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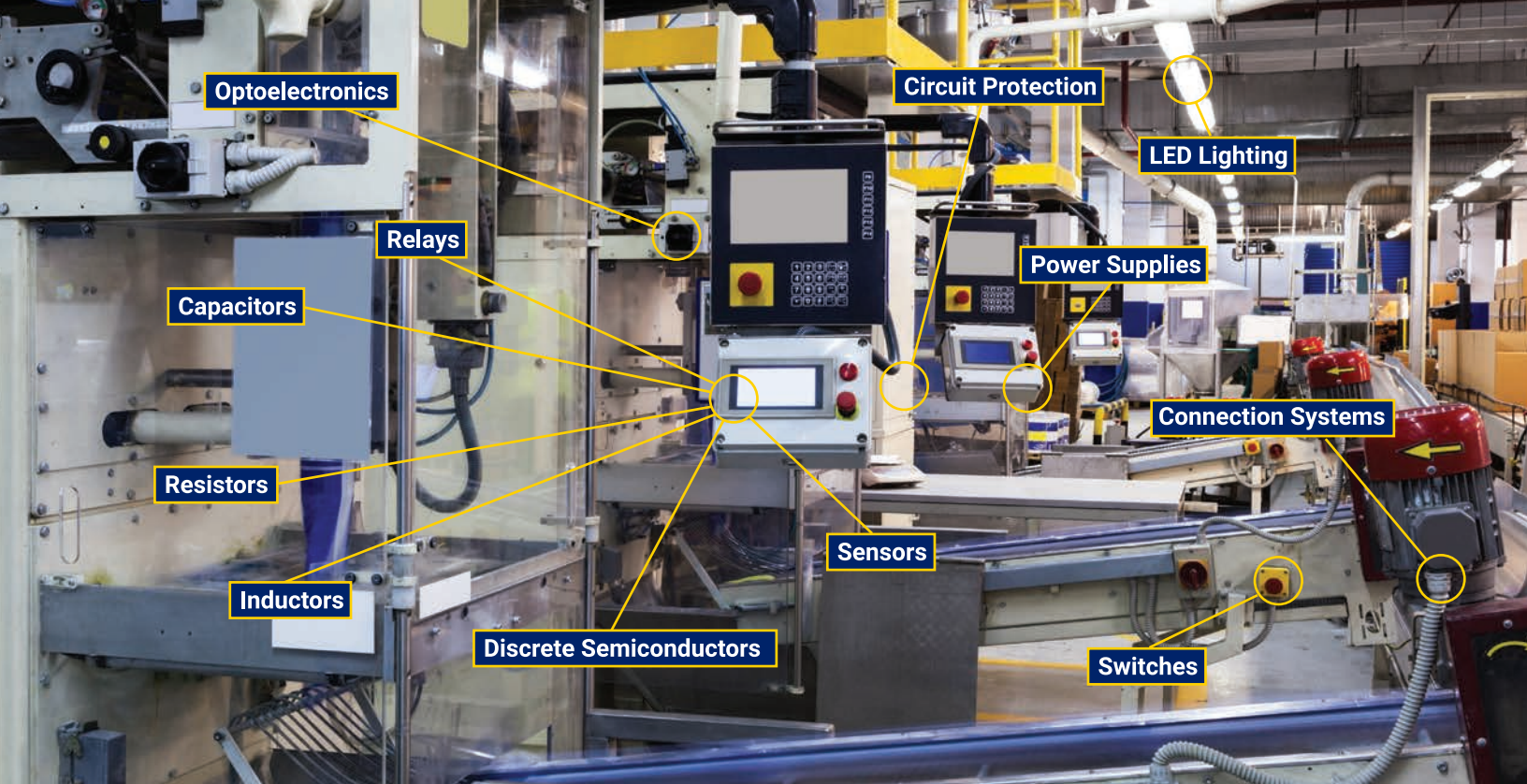
Selecting the Right Manufacturer Revenue for Rep Commissions



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FALL 2020

POA vs. POS:

**Selecting the Right Manufacturer
Revenue for Rep Commissions**



The topic of representative commissions is important and multi-faceted. It is important because it is how a rep gets paid by the manufacturer for all the work that the rep does on behalf of the manufacturer. In general, reps earn a percentage of the manufacturer's revenue for the business that the rep owns and drives. Sounds simple.

It is also multi-faceted because there are many considerations that must be addressed when establishing an appropriate rep commission model.

Among those considerations are:

- Alignment on what business is included in the commission calculation.
 - Direct and Distribution business.
 - Offshore business.
 - Business supported through EMS providers.
 - Business supported through high-service/catalog distributors.
- Split commissions when more than one rep might be involved in business across different locations.

There are numerous ERA member resources to help navigate those decisions.

Manufacturer's revenue

The topic of this article is narrowly focused on the commission calculation itself — specifically, the definition of “manufacturer's revenue.”

There are fundamentally two ways to define the manufacturer's revenue. Both definitions are used in the industry to calculate rep commission. We will look at the pros and cons of each approach.

Every rep commission includes the manufacturer's revenue as a key component. There are fundamentally two ways to measure that revenue — point-of-acquisition (POA) revenue or point-of-sale (POS) revenue. Each measures a different point along with a sales channel transaction. Selecting the appropriate one can impact how effectively reps, distributors and manufacturers collaborate in support of an end customer.

Defining terms

When business is transacted through distribution, there are effectively two sales transactions — point-of-acquisition (POA) and point-of-sales (POS).

POA transaction. The first transaction is between the manufacturer and the distributor. The manufacturer sells its product to the distributor and realizes revenue for that transaction. It may be simple where the distributor uses “book cost” and marks it up for the customer price, or it may involve a customer-specific ship-and-debit cost. Either way, there is an

agreed-to cost for this transaction between the manufacturer and the distributor. Measurement of manufacturer revenue for this transaction is called point-of-acquisition (POA) or point-of-purchase (POP).

POS transaction. The second transaction is between the distributor and the end customer. The distributor uniquely owns what to charge the end customer but often relies on the manufacturer and rep for market or customer intelligence. Strictly speaking, revenue from this transaction is a measure of distributor revenue. However, it is also a measure of the sale of a manufacturer's product into the marketplace. The measurement of revenue for this transaction is called point-of-sale (POS).

Transaction example

Manufacturer > Distributor > End Customer	
POA: \$0.80	POS: \$1.00

In this specific end-customer transaction, the manufacturer has agreed to support an \$0.80 cost to the distributor. The distributor has marked up that cost to \$1.00 for sale to the customer, a 20 percent margin. Here the POA revenue is \$0.80 and the POS revenue is \$1.00.

Some manufacturers calculate rep commissions using POA data, while others use POS. Which one is most appropriate? Let's explore the differences along two vectors: bookkeeping/accounting view and a sales motivation view

Bookkeeping/accounting view

One of the key advantages of the POA approach is that all the data to make commission calculations are within the manufacturer's financial systems. Manufacturers know the price that the distributor is paying for each transaction. And, POA revenue reflects the actual value that the manufacturer realizes from each transaction.

Because the POS method measures revenue at the second sales transaction, a manufacturer needs to rely on distributor-provided, customer-specific POS data to calculate rep commissions.

Some manufacturers may believe that they do not get timely, accurate POS information to use POS for rep commissions, especially when the calculation may include distributor POS data from other regions or via an EMS provider.

Also, POS data includes the distributor margin that the distributor keeps. So, some manufacturers conclude that they are paying a

(continued on next page)



John Simari

Special Consultant to ERA

John Simari held a range of sales and marketing positions at Texas Instruments (TI) prior to his retirement in 2016 after a 37-year career. For most of that time, Simari was a key contributor to TI's worldwide distribution program.

He has held positions as worldwide distribution director, Americas distribution director and worldwide account manager for distributor and OEM accounts.

Simari has been an active contributor to industry activities serving for eight years on the Electronic Components Industry Association (ECIA) Board of Directors and Foundation Board. He also is a business leadership center instructor at the SMU Cox School of Business in Dallas.

Simari can be reached at simariconsultingllc@gmail.com.

COVER STORY: POA vs. POS

(continued from previous page)

commission on money that they never see. At times, distributor margins are very high to cover the cost of value-added distributor services, which inflates the end-customer pricing with no benefit to the manufacturer.

Accounting rules can dictate how a manufacturer must report its revenue to shareholders and regulators. This is not a factor in this rep commission discussion.

The availability of good, accurate, timely and easily accessible data can influence a manufacturer to choose POA over POS to calculate rep commissions.

Sales motivation view

As with any sales compensation model, rep commissions are intended to focus and motivate the sales team. In this case, it is not just the reps that need to have focus and motivation, it is all members of the customer-support process — the sales teams from reps, distributors and manufacturers.

A POS model ensures that all three partners are aware and focused on what the end customer pays. That is what establishes the value of the manufacturer's product in the marketplace. All should be motivated to ensure that the end-customer price stays appropriately high. Any time a direct salesperson or a rep is compensated solely on POA, they can be ambivalent to the end-customer price. It is true that ultimately the distributor owns that end-customer pricing decision

by law, but that does not mean that the three partners should be striving for the same thing. Having this joint focus drives collaborative discussions between the partners and keeps a common face in front of the customer.

Also, the product and application expertise that reps and manufacturers can offer the distributor during the end-customer pricing process can be invaluable. This input could be lost if the rep and manufacturer incentive ends at POA.

Some manufacturers may believe, and some reps may fear, that a POA-based model is a "save money" approach as POA is always less than POS. However, any good sales compensation model should be designed to provide good compensation for good performance and great compensation for great performance. That can be accomplished using either approach with forethought and modeling.

Conclusion

POA and POS are revenue measurements of two distinct sales transactions. Either can be selected for use in rep commission calculations. From a purely bookkeeping and accounting perspective, POA has advantages. However, because a rep commission is a sales compensation model, the advantages of using POS make it a better choice. **n**

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SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW



Lori Bruno

Vice President and Regional Distribution Sales Manager

Luscombe Engineering Company of San Francisco

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 Lori Bruno, VP and regional distribution sales manager for Luscombe Engineering Company of San Francisco.

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

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, and have lived in Fremont, Calif., since I was 10 years old. Today, I live within a mile of where I grew up! I went to college after marriage and having my two children. I have a B.A. in human development and took master's level courses in counseling psychology. I wanted to become a marriage and family therapist, but as I was doing my internships, I realized it was not the right career for me.

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace?

I have a large circle of friends and family I enjoy spending time with. My husband and I love entertaining and host most holidays annually. I also love to cook (anything Italian), gardening, walking our rescue dog, Violet, and reading.

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

I have been in the rep business for six years and a member of ERA the entire time.

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

I actually "fell into" the electronics industry. I was dating a man who thought I would be great in sales and introduced me to the area manager at Time Electronics in San Jose, Calif. With no industry or sales experience, I was hired on the spot because I had "moxie." Most of my work experience has been on the distribution side of the house as an account manager (TTI, Avnet). After I was laid off from Avnet in 2013, I took a few months to clear my head and figure out my next move. My husband owns Luscombe Engineering Company of San Francisco (LECSF) and needed a distribution sales manager. After many discussions, we thought we would give it a try, and six-plus years later, I must say, I have the BEST job ever, with a boss I can actually say I love!

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

I love being a resource to people, putting the pieces of the puzzle together. I work as a liaison between our suppliers and our distributors. Because I have worked on the distribution side of the business, I understand the value proposition that distribution brings, and I can help create solutions that fit the needs of the customer. This business is all about the people. That to me is the most rewarding part; knowing people for many years who have become friends.

Briefly describe your rep firm.

LECSF has been in existence since 1954 and was solely owned by Jim Luscombe. John Latimer took over ownership in 1972. At that time, all Luscombe Companies became independent. LECSF is primarily an IP&E manufacturers' rep firm, but we are now entering the world of semiconductors with the addition of SMC-Diodes to our line card. LECSF covers Northern California and Nevada.

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

In the past two years, LECSF has implemented a new CRM system from Repfabric. We have also begun a mail campaign program to send targeted emails to our customers. We are marketing and branding ourselves to show the new LECSF. We built an entirely new website in the last year, changed the company logo after 30+ years and are just "thinking outside the box," especially in light of COVID-19 and our new normal. But honestly, our best investments have been in our people. We have a great group of sales engineers, from millennials to seasoned pros.

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 cannot begin to express how much I have learned from other ERA members; it's very different than the distribution world. Reps really are a "band of brothers" and I feel a great sense of camaraderie; it makes me feel we are not alone in our pursuits. I have made new friends, who I believe will be in my life for many years to come. I have especially loved participating in the planning of the ERA Conferences in 2019 and 2020.

Are you active on social media? Do you follow ERA?

I am active on all social media platforms. I absolutely follow ERA and often re-post articles on both the LECSF and my personal LinkedIn page and Facebook. I primarily got on Facebook to follow my children (and their friends) but it has now morphed into a platform for me where I share recipes and pictures of cute dogs and babies.

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

I was on Ding Dong School, billed as the "nursery school of the air" when I was three years old. Ding Dong School was the precursor to Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers Neighborhood and was aired on national NBC syndicates.

2021 ERA Virtual Conference to Deliver Immersive Education and Networking



Every year, the ERA Conference is one of the most comprehensive gatherings of electronics industry reps, manufacturers and distributors who connect to learn together from industry experts and thought leaders in an environment dedicated to sharing practical, proven best practices in field sales and marketing.

For the 2021 ERA Conference, we are gathering virtually by creating a space for the electronics community to reconnect, learn and network.

The unprecedented challenges that our industry and the world faces, have propelled ERA and the ERA Conference Committee to reinvent the 2021 conference and deliver a unique virtual event that uses the latest online platform to create an immersive educational experience for attendees.

The 2021 ERA Virtual Conference will be held on March 1 – 3. So, mark your calendars, register, and join us in an effort to reconnect, reinvent and prepare for success at yet another do-not-miss conference.

To ensure the success of the virtual conference, a group of more than 50 talented and enthusiastic industry reps, distributors and manufacturers who serve on the 2021 ERA Conference Committee, or one of its four sub-committees, are working tirelessly to develop a dynamic and fully immersive educational and networking experience, bringing you the best topics by the best speakers.

ERA is extremely grateful for all the time and effort this talented group of industry people devotes to create our top-rated conference.

Virtual Conference Program Preview

Over the course of three days, the virtual conference will deliver eight core hours of educational content. Following the format of the

traditional in-person event, the core educational content will include a Keynote Speaker, General Sessions and Breakout Sessions.

In addition, the virtual conference program will include optional recognized resources and sponsor presentations, various networking opportunities and a virtual happy hour!

Furthermore, groups, such as the ERA Chapter Leadership Council, will be using the virtual platform to hold meetings they normally hold during the conference.

Keynote Speaker

We are excited to announce that the Keynote Sub-Committee has selected Kevin Brown as the conference keynote speaker to kick-off the 2021 virtual event.

Brown's unconventional path to business and personal success has taught him that winning in business and life requires anything but conventional thinking. With a streetwise aptitude and a never-quit attitude, he worked his way from the front lines in business to the executive boardroom. For nearly two decades, Brown was a sales and marketing executive that helped grow a little-known family business into an industry giant with annual revenues reaching two billion dollars. After a career in franchising, he decided to retire from corporate America and pursue his passion for bringing The HERO Effect message to as many people and organizations as possible.

Brown is on a mission to help people and organizations embrace a simple philosophy that separates world-class organizations and high-performance people from everybody else. He is passionate about helping people expand their vision, develop their potential and grow their results

Michael Knight

We also are excited to announce that the General Sessions Sub-Committee has secured Michael Knight, president of the TTI Semiconductor Group and senior vice president of business development at TTI Inc., a Berkshire Hathaway Company subsidiary. As one of the ERA Conference's highest-rated speakers we are thrilled that he is returning (virtually) again in 2021 and look forward to his industry insights.

In addition to Michael Knight, the General Sessions Sub-Committee is currently interviewing economists and a speaker on sales for two other General Sessions.

Breakout Sessions

Volunteers on the Breakout Sessions Sub-Committee are working diligently on developing 12 Breakout Sessions for the 2021 virtual conference. Some of the key session topics include sales, business planning, operations, management, communications, marketing, industry issues and technology.

These interactive sessions are the highlight of the ERA Conference, and while this year we will meet virtually, the interactions, education and insight will not disappoint.

Attendees will be able to attend four live breakout sessions during the three-day event. And because the conference is held virtually, all registered attendees will have the opportunity to view all Breakout Sessions on-demand at their convenience via the virtual platform.

Virtual Platform Bells and Whistles

So, what makes the 2021 ERA Virtual Conference a truly immersive experience?

During the Keynote, General Sessions and Breakout Sessions attendees will have the ability to post questions via chat and have them answered during the Q&A sessions at the end of each presentation.

All educational sessions will be available on-demand for 12 months. ERA has received many comments over the years that the Breakout Sessions have all been very beneficial and attendees would like the ability to view sessions that they did not attend. With the virtual platform, these sessions will be viewable at any time.

The virtual platform also will offer attendee-to-attendee networking with real-time chat, networking lounge discussion forums and video call options. To add some fun and boost engagement, attendees can enjoy the virtual platform's built-in gamification.

Sponsorship & Recognized Resources

Sponsorships are strong again this year and the 2021 ERA Virtual Conference will offer some new and unique built-in sponsor opportunities, including sponsor booths and sponsor-led presentations.

Through the virtual platform, our Recognized Resource partners will have the ability to demonstrate their products and services, connect with attendees via private chats and host virtual meetings.

Technical support will be offered before and during the event to ensure that all registered attendees have a seamless and enjoyable experience.

We are confident that the ERA Virtual Conference will help us *Reconnect and Reinvent for Success* in 2021. **n**



Craig Anderson, CPMR, is president of Sumer Inc. and 2021 ERA Conference Committee Chair.

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FEATURE ARTICLE



Stronger Together: Reconnecting & Reinventing for Success

March 1 – 3, 2021



ERA is hosting its 2021 annual conference virtually! Dates are March 1 - 3.

ERA extends its deepest thanks to these valued organizations that have already signed on as sponsors of the 2021 ERA Virtual Conference. We could not accomplish our goals without the generosity of our committed supporters.

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Find out more information about the conference, including new virtual attendee registration fees and sponsorship packages, at <https://era.org/era-events/era-conference/>.

Stay the course or full speed ahead – what ship are you the captain of?

By now all of us want to emerge from our basements, bedrooms, attics, family rooms, kitchens — our so-called offices since early March — to get back to our normal, pre-COVID-19 lives. We dream of putting on business clothes, perhaps a collared shirt, maybe even a tie (Do I even remember how to tie a tie; full Windsor or half-Windsor knot?). We dream of wearing a suit ... Gosh, no! I do not even remember where my suits are! But just think how good would it feel to put on our work attire, get in our car, stop at Starbucks, walk-in and order our favorite drink (no face mask) and head to the airport to fly somewhere to visit someone to talk about something ...

Did we ever think we would miss the small and mundane things that we used to dread or even complained about? Do we miss being the Road Warrior who set out to win the day for our company, to bring in a new customer, to win a new design, to book an order, or just to see an old business friend/customer?

I never thought I would miss it — the action, the thrill of the hunt, the back and forth bartering and bantering, the satisfaction we get when we book the order, get an appointment, get our products approved for a new design, meet a new procurement professional, meet the new design engineer, sign that new line — all to make sure that our company is positioned to stay ahead of our competition. This is all while providing a living for our employees and our families.

So, what has really changed? Certainly, clothing!

We find ourselves living in a much more casual environment, sometimes perhaps too casual. We are meeting with folks now on Zoom and Teams calls, still face to face, just

not in person.

Many of us have worked hard since March to develop a cadence with our customers, our manufacturers, our rep/channel partners and our own teams to keep us all aligned and connected. We are all to be applauded for being able to pivot to this “new abnormal” world.

What is it that we cannot do today? Not much. All the tools are in place for us to conduct business in this virtual world with others

who are also in their own virtual world. They, too, are working hard to maintain their relationships with the U.S. on behalf of their companies; sometimes we forget that.

A major challenge that all of us are perhaps struggling with is how to find new customers, or new personnel at our existing customers, to get new products designed in, to get samples delivered, to get our new products approved. Those folks and companies who figure this out will be the winners.

And others may be telling themselves that this is simply not possible without an in-person meeting, that this cannot be done today, only after we get out from under the restrictions of COVID-19.

So, it seems to me that we have only two choices. The first choice is STAY THE COURSE. Do what we can to maintain our book of business. Convince our principals that “we are doing all we can and working hard to grow, but the darn pandemic is just not allowing us to do our jobs!” After all, “we are best when we are out in front of the customer ... hard for us to find new customers without being out and about ... how can you expect me to grow your customer base when I cannot go and visit them?”

The second choice is FULL SPEED AHEAD. Accept that this “new abnormal”



by Walter E. Tobin
ERA CEO
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All of us want to be recognized as 'the company' that continues to get things done despite COVID and have others ask: 'How do they do it?'

(continued on page 22)



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You are now entering the Twilight Zone

“You’re traveling through another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind; a journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination. Next stop ... the Twilight Zone!”

With some variation, these were Rod Serling’s opening words for the 156 episodes of *The Twilight Zone* that aired over five years from 1959 – 1964. (I remember watching the re-runs). For those who are unfamiliar with the show, Wikipedia summarizes it this way:

“Each episode presents a stand-alone story in which characters find themselves dealing with often disturbing or unusual events, an experience described as entering ‘the Twilight Zone,’ often with a surprise ending and a moral.”

In my last article for *The Representor*, “Toto, I’ve a Feeling We’re Not in Kansas Anymore,” I spoke of three periods related to the pandemic, which I called Survival, Searching and Stability. (I’ve since come to favor the terms Triage, Transition and Transformation, but regardless of the term you prefer, the concept is the same.) Today, I would like to share a few thoughts related to our current, collective “Twilight Zone” experience; each of the periods I previously identified, and the journey to that “wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination.”

In my previous column, I wrote that the initial Triage period had largely passed. While I still believe that, as the widespread effects of the pandemic linger, we may see increasing inability to survive on the part of some companies. This could lead to renewed emergency survival tactics and merger and acquisition activity. My first thought is this: I sure hope it doesn’t last for five years!

As I think about the Transition period we find ourselves in, I begin with a question: “What is the connection between Hank Ballard and the Midnighters, The Beatles, James Brown, Fats Domino, Bill Haley & The Comets, Brenda Lee, Peggy Lee, Trini Lopez, Muddy Waters, Tom Jones, Jay & The Americans, The Everly Brothers, Dean Reed, Sammy Davis Jr., Little Richard, and Wilbert Harrison?” Yes, they are all performers, but there is a unique connection beyond that fact; and I suspect that for most of us that connection is not as easily made. This is analogous to a challenge

we all have today — making connections.

During this time, the “rules” are shifting. How we connect with customers, channel partners, manufacturers and industry, in general, continues to evolve.

As work from home, social distancing and the lack of in-person meetings continue, feeling connected is harder than ever for each of us, our employees, and likely for every member of the industry. Despite all our advanced communications technology, we need to be aware that people feel less connected than ever before. What hasn’t diminished though, is the importance of connection. My second thought is this: Investing in a proactive and consistent connection strategy is more critical than ever before.

In this column, I have customarily promoted the ERA Conference; typically held annually in Austin, Texas, in late February/early March.

As you undoubtedly know by now, we will be transitioning to a virtual format for 2021. While nothing is typical right now, our conference committee has demonstrated a consistent ability to provide a world-class conference filled with valuable content; and I expect the 2021 ERA Conference to be no different in that regard. With the particularly apropos 2021 conference theme, “Stronger Together: Reconnecting and Reinventing for Success” — enhanced participation in the virtual ERA Conference is a great part of a proactive connection strategy.

As I consider the journey to the transformation of a post-COVID-19 world, let’s start with the inevitable question posed on every journey: Are we there yet?

In short ... no, we are not there yet. Our GPS is constantly “re-calculating.” So, what will it be like when we get there? What is the surprise ending and what will be the lesson(s) of COVID-19? “**Imagine if you will ...**” is a familiar Serling Twilight Zone expression; and in staying with our theme, some of my thoughts are as follows:

Imagine if you will ... a time when the rapid implementation of innovative and new sales strategies and tactics are understood as the acceleration of strategic process imperatives as



by **Chuck Tanzola, CPMR**
Fusion Sourcing Group Inc.
ERA President
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These companies joined ERA since August 2020.

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

REPRESENTATIVES

Apogee Solutions Group Inc.
(*New England*)
Dan Murphy
dmurphy@apogeosolutions.com

CTec Connector Technology LLC
(*Spirit of St. Louis*)
Brian Main
bmain@ctecstl.com

Jay Stone & Associates Inc.
(*Northern California*)
Jim Zazkowski
jim@jsarep.com

MANUFACTURERS

C&K Components
Gary Mountford
ckswitches.com

DIGI International
Dustin Steinhoff
digi.com

ERNI
Bill Knable
erniconnects.com

Fair-Rite Products Corp.
Rachael Parker
fair-rite.com

Integrity Light Metals LLC
Philip Burton
integritylightmetals.com

Jardum LLC
Jared Tabb
jardum.com

Major League Electronics
Neil Coffman
mlelectronics.com

Noreast Electronics Co. Ltd.
Raymond Poliquin
noreast.ca

RCAL Products
Brandon Bannon
rcalproducts.com

TWS Technology Limited
Gordon Holscher
tws.com

DISTRIBUTORS
ECCO (Electronic Connector Company)
Bernard Gizzi
eccoconnectors.com

ERA Member Service Action Lines

Avis Car Rental era.org
(Click the link on the Member Services page.)
Budde Marketing.....708-301-2111
buddemarketing.com
Empowering Systems.....888-297-2750
empoweringsystems.com
ERA Customized Survey Service era.org
(Click the link on the Member Services page.)
ERA Teleforum Audio Library era.org
ERA University (online courses) era.org
Hertz Car Rental.....era.org
(Click the link on the Member Services page.)
JJM Search.....402-721-6590
jjmsearch.com
LECTRIX.....lectrixgroup.com
MRERF (CPMR/CSP programs) mrerf.org
Repfabric.....844-737-7253, x225
RPMS software 800-776-7435
rpms.com
Spyre Group.....spyregroup.com/rep/index.htm
UPRIGHT upright.nyc
UPS shipping.....era.org
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Consultants Available for Expert Access

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Executive Searches: Carla Mahrt.....402-721-6590
Insurance: John Doyle.....888-243-0174
Legal: Gerald Newman 312-648-2300
Rep & Mfr. Services: Bryan Shirley, CPMR... 267-620-6000
Rep Network Mgmt.: Cesare Giammarco....401-595-7331
Sales/Business Strategy: Craig Conrad.....817-917-8268
Sales/Marketing Strategy: Steve Cholas.....949-413-1732
Sales Consulting/Coaching: John Simari.....214-325-4117

Other ERA Services & Publications

(Call 312-419-1432 or go to era.org.)

- Locator Online Directory of Manufacturers' Reps
- Lines Available Service
- Guidelines for: Becoming a Successful Rep; Establishing and Benefiting from Rep Councils; Agreements between Sales Reps and Manufacturers; Agreements between Stocking Reps and Manufacturers; Agreements between Reps and Sub-Reps; Agreements between a Rep Firm and Its Sales-people; Evaluating a Prospective Principal; Evaluating a Prospective Rep; Developing New Markets with Professional Field Sales Reps
- 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

- ERA Mid-Year Board Meeting - Oct. 29, 2020
- 2021 ERA Virtual Conference - March 1-3, 2021

Interested in becoming an ERA member? Contact ERA Membership Director Stephanie Tierney at stierney@era.org to learn more about the different ERA programs, resources and benefits, or visit era.org.

Mentorship and guidance are key for charting a successful career path

To gain a better insight into how young professionals in the electronics industry have turned challenges into opportunities and ensured continued success, The Representor interviewed Adam Grigor, President of Tech-Trek Ltd.

Grigor shared why relying on industry mentors and developing personal relationships with principals, customers and distributors are critical for charting a successful career path. Here is what he had to say.

Please provide a little background about yourself (personally and professionally).

I was born and raised just outside Toronto, ON, Canada. My dad, Brian Grigor, is one of the founders of Tech-Trek Ltd. in 1982 alongside his partner Bill Ford. I went to Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON, graduating with an Honors Degree in Political Science and Business. Throughout my summers, in both high school and university, I worked at Tech-Trek Ltd., cleaning the warehouse, organizing literature, filling in for vacations, whatever was needed of me. The experience gave me a good initial peek at the business.

I have been married to my wife Kimberley for 18 years. We have three children together, 15-year-old son, Avery, 12-year-old daughter, Sierra, and 10-year-old daughter, Maya. All are active in sports (hockey of course!), along with soccer and volleyball.

How long have you worked in the electronics industry?

I've been in the electronics industry for 18 years. It is the only industry that I've known! I've been with Tech-Trek Ltd. the entire time.

I started my career in distribution sales support in Ottawa, ON.

I progressed to an account manager before moving back to the Toronto area after our son was born.

In Toronto, I held an account manager role before progressing to Toronto sales manager, followed by a general manager – Eastern Canada, to my current role as president of Tech-Trek Ltd. in 2017.

What made you choose this industry as your current career path?

My dad being involved in the business was certainly the starting point. At the time, I didn't expect to spend my whole career in the industry but found it to be challenging, interesting and rewarding.

As a young professional, what are some of the main challenges you encountered as you embarked on your career journey?

Working for a manufacturers' rep, in a field office, at 22 years old was overwhelming at first. Training was limited and I had to learn on the fly — sink or swim. It is something that we are working to improve for our younger professionals today.

What are some steps that you have taken to overcome these challenges and to ensure that you can establish and nurture a successful career?

I knew that it was critical to rely on mentors to help provide guidance and support. Both my dad and Bill provided that early on and this mentorship continues today.

Developing personal relationships with principals, customers and distributors was also very important. Engaging a wide variety of people and listening to their experiences helped me to chart my own path.

As my career developed, I started to get involved more with ERA. This has allowed me further dialogue with experts in our industry, continuing to improve myself.

As president of Tech-Trek Ltd., I have sent two of our young professionals to the Spark Program at EDS. Both came back with a positive experience and enthused about a future career in the electronic industry.

Do you think that there is enough new talent entering the electronics industry and what could make this field more attractive to future young professionals?

We need more young people for sure. As reps, we need to improve our internal training process and expose our young people to the greater industry early on. We need to provide



Adam Grigor
President
Tech-Trek Ltd.

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For details on Florida-Sunshine ERA, go to
erasunshine.org

Toying with rep over post-termination commissions ends in 'game over' for opportunistic principal

Tech 4 Kids Inc. makes toys but was unable to play to U.S. retailers.

So T4K reached an oral agreement with Northern Group Inc., an independent sales representative with offices in the Midwest, to promote its toy products. With no T4K market share, the parties understood that Northern would have to enter "pioneering mode" because it would take years to generate sales.

The parties reach an agreement and Northern sets out creating demand

The oral agreement, reached in 2008, provided that Northern would receive a 5 percent commission on sales it procured for T4K. Not surprisingly, the parties never discussed such details as to how long the agreement would last, or what terms would apply upon termination.

Over time, Northern successfully penetrated major retailers, like Walgreens, Kmart, Fleet Farm and Shopko on behalf of T4K, and generated millions of dollars in sales. Commissions were paid to Northern only after the retailer paid T4K.

In October 2016, the toy deal broke. T4K terminated Northern over the phone, effective immediately, and offered to pay commissions for orders received through the end of the year. By October, retailers already had the holiday products they needed in stock and would not place new orders in the waning months of the year, leading Northern to reject the offer out of hand.

Northern believed it had obtained orders not only through 2017 from Walgreens, Kmart, Fleet Farm, and Shopko, but that it had already obtained commitments for orders from these retailers into 2018. Accordingly, it countered by demanding commissions on programs it already secured that were scheduled to run through 2018.

In the end, T4K paid on the few reorders that came in through 2016 and paid no com-

missions on orders thereafter. It also allegedly replaced Northern with a rep commissioned at a lower rate.

Believing it put T4K on the map in the U.S. and generated over \$2.4 million in sales in 2017 alone, Northern was ready to challenge this unfair treatment and filed suit in federal court in Green Bay, Wis. Among its various claims were: breach of the oral contract, breach of the duty of good faith and fair dealing, recovery under the "procuring cause doctrine," and recovery under Wisconsin's sales rep protection statute.

Seeking to avoid going to trial on any of these claims, T4K moved for summary judgment, a procedure that enables a resolution — before a jury is even empaneled — should the court find no material dispute of facts exists and T4K is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.

Breach of contract

Northern asserted that, under the parties' oral agreement, T4K owed commissions on the commitments to purchase it obtained pre-termination. T4K denied breaching on the grounds that it paid all commissions due before termination, and that pursuant to the parties' agreement and their history, commissions were not due until it was paid from the retailer.

Arguing for summary judgment, T4K further claimed that Northern had not procured the sales by the time of termination because the specific quantities and types of toys to be purchased were not determined. Though the retailers had committed to purchase, additional work remained.

Northern did not dispute that it was fully paid during the term of the agreement and that commissions did not become due until T4K received payment. Instead, Northern's position was it earned commissions whenever the pre-termination commitments to purchase



by Gerald M. Newman
ERA General Counsel

Gerald M. Newman and Adam J. Glazer are partners in the law firm of Schoenberg Finkel Beederman Bell and Glazer 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@sfbbg.com or adam.glazer@sfbbg.com.



Adam Glazer
ERA General Counsel

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it obtained from Walgreens, Kmart, Fleet Farm and Shopko translated into sales. And Northern asserted that by obtaining the commitments to purchase, it had duly earned its commissions on that business.

The court easily rejected summary judgment on the contract claim, finding logically enough that just because “T4K had not previously paid commissions until the sale had been finalized does not mean that Northern Group had not completed most, if not all, of its bargained-for performance. It simply means the amount of its compensation could not be determined until payment had been made.”

Dismissing T4K’s assertion that more work remained to be done, the court ruled: “the record is not clear as to what remained to be done and how significant that work was in relation to the whole.” Thus, the jury would get to decide whether Northern had procured the relevant sales at the time of termination and whether T4K breached by failing to pay commissions.

Breach of the duty of good faith and fair dealing

Wisconsin follows the common practice of reading an implied duty of good faith and fair dealing into every contract. In the words of its highest court, the implied duty of good faith means parties to a contract cannot “do anything which will have the effect of destroying or injuring the right of the other party to receive the fruits of the contract.”

Northern argued that T4K breached this implied duty by choosing to terminate the oral agreement — effective immediately — during the period between Northern obtaining commitments to purchase and T4K shipping the toys to retailers. Upon considering the timing of the termination, together with Northern’s contention that it was replaced with a rep at a lower rate, the court found that an appropriate resolution of these disputed issues would require a jury.

Therefore, Northern’s breach of the implied duty of good faith claim also withstood summary judgment.

The procuring cause claim

As regular readers of Legally Speaking know, in many states the procuring cause doctrine can render a terminated sales agent eligible to recover commissions on orders procured pre-termination, but not shipped or paid for until after termination, unless the parties’ agreement limits or precludes

post-termination commissions. T4K essentially sought to avoid the procuring cause doctrine’s reach by pointing to its termination of Northern before the orders came in.

Termination before the orders came in was, of course, the whole point. Wisconsin courts recognize that when a rep successfully accomplishes the result sought by the principal, the resulting commission obligation cannot be averted by conveniently terminating the rep.

And as the federal appellate court has ruled, the procuring cause doctrine “stands as well for the equally fundamental proposition that a party to a contract will not be permitted to take steps designed to prevent the other party from being compensated for the performance that he has already rendered.”

Although it was undisputed that at the time of termination, no retailer had committed to purchase a designated quantity of products, Northern asserted that it had obtained commitments to purchase pre-termination that formed “the basis for all future product shipments and revenue to T4K for the life of the retail programs.” Northern further asserted that the parties’ oral agreement did not include any limitation on the recovery of commissions post-termination.

This was sufficient to raise a material dispute of fact as to whether the alleged commitments yielded sales for T4K, and to defeat summary judgment. The court concluded, “T4K cannot avoid paying Northern Group for commissions if it terminated the oral agreement in order to not pay Northern Group commissions.”

The Wisconsin sales rep statute

Most states have enacted sales rep protection statutes, and Wisconsin’s version enables sales reps to recover up to three times the amount of unpaid commissions, plus attorneys’ fees. When no written contract exists in Wisconsin, commissions become due under the statute according to the past practices followed by the principal and rep.

In addition, the Wisconsin statute requires principals to provide 90 days’ notice of termination, unless a written contract provides otherwise.

T4K contended that the past practice was it would only pay commissions upon receipt of payment from the retailers and shipment of product; therefore, no commissions were due upon termination. However, the court recognized that upon termination, T4K had

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The 'quiet' movers and shakers

Many of the Where Are They Now? column notables have consisted of ERA Hall of Famers and past presidents. However, huge efforts and accomplishments have been achieved by members at the chapter level and with less glorious national titles as well.

This issue celebrates two such exceptional gentlemen — Steve Ross and Dennis McGillis.

Many of their contemporaries considered them to be the “quiet” movers and shakers. Both Steve and Dennis are exceptional communicators and two of our industry’s most likable people. As we say to our military veterans, “Thank you for your service.”

— Harry J. Abramson

Where is Steve Ross now?

I wish to express my sincere appreciation for being included in this column. It is a humbling experience. I am proud of my long-term association with ERA and happy to have made so many wonderful friends along the way.

I was born into a rep family on the San Francisco Peninsula. My father, Dave Ross, started his rep company, the David H. Ross Co., in 1947. While growing up, I wondered if such a life would be for me. While attending high school, I took pre-engineering classes and studied for my ham radio license (W6HKX), which I still hold today. I also worked five summers for Zack Electronics, a well-known “parts distributor” in the San Francisco Bay Area. While working at Zack, I spent nearly every dollar that I earned on components to build circuits and equipment.

After graduating from high school, I attended Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., and completed my BSEE degree in 1965. Having taken the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) for four years, I spent the next two years in the U.S. Army as an Ordinance Officer and a Company Commander. My most interesting assignment was to provide maintenance support to the 82nd Airborne Division with the U.S. Forces Dominican Republic.

When my military service was completed, I enrolled at Tulane University in New Orleans to earn an MBA. Upon my arrival,

my father contacted Dave McCoy of Cartwright and Bean, and he and his wife, Nona, took me under their wing. I was very grateful. During my second year, I married my Purdue sweetheart, Karen Strandhagen. After completing my MBA in 1969, I accepted a position as a product service engineer with Signetics, a semiconductor manufacturer in Sunnyvale, Calif.



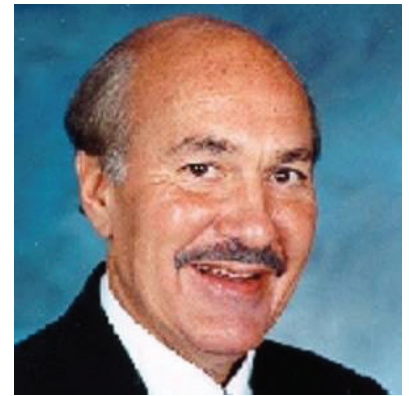
Steve Ross

After working at Signetics for about a year, my father invited me to join his company, which I accepted. Fortunately, Dad and I worked well together and we continued to do so until his passing 12 years later. I had a great deal to learn and my father was a wise and patient mentor.

Shortly after joining the rep company, I was introduced to ERA. In prior years, my father had served as Northern California Chapter President and National Director. When I joined ERA, I became its youngest member. Five years later, I was elected president.

Over my 31 years rep career, I had the pleasure of accepting a number of positions where I was able to work with groups of committed reps, manufacturers and distributors. These included: ERA Sr. VP of Membership, President of EDS, MRERF Trustee, and directors of ECI and WESCON. I also earned a CPMR, ERA White Pin,

(continued on next page)



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.

You can reach Harry J. Abramson at 216-406-4119 or email him at hja725@yahoo.com.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Steve Ross and Dennis McGillis

(continued from previous page)

Honor Roll, and an ERA Life Member awards. It was also a special experience to have attended ERA's first national conference in Honolulu in the mid-70s.

Looking back, it was truly a unique experience to have lived and worked in Silicon Valley while it was literally growing up around me. In fact, I knew of or sold to many of the same people who were mentioned in the Steve Jobs book. Of course, I wish I had the money to invest in some of these now-famous companies.

In those days, and if possible, it was desirable to retire early. Fortunately, and because I had a talented younger partner in Kevin Frost, the opportunity presented itself in 2001. I am pleased to say that Kevin has done a masterful job of growing Ross Marketing Associates, and the firm continues to thrive today.

After leaving the rep business, I spent a year recalibrating my life and seeking volunteer opportunities. My wife, Karen, served as my role model with her extensive non-profit board experience. At first, I accepted board positions but soon discovered that I preferred working one-on-one with those in need.

Over the past 19 years, I have served groceries to the low income and homeless; became a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) to four teenage boys in foster care; served as a classroom aide and conversational tutor in several English as a Second Language programs; volunteered in a citizenship class, distributed sports equipment to underserved youth; and tutored young readers in five different elementary schools. Each of these

experiences has been particularly rewarding.

My interests and hobbies have included: golf, travel, amateur radio, Stanford basketball, military and California history, classic cars, gardening, maintaining a Koi pond, poster art, and classical music. I continue to remain active in Rotary, and Karen and I visit our daughter and her family each week in Berkeley. Our son and his partner reside in the U.K.

After raising our children and enjoying 40 wonderful years together in Palo Alto, Karen and I decided to move to the Sequoias of Portola Valley in 2017. The Sequoias is a retirement community of 300 people nestled in the coastal foothills immediately behind the Stanford campus. Because the Sequoias is only nine miles from our old home, it is still close to our friends and activities. We've been happy here and we've made many new friends.

In closing, I wish to salute the friends, mentors and associates who have played major roles in my rep career. They include Karen Ross, David Ross, Kevin Frost, David McCoy, Ray Hall, Karin Derkacz, David Fisher, Gretchen Oie, Gerry Newman, Bud Haas, Vic Zachariah, Jack Berman, Bernie Newman, Bill Sonkin, Mel Jones, Bob Wersen, Blair Haas, Keith Bandolik, Hugo Shane, Dorothy Lock, Charlie Ostrofe, Clark Moulthrop, Frank Lebell, Dean Perron, Ron Rutkowski, and Neil Albert. I apologize for overlooking many others. Without their advice and support, my career would have certainly taken a different path.

In July, I turned 78. Karen and I will have been married for 53 years in December. I can be reached at steveross10@gmail.com.

Where is Dennis McGillis now?

When Harry Abramson asked for a summary of my life and history with the Southern California Chapter (SoCal) of ERA, including information about how our chapter created so many innovations, I couldn't say no.

Born in Los Angeles in 1944, I grew up in the San Gabriel Valley. My parents came from Minnesota in 1941. Dad was the GM of Plumb Tool in Los Angeles through the war. Mom was a legal secretary.

Frances and I graduated from high school in Covina, Calif., in 1961. In 1962, we married and I went to work as a technician at Consolidated Electrodynamics Corporation, a Bell & Howell Company, for four years in QC

and engineering. I became itchy for more and decided on technical sales.

I joined the Paul Nurches Company, an ERA member firm, in 1967 as a field sales engineer. We attended all ERA meetings and Paul encouraged me to get involved. In those days, all business was done at chapter meetings with everyone having a say in every agenda item. They often lasted until midnight.

In 1968, our chapter started tabletop shows at customer facilities. I arranged the first one at TRW in Redondo Beach. Decades later, customers no longer wanted a bunch of reps in-house so we held fewer, but larger shows in hotels or restaurants.

One of our principals hired me as their

sales manager in 1971. After a couple of years and holding two other positions, I learned corporate life was not what I wanted. Shortly thereafter, I had the opportunity to start my own rep firm and join ERA.

In 1980, with help from several members, SoCal ERA created an educational program at UCLA for members to raise their knowledge significantly above other reps. Our chapter paid half the tuition. How could we say no? 50 members took the (normally) \$5,000 executive MBA course. All agreed it was amazing! We didn't call it CPMR because that wasn't created yet.

After years of involvement on committees and being a board member since 1968, I became chapter president in 1995. By this time we held board meetings prior to chapter meetings and spent only minutes reporting to the chapter on business matters. We started the Owner's Forums in 1995. These popular lunchtime events brought owners together for lightly structured discussions several times per year while avoiding freeway traffic. We announced a topic, a moderator (usually Harrison Frank) started the conversation and helped it cover the important points. We always had several topics waiting for future forums.

Several members started meeting for breakfast on Fridays at a Tustin cafe. It worked well and it grew. A dozen or so reps regularly shared information and fellowship. We later started them in Chatsworth and Manhattan Beach.

The rep business is lonely. You see your own guys, but rubbing shoulders with peers is rare. Breakfast cures that. During the pandemic, a bunch of guys still meet on Fridays via Zoom.

Through the years, SoCal ERA had many active committees. In 1998, we had 46 people on 11 operating committees plus others on the Wescon and ECI boards. Committees did the work while the board provided oversight. Many hands lightened the workload.

When Bob and Lee Myers retired in 2000, I was elected executive director. Chapter innovation had been normal for many years as it left a long string of good events and creative thinking. Frances and I knew we had a long history of successes to live up to.

Our chapter separated from Wescon in 2000. Southern California and Northern California ERA chapters had acquired a portion of Wescon in 1973, sharing ownership with IEEE. Our volunteers promoted the shows, staffed committees and provided management services. Ultimately, Wescon shrank as the electronics industry did in the 1990s and ceased to exist a few years later.

Every week in 2001, we were sending several emails to each member. Some complained it was too much. While Bob had written a terrific printed monthly newsletter, it required printing and mailing plus services from an outside vendor at a cost of several hundred dollars per month. We continued it for a few months, then switched to a weekly email newsletter which included member messages.

We tried to recruit everyone who could make a contribution and recognize all who contributed so they would do it again. The more members involved, the better. Our December chapter meetings always included plaques for board members and committee heads.

Frances and I were proud that the Southern California Chapter earned ERA Chapter of the Year status eight out of nine years while in our care.

Along with our tabletop shows, the Orange County Electronics Expo Fairgrounds Show also proved popular for exhibitors and attendees.

Several distributors regularly participated in our chapter meetings and shows. In 2004, we invited them to join as a special class of chapter members to improve participation and communication. We also added a distributor representative to our board of directors. Each year we tried to have one or two blockbuster chapter meetings, plus several educational meets and a few social gatherings. At one chapter meeting, we had a technical program on computers, cell phones, email, software and more. Fourteen presenters participated in a two-hour program and everyone loved it!

Reps love to talk with each other. We tried to keep the conversation going at every event.

In 2010, Frances and I announced our plan to retire in 2014. As the time grew near, the chapter threw a terrific party in our honor. It was very special and we recall it fondly, as we do all of our ERA friends.



Frances and Dennis McGillis

EXECUTIVE COMMENTARY: Stay the course or full speed ahead?

(continued from page 11)

will be here for a while; perhaps another year! We can accept the restrictions of travel, customer visitations and that one-on-one, in-person interactions are way off. We can embrace the notion that a Zoom/Teams face-to-face call is the same as an in-person visit. We can learn how to do a virtual call correctly. We can plan for them like we would an in-person visit. We can make sure that we have up-to-date equipment and sufficient bandwidth to not get thrown off the air. We can try to have a professional venue in our home office to conduct business free from interruptions by other family members (the dog barking or the kids interrupting is no longer funny) and do this with professional and agnostic backgrounds to not polarize the other party. And then to bring these new skills into the post-COVID world, whenever that may be.

Our customers are also learning these new ways of doing business. Some may even embrace the video face-to-face call as the same as an in-person visit. They may not want you to visit as often or perhaps at all when that becomes possible. What would their reaction be if we insist on going back to the pre-COVID ways? You may risk losing a customer, a principle, or a key employee. Remember, your employees are looking to YOU as leaders to guide them, to teach them new tricks, to provide them with the latest and best IT tools, to empower them and to hold them accountable to their goals.

Our principles will not accept missed design goals, bookings and billings goals, funnel updates, etc., just because of COVID. All of us want to be recognized as “the company” that continues to get things done despite COVID and have others ask: “How do they do it?”

So, the choice is yours. Stay the course, be safe, do not rock the boat. The pandemic will end soon and we will be back in business.

OR ... embrace the new world. Learn new ways of doing business; get good at it, practice, upgrade your tools, take your game to the next level. If you don't, I guarantee that your competition is. Do not get left behind. Now is the time to accept that we will be in this for a lot longer than any of us had expected or wanted.

Hop on board, full speed ahead!

LISTEN IN ...



... to ERA's podcast series, featuring informative and educational interviews with industry leaders in a quick conversational format.

As of this writing, the ERA Conference Committee has announced that the annual conference will be all-virtual. Hopes that we would be able to reconvene in Austin, Texas, in February 2021 finally were extinguished. It was, I am certain, a difficult and heart-wrenching decision by the committee.

So many decisions are being influenced by the cloud of the pandemic, both on personal and professional levels. As we enter the fourth quarter of this year — the third quarter in which the COVID-19 virus has affected all of us in one way or another — we are still learning how to adapt to the current business conditions.

Those of us that carry a “glass-half-full” attitude, will find ways to make this work. So much evidence of this has already been obvious to me as I look at our ERA brethren and the companies we represent. Folks are finding ways to make this work, learning new ways to communicate and build relationships.

But what is to come?

Despite the virus, life goes on, as does manufacturing. After a dismal second quarter this year, many indicators are trending upward. In an online TTI MarketEYE Resource Center article, Walt D. Custer reported good news from the August 2020 Purchasing Manager's Index, “For the U.S., both the ISM and IHS Markit PMIs are above 50.” Anything above 50 is considered positive, especially given the current environment. In the September 2020 issue of *Electronics Sourcing*, ECIA Chief Analyst Dale Ford reported, “Electronics components revenues in the first half of 2020 were much more solid than originally feared and reasonable expectations for the second half remain.”

So, perhaps the world is not quite ready to come to an end. If component supplies can remain stable and the automotive electronics industry continues to improve along the lines evident in medical and computer/data processing electronics, we should see some momentum going into 2021. If, in fact, the pandemic does come under control sometime in 2021, as some experts have predicted, we may see a bountiful market next year. Stay tuned, stay optimistic.

To say that 2020 has been a most unusual year would be a gross understatement. As I write this, I'm looking at five tropical disturbances on the map. The gulf coast is prepping for perhaps another visit from Mother Nature in the form of a hurricane. There are too many wildfires on the West Coast to count. The destruction and lost lives are beyond comprehension. The level of civil unrest is inexcusable. And, of course the total disruption of our lives and livelihood by COVID-19 has been the most devastating occurrence in recent memory.

Because of the pandemic, I'm writing this at my desk in my home office, where I have spent an inordinate amount of time over the past six months. As I do so, I'm reflecting on lessons learned and contemplating where do we go from here.

I look at this from two points of view. First, it has made us take a step back and evaluate what is important. Friends, family and health are much more important than the size of the commission check. When we are able to return to somewhat normal activity, we can grow the commission check, but we can't replace those friends and family and without the health, we can't bring those commission checks back. Hopefully, we have learned from this and continue to put emphasis on the important things in life.

Secondly, looking forward, we must use what we have learned and what we can expect to see in the coming months and beyond to our advantage. We have learned to use technology to a greater advantage and more quickly than we would have under “normal” conditions. As we are able to return to more face-to-face sales calls, we can still use the expertise we have gained to be much more productive on a day-to-day basis and perhaps make the “in-person” visits more meaningful.

I mentioned that I was writing this column from my home office ... I'm sure that all of us have spent a lot of time in that environment. Moving forward, that may be the norm, rather than the exception. I suspect that many of us find that we work pretty efficiently in this mode. We also may find that we work longer hours and at weird times. I find myself answering and sending emails at times that would not happen from the office.

While there are advantages in working in a home-office setting, there are disadvantages as well. Probably the thing I miss the most is the interaction with others in the office and the on-the-spot exchange of ideas and decisions. Going forward, I trust that we can encompass the best of both worlds and grow from this most unusual time in our lives.

COMPONENTS

Bob Evans, CPMR

EK Micro

Rolling Meadows, Ill.

An optimistic viewpoint

MATERIALS, ASSEMBLY, PRODUCTION & SUPPLY

Troy Gunnin

Sun Rep Inc.

Tampa, Fla.

Reflecting on lessons learned and contemplating about the future

ERA THANKS KARIN DERKACZ FOR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

ERA congratulates Karin Derkacz on her anniversary of 50 years of service.

Karin joined ERA on Sept. 28, 1970. During her five decades at ERA, Karin has been and remains the association's touchpoint for countless current, former and retired members, including many multi-generation ERA families.

She has held various roles, including executive assistant to the CEO; managing the planning and implementation of all meetings of the national executive committee national board and staff; coordinating the registration process, exhibitor participation and hotel room reservations for all national conferences and assisting with all ERA White Pin events; serving as office manager for the 40+ years of her tenure that ERA maintained an office in downtown Chicago; maintaining the ERA membership and other databases and issuing all related reports; coordinating ERA's Lines Available service; and many more.

Earlier this year, at the 2020 ERA Conference in Austin, Texas, ERA recognized Karin with the Fourth Annual Tess Hill Award for her longevity of service to ERA, for inspiring volunteerism in its highest form and for her dedication to ERA's educational mission.

ERA CEO Walter E. Tobin, "We are truly fortunate and grateful to have Karin in our ERA family. Throughout the years, she has been the voice of ERA, connecting with everyone who reaches out to the association for any reason. Her contribution, loyalty and dedication are the foundation of our success and represent the true spirit of ERA."



2021 ERA CONFERENCE IS GOING VIRTUAL

ERA announced that the 2021 ERA Conference will be a fully virtual event, scheduled March 1-3. The transition of the 2021 ERA Conference from an in-person to a virtual event was necessitated by the pandemic, social distancing regulations and travel restrictions that have made it inadvisable to safely hold a traditional in-person conference. The dedicated volunteer members of the Conference Planning Committee and ERA are working hard to ensure that the 2021 ERA Virtual Conference delivers an exceptional online learning platform that offers attendees an interactive education and networking experience. For more information, visit era.org.

ERA RELEASES NEW WHITE PAPER

ERA has released a new white paper, "An Introduction to Manufacturers' Sales Reps: Building a Mutually Successful Foundation for Growth," by Cesare Giammarco, Special Consultant to ERA. The white paper is now available on the ERA website. ERA member login is required to access the document.

U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPPED TO 7.9 PERCENT IN SEPTEMBER

The unemployment rate dropped to 7.9 percent in September; however, job creation slowed to 661,000, compared with the 1.5 million jobs created in August.

The decline in the unemployment rate came along with a 0.3 percentage point drop in the labor force participation rate to 61.4 percent, representing a decline of nearly 700,000. A separate, more encompassing measure that counts discouraged workers and those working part-time for economic reasons also saw a notable decline, falling from 14.2 percent to 12.8 percent.

The leisure and hospitality sector led job gains with 318,000 new jobs, while retail added 142,000, and health care and social assistance increased by 108,000.

FOUR WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF VIRTUAL SALES MEETINGS

Virtual sales meetings have become the norm as a result of COVID-19. However, many sales reps may find themselves unsure of how to best lead a meeting with prospects over video.

Given that video interactions will be the norm for a while, now is an ideal time for sales reps to start developing best practices for video interactions. According to Leeatt Rothschild, who has more than 15 years of experience at the intersection of business, sustainability and brand purpose, the four ways sales reps can make their virtual sales meetings more successful and ultimately earn more new business are: 1) Keep your video on during the meeting. 2) Turn the meeting into a conversation. 3) Create additional opportunities for engagement. 4) Follow up with a meaningful gift.

MEMBER SERVICES

EMPOWERING SYSTEMS, an ERA Recognized Resource for over 20 years, helps electronic manufacturers' representatives grow their business. The company's cloud solutions are designed for reps and how reps work. AccountManager, SalesAnalysis, Analytics, Mobile and Microsoft 365 integration keep reps in front of their customer and away from administrative work. Ask about the ERA member special discount. Contact Carroll Boysen at 888-297-2750 x709 or visit empoweringsystems.com or for more information.

SCHOENBERG FINKEL BEEDERMAN BELL & GLAZER LLC offers legal Expert Access services to all ERA members. An initial consultation on any commission recovery or other rep-related business matter is available without charge. For more information, visit sfbbg.com, or call Adam Glazer at 312-648-2300.

ERA TALKS is a new podcast series featuring informative interviews with industry leaders in a quick conversational format. For details, visit era.org/era-media-center/era-talks-podcast/.

ERA WATER COOLER is a free biweekly teleconference providing an open forum discussion for members and non-members. For details, visit era.org/era-events/era-water-cooler-teleconference-series/.

UPRIGHT supports businesses through web design, development, branding, content strategy, and corporate innovation. With diverse backgrounds in the startup tech community, we provide resources for companies to expand their growth through technology. Upright is familiar with the manufacturers' rep model and its interaction with manufacturers and distribution partners. For more information, go to upright.nyc.

ERA UNIVERSITY provides members, employees and families with hundreds of online college, business, technology and special interest courses through 1,500 educational institutions. The instructor-led classes offer live interaction and access to lessons 24-7. Most classes run six weeks and include 12 two-hour lessons for \$79. For details, go to ed2go.com/era.

BUDDE MARKETING SYSTEMS is a leading provider of point-of-sale (POS) reporting. With 15+ years of experience, BMS provides solutions to drive business growth, improve efficiency and maximize profitability. BMS offers a vast selection of standard reports or can customize reports to achieve your business goals. For details, call 708-301-2111, or email sales@buddemarketing.com.

RPMS offers sales analysis, commission reconciliation and sales force data exchange software designed exclusively for manufacturers' reps. For more information, go to rpms.com.

LECTRIX is a results-driven marketing company that serves electronics manufacturers, suppliers and representatives. The company specializes in brand awareness, content creation, online event creation and lead generation. Visit lectrixgroup.com for details.

JJM SEARCH is the global executive search firm founded by Carla Mahrt, a 20-year electronics industry veteran. JJM is part of the MRI Network – leaders in the search and recruitment industry for over 40 years. Let Carla connect your company with bright, qualified candidates for your openings. For details on JJM, go to jjmsearch.com.

SPYRE GROUP offers resources that help sales rep firms provide value to the manufacturers they represent and increase efficiencies for their sales teams. It provides web, print and presentation development services, along with packaged solutions. For details, contact Patrick Knoelke at 913-499-6014, or visit spyregroup.com/rep.

UPS is an ERA member service provider for shipping of all kinds. For discounts of up to 34 percent, call 800-MEMBERS (636-2377).

REPFABRIC is a mobile efficiency tool that speeds up the entire workflow of business including email, opportunity tracking, commission reconciliation and principal reporting. Contact Repfabric at info@repfabric.com, or call 844-737-7253, x225, to schedule a consultation.

*For a complete list of ERA's Recognized Resources, check out the Member Services page at era.org. Then link to a service provider's home page for more information. Or take advantage of services from companies like **Avis and Hertz Car Rentals** (which are accessible ONLY via the ERA website).*

FROM THE TOP: The Twilight Zone

(continued from page 13)

opposed to a reactive response to situationally dictated limitations.

Imagine if you will ... a time when sales effort is judged not by the number of miles traveled to customer locations. A time when video sales calls are accepted as an additional sales technique as opposed to a compromise alternative sales methodology.

Imagine if you will ... a time when we will return to travel and to in-person industry connection events - when "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" is once again more applicable than "What happens in the basement, ..."

Imagine if you will ... a time when being valuable is the result of your developed connections, capabilities, ideas, skills and experiences, and being valued is an acknowledgment of those developments, connections and contributions, independent of the company name on the business card.

Imagine if you will ... a time when the "new normal" is no longer the "new normal," but rather just Normal ... "... a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination."

"Imagine if you will ..." These are just a few of my thoughts. What are yours?

Send me your ideas at ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Full disclosure: I originally planned the title of this column to be "I'm Going to Kansas City" as a follow up to my previous column and based on a Leiber and Stoller song that reached #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in the year I was born, but the Twilight Zone theme just seems more appropriate. For the trivia buffs in the reading audience, that song was also named one of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's "500 Songs That Shaped Rock & Roll" and each of the performers listed above recorded that song — a rather unique connection.

RISING STARS: Mentorship and guidance

(continued from page 15)

our young people with mentorship and guidance, and we need to promote and help them to engage with other young professionals in the industry.

The electronics industry offers the opportunity for an exciting and fulfilling career. The advancements in technology through the 2020 decade will be extraordinary!

Professionally, what keeps you up at night?

Where will our industry be in the next 3, 5, 10 years? What can Tech-Trek Ltd. do to adapt to the challenges that will face us? How can we stay ahead of the curve? We are constantly striving to enhance our value to our principal, customer and distributor partners; what do we need to do to accomplish this?

LEGALLY SPEAKING: Post-termination commission

(continued from page 20)

offered to pay commissions on certain orders received and products shipped after termination, calling into question its claim about past practices, and creating factual disputes inappropriate for resolution on summary judgment.

Additionally, T4K did not dispute that it terminated Northern effective immediately, despite the statutory requirement to provide 90 days' notice. The court left the door open to the possibility that this "may have resulted in further damages," and denied summary judgment "for this reason, as well."

Epilogue

After T4K's motion for summary judgment was denied in its entirety, it took a hard look at the facts it would have to confront before a jury, including allegations of terminating its long-time rep to avoid paying the commissions due. Set back on its heels by the court's ruling, T4K was suddenly done toying with Northern, and the parties quickly reached a pre-trial settlement.

Alas, reaching an urgent, pressure-packed deal after losing on summary judgment comprises a not uncommon result when manufacturers refuse to consider an early, reasonable settlement and insist on playing the game all the way through summary judgment.

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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.



ARIZONA

Arizona ERA hosted a Water Cooler virtual meeting in September which featured a panel discussion on “Thriving in Today’s Economy.” The call was moderated by ERA CEO Walter Tobin and featured a panel consisting of a manufacturer, a distributor and an OEM. The discussion focused on the challenges currently facing the Arizona electronics business environment and strategies and concepts of how to succeed in overcoming these challenges. The meeting was open to Arizona Chapter members, as well as Northern and Southern California and Rocky Mountain Chapter members and was attended by more than 80 people.

CAROLINAS

Carolinas ERA continues to host its virtual bimonthly breakfast meetings. The chapter also held a meeting featuring ERA CEO Walter Tobin as a guest speaker who led a discussion on thriving in the new “abnormal” in September.

Additionally, in lieu of its Carolinas ERA Annual Memorial Golf Tournament, the chapter is hosting an Annual Memorial Fund Raiser, with proceeds benefiting the Carolinas ERA scholarship fund and the American Cancer Society.

Each year, the chapter highlights a local rep or distributor partner lost to cancer. To date, Carolinas ERA has reached almost 50 percent of its goal and is expecting to exceed it later this fall. The chapter thanks all who have contributed thus far; donations are greatly appreciated.

CHICAGOLAND - WISCONSIN

Chicagoland-Wisconsin ERA is continuing its “Coffee is for Closers” virtual series through the rest of the year. The September series topic was “Breaking Through to New Contacts or Target Customers During a Pandemic.” The chapter is planning another virtual meeting in October.

INDIANA-KENTUCKY

The chapter is hosting a lunch at Squealers BBQ featuring a tour of DIVaero, a new, rapidly growing contract manufacturing company, on Nov. 5. For more information on chapter activities, contact ellen@ccrep.com.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Southern California Chapter of ERA continues to hold virtual monthly educational meetings. The chapter’s objective is to help members increase their business skills. This year, Southern California ERA has hosted meetings on diverse subjects covering topics such as which virtual platform is the best choice, line profitability, Excel tips for sellers, and a discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on reps.

SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS

The Spirit of St. Louis Chapter met in-person for the first time a few weeks ago for a Chapter luncheon. A third of its members attended, with others joining via a Zoom call. The chapter’s tabletop trade show — “St. Louis Electronic, Electrical, Engineering and Manufacturing Show,” which is traditionally hosted every 18 months, has been rescheduled for the second time and has now been pushed to April 2021.

Many of the chapter’s rep partners are providing webinar training for customers independently or with factory involvement. While most distributors still have travel restrictions, the chapter is reporting that the local markets — specifically healthcare, military and industrial, along with security — are doing very well.

In talking with ERA partners, the chapter agrees there was an initial scare at the start of the pandemic, with customers having to write COVID-19 protocol documentation to add to their employee manuals; however, they are learning how to adapt to today’s business environment.



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