately they are “no longer doing it.” Through our years in business we have “reinvented” ourselves many times to fit the ever-changing market we serve. So have many of our other rep friends. It’s necessary if we are to survive and thrive. I implore each one to take a good look at the “New Co. vs. Old Co.” and take steps to ensure that as our industry moves ahead, each of us is constantly in the “New Co.” mode.

COMPONENTS

Bob Evans, CPMR

EK Micro

Rolling Meadows, Ill.

Component lead times remain extended

MATERIALS, ASSEMBLY, PRODUCTION & SUPPLY

Troy Gunnin

Sun Rep Inc.

Tampa, Fla.

Embracing a ‘New Co.’ mode to meet the demands of an ever-changing market

DISTRIBUTOR UPDATE: Smartsizing electronic distribution

(continued from page 25)

3. Able to easily accommodate expansion and growth.

The new facility headquarters at 85 Adams Avenue in Hauppauge, N.Y., met the requirements. It was centrally located in western Suffolk County in Long Island's largest industrial/manufacturing area.

"This geography is eminently reachable for our workforce and also features close proximity to Islip MacArthur Airport," Gallucci noted. "It is the heart of Long Island's manufacturing area, has a strong business association and includes an international Foreign Trade Zone. This location made perfect sense for us as we distribute some of the top leading lines all over the country and internationally."

Spacious and in good repair, the facility was gutted to a shell and repurposed for present and future efficiencies and distribution realities. For example, a new state-of-the-art barcode scanning system was put in place which allows for random inventory placement. The end results are greater efficiency, significant manpower savings and better space utilization.

Designing space ergonomically

"We recognized that in growing our business we needed to be increasingly more efficient over time,"

Gallucci said. "That meant starting with a better layout for inventory placement and warehousing management that would reduce time locating, checking, packing and shipping the electromechanical and passive components that our customers required."

"We also rethought our Value-Added Department in order to more efficiently handle the numerous operations that customers want such as assembly, kitting, military qualified packaging and soldering. Our VA offering includes over 50 services. Now, with rededicated space and improved capabilities, we are capable of tackling more types of VA services under one roof, a decided advantage for customers, offer faster turnaround time as well as compete better on cost while maintaining the commitment to quality that we are known for."

Updating Peerless' identity

While brick and mortar may be the most recognizable aspect of smartsizing, albeit one that most distributor customers will never encounter in person, the smartsizing of Peerless included more visible aspects.

Peerless Marketing Manager Edward Combs explained: "We understood the need to update our outreach and approach to both customers and suppliers. Our old Peerless logo had been in place longer than any existing employee could recall.

"We asked ourselves: Why change something that many saw as an icon of the electronics distribution industry itself, since Peerless has been around since 1945?

"A strategic survey conducted by an independent firm validated many beliefs held by our employees, and the decision to modernize, rather than to completely replace the symbol, was made. Today, our new identity involves the best of both worlds. The new logo design and color palette are reminiscent of their predecessors and all the good things that they stood for; however the star burst looking forward and embracing the future better reflects what we at Peerless are striving to do."

The same held true for the way Peerless addressed existing customers and prospects. Smartsizing identity meant development of and adherence to a revamped mission to enable OEMs and other customers to meet their manufacturing and maintenance needs by providing them with the highest quality products from an extensive inventory, in an expedient timeframe backed by unparalleled levels of knowledge, expertise and service.

The results of smartsizing

"The electronics components distributor of today must be agile, consultative and solutions-oriented," Gallucci remarked, "and must be able to assist designers, engineers as well as purchasing agents and buyers. Our new mission statement addresses those facts and includes something that we practice day in day out, 'We do it all for you.' It's true. And we will be able to do it even faster and better from this new dedicated distribution facility with a new identity and the expertise of our experienced team."

Gallucci summed up the smartsizing initiative at Peerless.

"Peerless Electronics has been an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) organization since 2012, so the smartsizing of Peerless provides a stronger foundation built with loyal employees, loyal customers and loyal suppliers. That's the Peerless brand in a nutshell. We feel confident that this focus will help the organization to prosper now and into the future." ■



This article was written by Laura Heckman, marketing assistant and website administrator for Peerless Electronics, Inc. You can reach Heckman at 516-594-3576 or by email at lheckman@peerlesselectronics.com.

ERA ELECTS NEW OFFICERS FOR 2019-2021 TERM

The Electronics Representatives Association (ERA) has announced that its board of directors elected new national officers for the 2019-2021 term during its Feb. 27, 2019, meeting. They are: chairman of the board – Dave Norris of Norris & Associates; president – Chuck Tanzola, CPMR, of the Fusion Sourcing Group; senior vice president / fiscal and legal – John O'Brien, CPMR, of Coakley, Boyd and Abbott; senior vice president / education – Tom Griffin, CPMR, of Catalyst Sales Inc.; senior vice president / membership – Cameron English, CPMR, of English Technical Sales Southwest; senior vice president / industry – Bob Evans, CPMR, of EK Micro; and senior vice president at large – David Fitzgerald of WESCO Sales Group Inc.

Griffin, English and Fitzgerald are new members of the association's executive committee. Norris succeeds the outgoing chairman, Dan Parks, CPMR, of West Electronic Solutions, who concluded seven years as a national officer. The continuing executive committee members are: Ken Bellerio, president of Schaffner EMC Inc., the manufacturer delegate; Chris Beeson, executive vice president of sales and supplier management for Digi-Key Electronics, the distributor delegate; and ERA CEO Walter Tobin, who serves as an ex officio member.

DAVID NORRIS NAMED RECIPIENT OF RAY HALL SPIRIT OF ERA AWARD

ERA announced that David Norris, president of Norris & Associates Inc. of Hingham, Mass., is the 13th recipient of the Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award. Norris is the association's current chairman of the board and has served on the ERA Executive Committee since 2004.

The Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award was established in 2004 to honor the late Ray Hall, who served as CEO of ERA for almost 40 years. The award recognizes individuals who exemplify the spirit of ERA through their commitment to serving and advancing the professional field sales (manufacturers' representative) function. Norris was nominated for the award by Cameron English.

"I am honored and deeply moved to have been selected as the recipient of the 2018 Ray Hall Spirit of ERA Award," Norris said. "Ray was the driving force behind ERA for most of my nearly four decades as a member. All that I know about the rep business I have learned through the generosity and support of fellow ERA members. Ray led the charge as the ERA community grew and expanded its reach and relevance during his tenure as CEO. I only wish he was still with us so that I could thank him for all he did for our industry and for the professionalism of manufacturers' representatives."

ERA HONORS BOB EVANS, CPMR, WITH 2019 TESS HILL AWARD

At its 50th Anniversary Conference, held in Austin, Texas, Feb. 24-26, ERA presented the third annual Tess Hill Award to Bob Evans, CPMR, president of EK Micro in Rolling Meadows, Ill.

Evans was recognized for his nearly 20 years of contribution to ERA at the chapter and national levels, his long-standing commitment to education as the current chair of the Chapter Leadership Council, and his service to both the Chicagoland-Wisconsin Chapter and the ERA Executive Committee.

This award was created in 2017 to honor Tess Hill, a long-time ERA staff member. It recognizes individuals for their longevity of service to ERA, for inspiring volunteerism in its highest form and for their dedication to ERA's educational mission.

"To say that it was humbling for me to receive an award bearing Tess Hill's name, and one previously bestowed upon Tess and Kathie Cahill, would be a gross understatement," Evans said. "In my mind, they have always been foundational figures of ERA, setting a standard of excellence rarely equaled. To be mentioned in their company was an amazing surprise to me, for which I am very grateful."

MARK LARSON NAMED RECIPIENT OF ERA'S LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mark Larson, vice chairman of Digi-Key Electronics was presented ERA's 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award at the association's 50th Anniversary Conference in Austin. The award was created to recognize individuals who play an integral role in supporting the manufacturers' representative model in the electronics industry.

When notified of the award, Larson commented, "The success that Digi-Key has enjoyed, growing from a tiny electronic component distributor to become the fourth largest distributor in North America and the fifth largest distributor in the world, has not happened by accident. Its growth is the result of the natural synergies that are inherent in the three-point sales relationship of the manufacturer, the manufacturers' rep and the unique business model that Digi-Key created. It has been personally very rewarding to have had a part in creating this remarkably efficient sales relationship that serves the customer with minimal redundancy and minimal sales channel conflict. We often speak of "win-win" situations, or better yet, "win-win-win". But amazing as it may seem, we have created a "win-win-win-win" — a win for the manufacturer, a win for the rep, a win for Digi-Key, and most important of all, a win for the customer."



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.

Chapter of the Year Awards announced

At its 50th Anniversary Conference, held Feb. 24-26 in Austin, Texas, the Electronics Representatives Association (ERA) announced the chapters that have been selected as Chapters of the Year award recipients for their 2018 activities. The awards are based on four categories: Education, Membership/Member Services, Special Projects and Marketing Services.

The award recipients were:

- Education - Chicagoland-Wisconsin ERA for its event called "Lie to Me: The Science Behind Reading Hidden Emotions."
- Membership and Member Services - Southwest ERA for its multi-city - Dallas, Austin and Houston - member lunch meetings.
- Special Projects - Northern California ERA for its Women in Leadership panel discussion and networking event.
- Marketing Services - Arizona ERA for its Sonoran Silicon Valley Tech Show and Gathering in Phoenix.

Seven chapters submitted a total of 18 entries. The judging panel consisted of ERA CEO Walter Tobin and former Chapter Officer Leadership Training (COLT) graduates Matt Cohen, CPMR, of the Michigan Chapter, Adam Grigor of the Canada Chapter and Peter Conlan of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter. As chair of the Chapter Leadership Council, Bob Evans, CPMR, coordinated the awards and moderated the judging panel.

CAROLINAS

Carolinas ERA is hosting bimonthly breakfast meetings. The chapter is planning an educational event featuring a Cyber Security expert in the spring. Details to come soon. The chapter also held its annual DTAM and 2019 Rep-Distributor Forum meeting on March 4.

CHICAGOLAND - WISCONSIN

The Chicagoland-Wisconsin Chapter held its spring program on April 5. The program featured a round table discussion and ERA Conference wrap-up highlighting the two must-see breakout sessions, "The Sales Person and Rep Firm of the Future!"

INDIANA - KENTUCKY

On April 11, Indiana-Kentucky ERA sponsored a "for fun" gathering at Top Golf in Fishers, Ind. The only competition was within the foursome so it was fun for golfers, non-golfers and families alike.

NEW ENGLAND

New England ERA held a dinner event on March 27 at Waxy O'Connors in Lexington, Mass. The event featured guest speaker ERA Consultant Cesare Giammarco who presented "The Profile of the Manufacturers' Rep Firm of the Future." Giammarco's presentation, which

was also one of the most well-attended breakout sessions at the 2019 ERA Conference, focused on how the roles and responsibilities of the successful rep have changed over time. He addressed what the successful manufacturers' rep company of the future will look like, and what can reps do now to position themselves for success.



L to R: Mike Walsh, John Hutson, Cesare Giammarco, Julie Carr, Adam Anderson at the New England Chapter event.

METRO NEW YORK

The chapter has set the date of June 24 for its Fourth Annual ERA Charity Golf Outing at St. George's Golf and Country Club. Details to come soon.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Northern California ERA hosted a dinner event on March 26 featuring guest speaker David Ginsberg, vice president of supply chain for Sonic Manufacturing Technologies Inc. Ginsberg's presentation, "The Digital Supply Chain: Better, Faster, Cheaper & Now," focused on the how-to and why of digital supply chains for the electronics industry and beyond; making inquiries into the limitations of yesteryear's model, the tech that can literally be deployed today, and the measured cost and performance of the new digital supply chain as a competitive business and marketing strategy for tomorrow.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Jennifer Eby, secretary of the Pacific Northwest (PacNW) Chapter, led the first local "Women in Electronics" Seattle-area chapter event. Applied Technology Services, a large contract manufacturer in the Seattle area, hosted the event. Twelve women from all parts of the electronics industry were represented at the event, including distributors, manufacturers, EMS companies and OEMs.



L to R: Dave Fitzgerald, Jennifer Eby, Mark Taylor, George Allecci of the PacNW Chapter.

The chapter recently released a new website (<https://era-pnw.org>).

On Jan. 30, PacNW ERA held a post-holiday networking event at the Bellevue Brewing Company in Bellevue, Wash. This was the first event in the Seattle area that was open to representatives, distributors, and in one case, a principal in over 10 years. Close to 30 participants discussed industry trends, concerns and changes. The chapter plans to do two more similar functions in 2019.

In appreciation of his outstanding

contributions and achievements to the electronics industry and ERA for more than 37 years, ERA-PacNW recognizes Mark Taylor, formerly of EBCO, with the 2018 Life Membership Award.

During his 37+ years as a representative and owner, Taylor has held various positions with PacNW ERA and has participated in numerous National ERA conferences.

"Mark Taylor's accomplishments speak for themselves. He has been a testament to what it takes to be a leading manufacturers' representative for such an extended tenure, he is a tremendous example to all of us in the industry," said Dave Fitzgerald, president of PacNW ERA.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

On March 6, Southern California ERA held a meeting for members to meet the new Board of Directors and support the local Southern California Chapter. The chapter had a special guest speaker, Dr. Raymond Sfeir. He spoke on Southern California Economics at the Oak Creek Golf Club.

SOUTHWEST CHAPTER

The chapter will be holding three events in 2019. Each is scheduled to be a lunch event, and the dates are tentatively set for June 7 in Dallas, July 12 in Austin and Nov. 1 in Houston. Southwest ERA also is considering organizing a donation aimed to support STEAM in schools in the area. Up for consideration are ideas like FIRST Robotics (in various divisions), donations at campuses for STEAM activities, sponsoring school events or teams for STEAM, etc.

SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS

The Spirit of St. Louis Chapter is reporting membership growth with 30 current members. The chapter is working on slowly reorganizing to fit the ERA National model by implementing changes to its bylaws and being cognizant of having distributors, manufacturers and reps, all working together. The chapter also is reorganizing its local show to include more seminars along with limited floor space and times.

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- Line Portfolio Evaluation
- Outsourced Field Sales: Adding Value for the Customer (CD)
- Outsourcing Field Sales (Fortune Magazine Reprint)
- The Value of Outsourced Field Sales (EBN Reprint)
- Selling Through Manufacturers' Representatives
- ERA Code of Ethics
- Recommended Technical Standards for Distribution Point-of-Sale Reporting
- FAQs Manufacturers Ask About Representatives
- Split Influence Recommendations for the Electronics Industry
- State Rep Commission Protection Acts
- ERA Membership Pins
- ERA Logos

ERA Meetings & Programs

- 2019 COLT Webinar - Oct. 23, 2019
- Board of Directors Meeting - Oct. 24, 2019
- COLT In-Person Workshop - Nov. 6-7, 2019
- 2020 ERA Conference - Feb. 23-25, 2020

A book review and recommendation by Dan Beaulieu

GAP Selling: Getting the Customer to Yes: How Problem-Centric Selling Increases Sales by Changing Everything You Know About Relationships, Overcoming Objections, Closing and Price

by Keenan

Copyright: 2018

Price: Kindle Edition \$9.99 / Hardcover \$24.30

Pages: 197

This one will rock your world

This is the best book on selling that I've read in 10 years. And I read all of them. Get ready for the ride of your life.

This book debunks all of the so-called axioms about selling that you have heard over the course of your career. In this book, the author, Keenan, handles all of that sticky stuff that slows down; nay, just about kills your sales efforts.

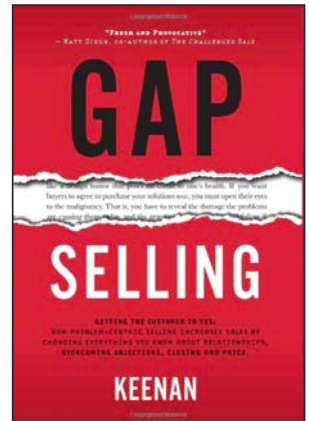
Here are some of the more cogent examples from the book:

- Customers do not care about you. They do not care about your company, or how long it has been in business, or how it started. The customers only care about one thing, and that is, what can you do for them?
- The salesperson is dead. You are a consultant, an advisor, an expert, someone who is a peer, someone who the customer comes to rely on for valuable solutions.
- Customers don't buy from friends, or drinking buddies, or golf partners. Customers buy from someone who can bring them value ... Yes, even if they don't actually like that person.
- Customers do like change. Heck, they will embrace change if you can prove to them that it will make their product and their company better.
- Show them the future. Customers will change when the future you show them is better than the present they told you they liked.
- Customers will return your phone calls and answer your emails: if they are provocative enough; if the messages surprise them; and if they are intrigued. You don't like to answer boring sales calls, why should your customer?

And there is so much more. The author shows you how to move the customer off the dime when he is stalling. Or, how to get her to talk and into telling you what she needs, by asking her a series of questions that will drive her to let you solve her problems.

I started sending this book out to some of my sales training clients even before I finished reading it. Please, if you are the kind of person who never reads a book on sales, start today with this one. Or, if you are the kind of person who is reading sales books all the time, grab this one next. Heck, stop reading the one in your hand right now and pick this one up. I guarantee you that it is better than the book you are reading now.

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.



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Fall date(s) will be announced soon! Email us at certify@MRERF.org to be notified of MBP in the fall or for more information.



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BMA Technologies	45
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C C Electro	45
Conquest Technical Sales	42
Dytec-NCI Inc.	42
Groh Associates	43
GSA	44
Jacobsen Associates Inc.	41
MacInnis Group	43
Performance Technical Sales	42
PMR	39
Power Component Sales	43
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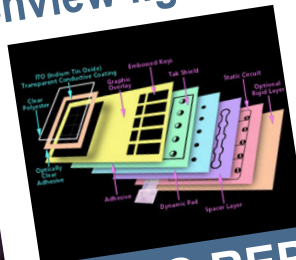
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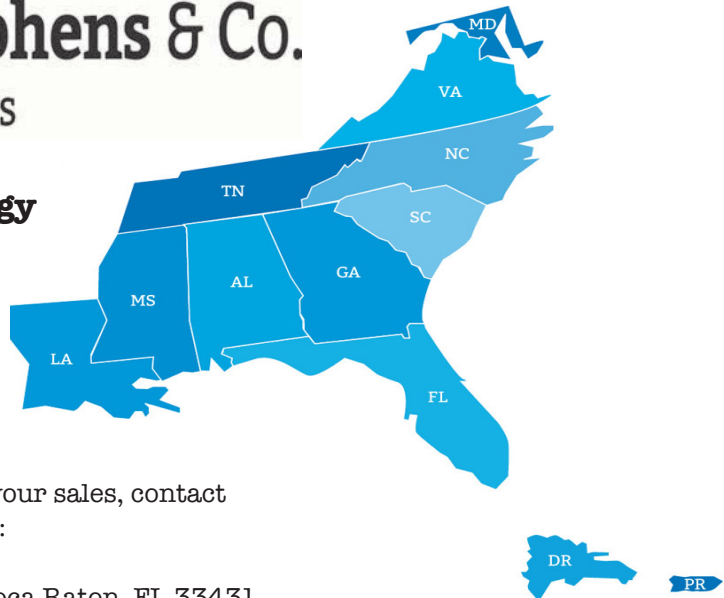
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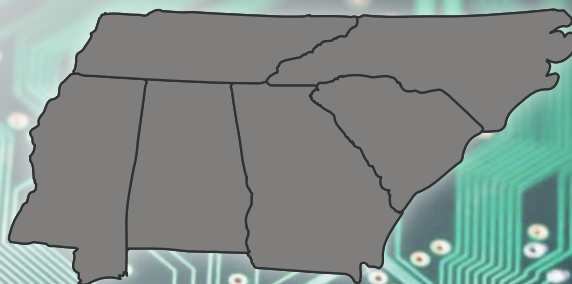


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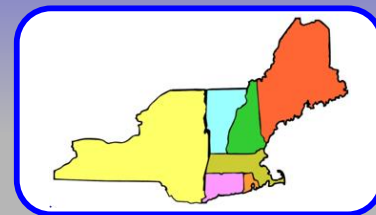
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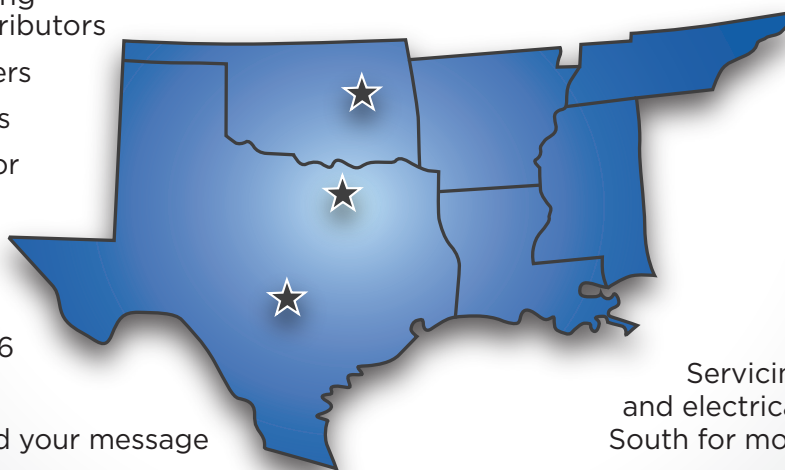
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