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 Electronics Representatives Association

FALL 2022



LEADERSHIP SKILLS —THE INVESTMENT WITH INFINITE ROI

Leadership development is an investment that pays dividends over time in a range of ways

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FALL 2022



LEADERSHIP SKILLS —THE INVESTMENT WITH INFINITE ROI

Leadership development is an investment that pays dividends over time in a range of ways

COVER STORY

Leadership development is an investment that pays dividends over time in a range of ways. Mounds of research indicate organizations that invest in developing their leaders and future leaders see significant returns, including:

Better performance. Research by Deloitte shows companies that invest in leadership development are three times more likely to outperform their peers. This is because people who are well trained tend to perform better than those who are not. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about salespeople, managers, executives or employees — well-trained and engaged individuals consistently deliver superior outcomes.

Effective retention and recruiting. LinkedIn's 2022 Workplace Learning Report shows that the top driver of a great workplace culture is the availability of opportunities to grow and learn. Any organization currently navigating recruiting or retention challenges should take note. LinkedIn research also found 94 percent of employees want to work for an employer that focuses on developing leaders.

Enhanced profits. The Association for Talent Development (ADT) reported companies that invest in comprehensive learning programs enjoy a 24 percent profit margin over organizations that do not.

Yet, the current leadership landscape is pretty bleak. According to a recent report by Bersin by Deloitte on high-impact leadership development:

- 60 percent of leaders show commercial acumen and business judgment
- 48 percent are seen as driving change and innovation
- 44 percent build talent for competitive advantage

These statistics show there's much room for improvement, and it's up to companies to decide whether or not an investment in leadership skills is worth it.

Leadership development = employee success

Leadership development is something many companies may tout for recruitment. However, it's critical to understand leadership development and why you need it.

You can't do anything all alone. There's no doubt that leaders are needed to make change happen. But without a team behind them, there's nothing to accomplish. To see real progress on the bottom line, you need to develop your people (and keep developing them often).

Employees follow effective leaders. People don't leave companies. They leave managers. Along those same lines, they follow leaders who inspire and empower them. When leaders build up their own skills and abilities as well as their employees' skill sets, they experience a more effective, engaged culture where high-performing employees will stay, grow and become influential leaders who keep the momentum going.

Better decisions drive better outcomes. When a company's leadership strategy is linked to its business strategy, employees are well-equipped to navigate the ever-changing competitive landscape more effectively. They can also shape the culture and future of the business through better decisions and improved agility.

Leadership development is vital for organizations because it improves bottom line financial performance, attracts and retains talent, leads to better strategy execution, allows an organization to navigate change successfully, and leads to improved customer experience.

Communication skills are leadership skills

Communication skills are necessary to be successful in today's workplace. Leaders must communicate effectively with employees, customers, partners, vendors and shareholders. But how can you tell if you're doing it right? How do you improve your communication skills?

Focus on mastering difficult conversations. Leaders often find themselves in difficult situations where they have to make tough decisions or have uncomfortable conversations. For example, they have to weigh multiple factors, such as cost versus benefit, and sometimes they have to choose between one solution over another. Worse yet, they have to deliver negative performance reviews and terminate employees. In these cases, leaders must be able to articulate what led them to these actions or conclusions in a constructive way.

Practice active listening. When communicating with others, leaders should try to understand what people are really saying. Active listening is required. Ask questions to clarify if you don't know what someone is telling you. You might even want to use body language to tell them you're paying attention. For example, nodding your head while they speak lets them know you've heard what they just said.

Embrace feedback. Effective leaders should also master asking for feedback. People love

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By Sannah Vinding

COVER STORY: Leadership skills

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giving honest feedback about performance reviews, promotions and raises. Request feedback regularly, and more importantly, take action based on it. Don't ignore negative feedback — address problems immediately. On the other hand, don't wait too long to act on positive feedback. If you don't reward people for good work soon enough, they won't feel motivated to continue working hard.

Critical thinking is crucial

Often without realizing it, people analyze situations and draw conclusions from them every day. Many leaders, though, make these decisions with less-than-sharp critical thinking skills, resulting in outcomes that aren't in their team's best interest. Critical thinking is a superpower. It helps leaders see issues that others don't while empowering them to solve problems faster and more effectively. An additional competitive advantage is being able to recognize patterns and anticipate future challenges. Unfortunately, many organizations may fall into the groupthink trap, where everyone agrees without challenging solutions or trying different points of view in solving an issue. Critical thinkers can challenge ideas more efficiently and tend to be flexible and adaptable. These are the kinds of employees you want on your team (as well as leading it!).

Leadership development is not a one-time event

Another way to improve leadership skills is to practice, practice, practice. Take advantage of opportunities to mentor others, coach team members and give feedback to colleagues. Doing so builds trust and improves relationships, both within your organization and outside of it. Don't forget to set aside some time each week to reflect on your experiences and think about how you might apply what you've learned. This process allows you to identify strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies for improvement.

Leaders must constantly seek ways to improve themselves

Leaders constantly seeking knowledge and improvement can see the bigger picture and understand how everything fits together. By continually asking, "What am I missing?" and "Where could I improve my skill set?" you'll always be ready to adapt to changing circumstances and keep moving forward.

The most effective leaders are humble. But unfortunately, humility is a trait often overlooked in today's world. It takes courage to admit mistakes. Admitting mistakes is one of the hardest things to do as a leader. You may not have made a mistake intentionally, but if you haven't learned anything from past experiences, you'll likely repeat those same mistakes. However, leaders who can admit mistakes and own up to them can move past them and focus on the next thing. They know that recognizing errors doesn't mean they've failed or are weak. Instead, it means they're human and still have plenty to learn.

To be a good leader, you must facilitate leadership development opportunities in others. But more importantly, you need to spend time investing in yourself. Fortunately, there are many ways to develop these skills, such as reading books and articles, attending workshops, taking courses, and practicing certain behaviors.

By trying different approaches and seeing what works best, you'll gain valuable experience that will help you lead others effectively.

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Finally, leaders must keep up with current trends and issues. To ensure everyone understands what's happening around them, leaders should read industry news and blogs, stay abreast of changes in technology and regulations and keep up with the latest research on job-related topics.

Whether you want to improve your communication skills, build your confidence or develop new habits, start today! ■



About the author

Sannah Vinding is an engineer, B2B marketing strategist and innovative leader who delivers practical customer-centric go-to-marketing strategies for the electronics manufacturing industry. As digital marketing director at Micro Commercial Components, she has more than 20 years of experience in B2B marketing, as well as product and process innovation expertise in consumer electronics and the human-machine interface industry.

Her passion for helping leaders develop the skills to succeed led her to create the "Mind the Innovation" leadership podcast, which contains more than 30 hours of podcast and video content covering everything from company culture and winning innovation to people-centered leadership development. Listeners can develop the skills necessary to thrive as leaders within their organizations and lives.

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Leaning on mentors and experienced reps to build a solid foundation



Wyatt Gifford
English Technical Sales

To gain better insight into how young professionals in the electronics industry have survived and thrived, The Representor interviewed Wyatt Gifford, field sales representative at English Technical Sales.
Gifford shared how he thinks there is always something to be gained by those who come before you – a lesson he's learned in his personal and professional life.

Please tell us a little bit about yourself (personally and professionally).
I was born and raised in Southern California. Being the youngest of three, I grew up a team player whether I liked it or not! I graduated high school with a tough decision to make – continue playing football or pursue my education. I chose the conservative route for education. I started in the automotive engineering program at Arizona State University (ASU), thinking it would be fun to engineer and build vehicles. However, after much contemplation, I graduated from ASU with a degree in technological entrepreneurship and management. This degree is a hybrid between engineering and business. I learned how to not only engineer my own products, but how to market and sell them. However, I was never really sure where this type of degree would take me.

How long have you worked in the electronics industry?
I started as an intern in the electronics industry in 2019, and then I transitioned to full-time as an outside salesperson in January of 2020. So, I am approaching my fourth year in the industry as of 2023.

What made you choose this industry as your current career path?
Prior to my employment with English Technical Sales (ETS), I was not aware of the rep industry in any way. I was referred to the opportunity by a friend of mine who, at the time, was working with one of our local design houses. For some time, I was not sure if this was the career for me. That being said, I also had no understanding of what a rep was or did. As I became more comfortable, more established and developed a good understanding of how to be a rep, I began to see this as a viable, long-term career. The freedom, the excitement, the pace – this industry is very exciting and unlike many others. I have found it satisfying for myself as I continue to develop into a more experienced rep.

What are some of the main challenges

you encountered as you embarked on your career journey?
There are a lot of challenges associated with this industry. I think many of us are aware of that, but I think it is sometimes easy to forget how long and difficult the journey was for each of us.

Personally, one of the most challenging parts for me was keeping my motivation. This career can be compared to something like fishing or hunting. You spend weeks, months and sometimes years, searching and chasing potential opportunities. There are no step-by-step directions to make a sale, so you have to experiment and adapt to find what works for you and for your base of customers. Even then, you can do everything right, but the timing or something else could be wrong – and you will miss your target.

The reason this was so challenging is I had no idea if what I was doing was the right thing. It sometimes felt like I was wasting my time and my employer's time. Fortunately, I have a great mentor in this industry. He often provides encouragement and feedback to my efforts. His assurance and guidance have often kept my head above water, and was more valuable than any trainings or courses on being a sales rep.

What steps have you taken to overcome these challenges and ensure that you can establish and nurture a successful career?
The shared motivation of my mentor and colleagues was a great resource to overcome this challenge. However, I have also taken a great deal of time to gather knowledge and make connections from others in the industry. As I said above, there is no guide for this career. Everyone has different techniques to accomplish success. One lesson that I learned from being the youngest in my family is there is always something to be gained from those who came before you.

Currently, there are a great deal of experienced reps in the industry and within the ERA. I would recommend that any newer

reps out there really listen and engage with your more experienced reps, and other reps around the country. The knowledge you will gain from them is priceless, and I believe will create the foundation for a long and successful career.

What were some training tools or networking/industry events that you found beneficial to your professional growth?
ERA is likely the most powerful tool for my growth as a rep as almost all of my industry contacts have come through engaging with ERA. Many of the most powerful tools and strategies we use as modern-day reps have come from within ERA and related events.

Do you think that there is enough new talent entering the electronics industry and what could make this field more attractive to young professionals?
Yes, I think there is enough new growth within the rep industry. I think the transition may have been slightly delayed; however, the industry has become aware, and I am seeing a massive adaptation arising.

Where do you see your profession and the industry 10 to 20 years from now?
In 10 to 20 years, I think the faces may look different, the tools we use will look different, and our customer base might shift to different technologies with the rise of electric vehicles, green energy and other advancements. However, I think at the end of the day, our profession will still be doing what we have always done – driving engineering designs for our customers. Unless artificial intelligence (AI) becomes able to read our thoughts and develop custom-engineered parts on the spot for our end users – until then, the difficulties of new discoveries, communication of ideas and the rationale of compromises will keep the rep industry striving.

Professionally, what keeps you up at night?
The thought that in my hunt for new opportunities, I have blindly passed by a multi-million dollar “stag.” ■

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Brooks Mattice, CPMR
General Manager
The Mel Foster Group

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 Brooks Mattice, general manager for The Mel Foster Group.

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

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Thanks for the opportunity to share my story with *The Representor*! I'm the general manager of TMC, a manufacturer's representative firm covering the states of Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. I'm a proud alumnus of Purdue University, having graduated with a BSEE in 1995. Immediately after college, TMC hired me, and over the next 20-plus years, I served as a sales engineer in varying capacities. At first, I called on some of TMC's smallest customers, but eventually I grew some of those customers into some of TMC's largest. Several years ago, TMC became part of the MFC Group, which gave me the opportunity to move into a leadership role. As general manager, I really enjoy learning from, working with and coaching the rest of our team at TMC, articulating our story to principal and distributor partners, and working with the management team in the greater MFC Group. I also still maintain account responsibility and I feel it's important to stay engaged in the sales process.

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace?

Family life keeps me busy. My wife and I have two kids: an 18-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son. Both swim competitively, so that is an integral part of our family's culture. We've spent many weekends at pools across the Midwest. I try to live an active lifestyle which includes working out, swimming, walking and occasionally running. My golf game is a work-in-progress, but I've made some recent improvements that have me optimistically chasing mediocrity. Finally, my wife and I come from long lines of Boilermakers, so we try to attend as many Purdue events as possible. We have season football and basketball tickets with a group of 40 college friends and their families. Purdue swim meets are also in our future. Boiler up!

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

I just celebrated my 27th anniversary with TMC.

TMC and Mel Foster Co. have always been active in ERA, but it wasn't until my role changed 3½ years ago that I became more involved. It's been an incredibly rewarding

experience. I've learned so much and met so many smart, interesting, great people in this short time that it's made me regret not becoming more active earlier.

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

That's a long story! Towards the end of my college years, I realized that I wanted to utilize my degree in some other way than being a true engineer. Coincidentally, TMC was investing in their business and looking to hire a young EE to groom as a salesperson. Luckily for me, the stars aligned, and TMC hired me as a sales engineer in Lexington, Ky. I loved it immediately. It appealed to my competitive nature. I quickly realized the power of synergistic selling. Representing many different suppliers gave me a foot in the door with every customer and distributor in our market. I found I was good at listening to customers articulate their largest problems, and I enjoyed strategizing with our principals in finding and proposing solutions.

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

Without question it's been the people and the relationships. I'm so fortunate to be able to work with extremely talented, hard-working and amazing people. They have truly become my second family. Outside of our team, building great relationships with our customers, principal partners and distributor partners has been a critical element to our company's success – to the extent that it's ingrained in our culture. Being part of this culture has helped me build lifelong friendships with people from nearly every corner of the world and has made fighting for mutual success with each of them a very personal cause. Some of my favorite memories have been the opportunities to celebrate successes with those extended teams from around the globe. I am constantly reminded that this is a people business.

Briefly describe your rep firm.

TMC was founded as a two-person rep firm in 1978 in the traditional ERA territory of Indiana-Kentucky. In the mid-1990s we moved into Ohio-Western Pa.-West Virginia and then into Michigan at the request of a few of our largest principals. Now in our fifth decade, we stand at 17 employees and are headquartered on the north side

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We've got this!

Vacations are over and summer is winding down – at least for us in the northern half of North America. Business travel is picking up and customers are beginning to open back up, albeit slowly, as many still prefer video conferencing. We find ourselves getting back into a bit of cadence, yet still balancing work-from-home challenges. We are returning to the office a few days a week. (Where did I put my favorite coffee cup?) Is this the new normal or the new abnormal that everyone has been talking about for the past three-plus years?

Actually, I think we have already been living our new business lives for the past 12 months or so; we just did not know it, nor did our customers, channel partners, manufacturers or reps.

So, what now?

For many of us, we have already “skated to where the puck is now” and have become more comfortable with this new cadence: balancing video calls, which as we all know by now are face-to-face, with in-person visits; trying to accommodate visits from our manufacturers into the territory to get some sort of audience with customers and channel partners; and trying to schedule multi-person sales calls with some of the attendees not in-person but on video. Is it easier to schedule calls or meetings now than pre-you-know-what?

I promised myself and you to never again say or type the word: “COVID-19” or “pandemic” again. That is the last time you will see or hear these dreaded words from me again. Yet, has this gone away? Have we gotten used to it? (No politics here at all.) Have we just decided to get boosted and live our lives? I think so. Very few masks are being seen – perhaps we have all turned the page...

We have survived, and perhaps even thrived, through allocation and now into inflation...perhaps heading into a recession? Gosh, what else can get thrown at us? I say, bring it on!

What is that saying? “What does not kill you only makes you stronger.”

My sense is that all of us are ending 2022 stronger; our organizations are stronger, the relationships that we have with our employees are stronger, the relationships with our customers are stronger, the rep model has not only survived but thrived. We have all learned who we can rely on to help us manage our companies, our “book of business,” and our business and personal relationships.

Who would have thought that we would ever allow employees to work from home two to five days per week? When did we ever think that our customers key engineering and procurement contacts would no longer work at the company headquarters, but move out of the territory? How do I now continue to support their needs? How can I call on them? Today, we have most of this figured out.

Did I ever think of the day when I found the perfect employee for an opening, but he/she worked so far away from our office that I could/would never be able to hire, onboard or evaluate them? Today, we all can find the best people for our openings, perhaps regardless of where they live. Is this progress? I think so!

Our business world has changed forever. There is no turning back. Embrace the changes! Sure, it may be new and tough. Some of our old paradigms (“If a person is not in the office, they are not working”) are falling by the wayside and many of us are being challenged in so many ways. But look back: we have seen perhaps 10 years of change in the past 18 months.

Time to “put our trays in the upright and locked position” as the plane is landing because a new world is waiting for us and has been there hiding in plain sight for many months.

I am excited for all of us in 2023! What other industry offers the kind of growth opportunity that electronic components offers? None. Growth comes with challenges and issues, but we've got this! ■



by Walter E. Tobin
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If I knew then what I know now...



by Chuck Tanzola, CPMR
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Hindsight, people say, is 20/20. Two aspects of that statement stick out to me – hindsight (looking back) and 2020 – a year defined of course by the once in a lifetime pandemic that seemingly wouldn't go away (sort of like my to-do and action item lists...they also never seem to go away, but I digress).

"If I knew then what I know now..." Perhaps you've also heard people say this. I know that I have. The statement is usually completed with some wistful expression of actions that maybe would have been taken if only our hindsight had been foresight instead.

As I have been thinking about our industry lately and talking to people, I hear them asking, "If we knew in early 2020 what we know now, what would we have changed?" Some of the most common answers I've heard are: We would have adopted video communications technology earlier. U.S.-based semiconductor fabs would be turning out more fine geometry chips in Austin, Columbus, Albany and Phoenix in 2022 instead of 2024, 2025 and 2026. We would have hired more people, sooner. We would have found time to see family and friends more.

Of course, we cannot change the past, so maybe some other questions are more important. For example, what do we know now that we didn't know then? What have we learned? Here are some of my thoughts for your consideration:

We need people/family/social interaction.

Now that we've largely spent the last two years in isolation, a day doesn't go by where the importance of seeing people in-person isn't extolled in the results of some survey or study.

Personal customer relationships are supremely important. Almost universally, my industry colleagues confirmed a significant increase to the normal difference in their ability to contact customers based on the depth of their personal relationships.

Necessity is truly the mother of invention (and innovation). During the pandemic, this was particularly (but not exclusively) evident in the healthcare industry. Consider how many new and different designs for ventilators were developed in a relatively short time, for example.

If necessity is the mother of invention, disruption is the accelerator of adoption. Video communication technologies existed prior to travel shutting down but are now fairly ubiquitous; the rise in electronic banking is widely reported; and home delivery apps have doubled their earnings in the last year.

Habits once formed, are hard to change. Consider that working from home was disruptive

at first, and now is more comfortable and increasingly desired by employees. During the pandemic, restaurants accelerated their take-out offerings and services, and today reports are that more than 1/3 of people use more take-out dining than they did a year ago.

Our industry is simultaneously resilient and vulnerable. The growth of sales and corresponding supply chain challenges have been widely reported, so I won't dwell on them here, but I will note that it at least seems that every distinct event has had a more dramatic effect on the supply chain than ever before.

Keep the first things first. Engineering activity shifted to get existing product out the door as customers focused on economic survival as opposed to future development. Correspondingly, the "golden screw" has been getting as much or more attention than the "next big thing."

Flexibility and the ability to pivot is key. In Ithaca, we routinely (and rightly) talk about the frequency and suddenness of change in the weather. Frankly, it pales in comparison in both frequency and abruptness to what we've seen in changing situations on our industry.

I'm sure this is not an exhaustive list and I welcome any input you have that would add to it. However, as I developed this list, another question occurred to me. Is there anything on this list that we really didn't know before? Are the lessons from the pandemic new, or have the last few years simply served as a not so gentle reminder of things we already knew? My sense is that while there is widespread emphasis on finding the holy grail – the industry and life-altering breakthrough that came out of the pandemic – the latter is more applicable.

If that is the case, then the real question of the pandemic is not, "What do we know now that we didn't know then?" but rather, "Given what we already know, what will we do about it?"

A final confession. As I put this column together, I struggled with it a bit. I never quite know exactly where I'm going when I start writing but have a general idea or direction. In this case the final product took a number of twists and turns as I gathered a variety of input on the subject. I believe this is the result of uniquely personal experiences over the last few years. I suspect that the answer to my final questions are similarly unique to each of our circumstances and situation, but as always, I can be reached at ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com and welcome your comments.

This is my viewpoint – what's yours? ■

QBR vs. SPM

I've always believed you can never know where you're going until you understand where you've been. Today, this is still true, but I also believe in Einstein's theory: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Which brings me to the structure of today's quarterly business review (QBR.) We spend so much time looking back each quarter and spend so little time looking forward. There is little we can do to affect the past but, the future – that's where we can make a difference.

Quarterly business review

Don't get me wrong – it's important to understand what was accomplished in previous quarters. As salespeople and as manufacturers' reps, we are all compensated on accomplishments. It's critical to our business and our principals' business that we understand our performance. We review sales numbers to see if we've hit our metrics and if the numbers are growing. We review opportunities to see if they did in fact close in the last quarter. We look back to see what new designs have been started and to see where we are in the overall plan for the year. These things are important to understand. As salespeople our key performance indicators (KPIs) are based on hitting these metrics that were developed. But, many of these KPIs are determined many quarters before we review them. In many cases we're developing plans for January during the previous August/September time frame. Our principals use these forecasts and projections to plan resources during the forecasting period, so it is important to have open communication with management on the tactics we plan to use. In effectively communicating these tactics, everyone buys into the strategy and everyone is working towards the same goals and product development. They implement R&D schedules and launch new production introductions based on forecasted revenue. As salespeople and rep firms, we develop various strategies to hit certain goals:

- Strategies to meet sales goals and grow our numbers
- Strategies to maintain and grow our current customers

- Strategies on how to engage with new customers
- Strategies to design in principals' new product introductions (NPIs)
- Strategies to gain market share

Strategic planning meeting

The strategic planning meeting (SPM) utilizes the results of the previous quarters but focuses on reviewing the strategies we employed to meet these goals. An effective SPM recognizes the strategies implemented and reviews the list of tactics – the actions we take on a regular basis to advance the strategies and ultimately meet our goals. We all try different day-to-day tactics. Some work and some do not. What's important in this meeting is to openly discuss those tactics. If a tactic is working, how do you do more of it? If it isn't, what needs to change to drive the desired results? In a group setting, these discussions spark new ideas. If something is working for someone else, how do we implement those

tactics elsewhere? We highlight those that are working and do a deep dive in to why they're working. If the tactics aren't working, it's just as important to figure out why, to avoid repeating them. Many times, it can be a simple tweak and a tactic that was previously driving no results can become successful.

It's also important to understand what is happening in the markets. The global market and the North American markets both have an effect on our local markets. Then, each local market has its own drivers that affect their performance. This was evident over the past two years in an unprecedented time where the intricacies of each market were magnified by a number of issues. These meetings are critical in gaining an understanding of what's happening in each of the markets, but the focus needs to be on adapting our tactics to meet these new market drivers. Again, in a group setting, everyone is communicating and the expectations are set with common knowledge.

By looking forward, everyone is engaged in the process. Everyone is learning from one another and everyone is focused on the end results. ■



by John O'Brien, CPMR
Coakley, Boyd and Abbett
ERA President
jobrien@cbane.com

*There is little we
can do to affect the
past but the future
– that's where we
can make a
difference.*



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

These companies joined ERA since July 2022.

REPRESENTATIVES

Fieldstone Technical Solutions
Mike Burke
Southern California
fieldstonetech.com

Luscombe Rocky Mountain
Doug Campbell
Rocky Mountain
lec-rm.com

MMS Technical Sales
Joseph Rabbitt
New England
mmstechnicalsales.com

TAI Technical Sales
Steve Buroojy
Mid-Lantic
taicorp.com

Taylor Marketing
John Lambert
Rocky Mountain
taylormarketing.com

MANUFACTURERS

Aker Technology USA
Ed Fox
aker-usa.com

Bujeon Electronics
Andy Hwang
bujeon.com

Electroswitch Electronic Products
Trey Ayscue
electro-nc.com

Greenliant
Tara Yingst
greeliant.com

Curtis Industries
Gary Wenzel
curtisind.com

NorComp
Damien Croft
norcomp.net

I-PEX USA LLC
Russ Elder
i-pex.com

Intelligent Memory America, Inc.
Mike Amidi
intelligentmemory.com

Kyocera-SLD Laser
Vik Sreedhar
kyocera-sldlaser.com

Prime Power, Inc.
Paul Richardson
primepower.com

TWS Technology, LLC
Ryan Burger
tws.com

Unisonic Technologies Co., Ltd.
Chelsy Chen
unisonic.com.tw/

DISTRIBUTORS

Griffin Distribution LLC
Amy Simmons
griffindistribution.com

Waldom Electronics
Don Akery
waldom.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
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/CPSC/MBP programs) mrerf.org
Repfabric 844-737-7253, x225
RPMS software 800-776-7435
rpms.com
Spyre Group spyregroup.com/rep/index.htm
UPS shipping era.org
(Click the link on the Member Services page.)

Consultants Available for Expert Access

Accounting & Taxes: Stan Herzog 847-975-0409
Executive Searches: Carla Mahrt 402-721-6590
Insurance: John Doyle 888-243-0174
Legal: Adam Glazer 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

ERA Services & Resources

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

- ERA HoverMap - An Online Directory of Manufacturers' Reps
- Lines Available Service
- ERA Water Cooler Industry Discussions
- ERA Talks (Podcast)
- ERA Member Surveys
- ERA Bulletin Board
- POS Reports & SBLC Alerts
- ERA Logos

ERA White Papers & Industry Standards

(Visit era.org for details.)

- Staying on Course – Tips for More Effective Manufacturer/Representative Quarterly Meetings
- Rep to Manufacturer Communication: Reinforcing the Mutual Value
- Introduction to Manufacturers' Reps
- Line Conflicts: Navigating to a Mutually Beneficial Resolution
- Thriving on Change 2014: How the Field Sales Function Keeps Evolving
- Guidelines to Planning a Territory Visit
- Developing New Markets with Professional Field Sales Reps
- POS – Recommended Technical Standards for Distribution Point-of-Sale Reporting
- Split Influence (Commission) Recommendations for the Electronics Industry
- Split Commission Request Form, in Excel format

ERA Meetings & Programs

- Chapter Officer Leadership Training (COLT), Nov. 2-4, 2022
- ERA Annual Conference, Feb. 26-28, 2023

ERA XCOM DIGEST

I am excited to share the experiences of two 2022 summer interns sponsored by the ERA White Pin Internship Program. As you will see, our pilot program, aimed at attracting young talent to the rep model to keep the industry fresh, was a tremendous success for both the rep firms and the interns.

Raleigh-Durham, N.C. area

Aparna Sproelich, CPMR, vice president/COO of the Aurora Technical Group - Southeast, started the candidate search in February 2022 at a local community college in-person career-fair. The position was for a marketing specialist with entrepreneurial spirit, high energy, some technical abilities and good communication skills. The interview process was critical to both parties and included job function details and face-to-face communication. Once the candidate was identified, the offer of a 15-week internship program was accepted and onboarding began.

The chosen candidate was Nelysa Rosario, a student at Wake Technical Community College in Raleigh, N.C. In her short time at Aurora Technical Group, Rosario was able to work with account managers to validate target markets, develop marketing campaigns, work with account managers on proper email messaging, follow up on cold emails and other leads, and develop and execute verbal messaging for initial customer contact. At the end of the summer, Rosario was hired as a marketing specialist employee and will work part-time while she finishes her associate's degree. According to Sproelich, "The interview process was the key. The candidate shined during our face-to-face discussion. We felt confident during the interview that she would blend in well with our team and add value in a very short time." Sproelich and her team were very pleased with the White Pin Internship program as it was the catalyst for hiring a solid employee.

Southwest U.S.

English Technical Sales (ETS) was looking for a business development/research analyst intern and posted the position on the bulletin boards of six Southern California engineering colleges but received no response. Not to be discouraged, Cameron English, CPMR, CEO/president of ETS, targeted one college (his alma mater) for their recruitment program and found a

The White Pin committee's inaugural summer internship program, aimed at attracting young talent to the rep model, was a tremendous success for both the rep firms and the interns.

candidate through its bulletin board. ETS hired Gustavo Ruiz, an undergraduate computer science major interested in exploring internet-based marketing. Working three days (20 hours) per week this summer, Ruiz was able to research target customers using ZoomInfo, develop email drip marketing campaigns using Auto Klose

and ultimately share analytical marketing data directly with principals and account managers on calls. Ruiz will continue as a 1099 employee for ETS while pursuing his undergraduate degree. Regarding the experience, English said, "Gustavo's contribution to our marketing initiative was more than expected. His critical thinking skills as a computer science major enabled him to dig deeper into techniques to find engineering prospects at target customers. We are very pleased with the initial results of our marketing program. Our principals were even more thrilled."

Next year's program

Based on the success of the 2022 Summer Internship Program, the White Pin committee is happy to announce the continuation and expansion of the program in 2023. Reps will need to submit applications to qualify for the subsidy. Applications can be found on the ERA website under the ERA Resources tab and should be submitted no later than February 28, 2023. Applications will be reviewed in order of date submitted. Let's work together to create an outstanding White Pin Intern class for 2023! ■

INDUSTRY UPDATE

Kingsland Coombs, CPMR, CSP
Control Sales Inc.
Sr. Vice President at Large
kingc@controlsales.com

Sharing the success of the Summer 2022 White Pin interns



MANUFACTURING
UPDATE

Ken Bellero
Schaffner EMC
Sr. Vice President/Manufacturers
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Major issues affecting
manufacturing in 2022



Now that many of us have survived the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak around the world, several key issues are now the topic of conversation for many manufacturers throughout the U.S. The COVID-19 shutdowns, along with the current resurgence of sales volumes, have put a very big spotlight on new issues that many are tackling every day. These have now become the focus for many and have added additional costs, time and resources that have in the past not been necessary.

Here is my take on five of the major issues that I see are specifically prominent among U.S. and European manufacturing companies. Let me know if you have others that your company may be facing that, by discussing together, we could help you address as well.

Labor shortage. With many baby boomers retiring, millennials approaching middle age and a small Gen Z, employers are finding it harder to hire new workers to fill empty jobs or positions created due to the increase in growth the electronics industry has been experiencing in 2022. The Congressional Budget Office forecasted that the U.S. labor force would grow by a mere 0.2 percent per year from 2024 to 2031 – which will put a great deal of stress on hiring new employees for many of us in manufacturing.

It is taking much longer to find qualified candidates for many of the positions that are open which is causing a great amount of frustration and work overload on the current workforce. Many companies have turned to agencies to help with the search but still must deal with a much smaller group to interview, a higher cost for the search and, when a qualified candidate is found, a great deal of competition from other manufacturers to successfully hire the employee. There seems to be no relief in sight at this point in the year and as the holiday season approaches, it becomes more and more difficult.

Supply chain instability. The economic turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities in the supply chain leading to doubts about globalization. This has shown the manufacturing sector just how easily the supply chain – heavily dependent on international sources – can be disrupted. Many manufacturing companies are looking to “re-shoring.” This pressure and expense to move

manufacturing to cut down on vulnerability has been very detrimental to many. Also, the higher costs of shipping from overseas, along with the extreme delays many are experiencing on the delivery of products via sea or air freight, have cut down on the profits for many manufacturers. This is putting more focus on moving production facilities to provide more control over the supply chain as we move into what seems to be a very promising 10 years of growth in the electronics industry.

Smart factory initiatives. The importance of smart factories is undeniable; operating more efficiently will keep your facility a step ahead of your competition. Putting together a successful roadmap for a smart factory, however, is a huge initiative and takes a lot of planning and preliminary examination. Here are some suggestions to move smart manufacturing strategies and roadmaps from aspirational to actionable, and to set realistic expectations for resources and funding:

- People come first.
- Prepare to integrate continuous innovation with continuous improvement.
- Shift performance management from efficiency to speed.
- Expect to execute gradually.
- Be realistic about your expectations at each stage.
- Create a roadmap.

Once these actions are reviewed and discussed internally, then the initiative can begin to become more of a reality.

Cybersecurity. Most U.S. manufacturers report cybersecurity incidents in the past 12 months. At Schaffner we have been doing a great amount of employee training and testing to make sure our employees understand the importance of being vigilant when it comes to cybersecurity. The threat of attacks is on us every day and only those companies that have been able to make their employees aware of how not to be a victim have been successful. But so many manufacturers still struggle with obtaining 100 percent protection from these constant threats and attacks.

One of our key logistics partners had a very serious cybersecurity issue in the beginning of the year which brought them

(continued on page 32)

Fall means school has started, but school never ends at ERA. We are planning or presenting year-round to keep everyone at the head of the class with their selling and management skills and beyond. Reps want to be the best for their principals and distributors to achieve mutual success.

Recently I listened to the July 25th episode of the "How to Be a Better Human" podcast (you can find it on Apple Podcasts and Spotify) about why math is important to humanity. This might be a skill you either loathe or love. I am thinking about math and school as I send my son to Purdue engineering school as a freshman. When I was there, it was math that got me through everything. As long as I could put a formula to the problem, I could find a solution. As a rep, math is essential to succeeding in business – calculating commission (or splits) to projecting forecasts to ppm to beta curves or trip curves... What does all this do for us beyond the numbers? Math creates a connection with your peers and that “ah-ha!” moment when you solve the problem, together. It takes some collaborating and persistence and understanding. Math is everywhere as we progress through our careers. Our brains take in new data (another good read/listen is the book “Think Again” by Adam Grant) from education, everyday events and formal trainings, and we come to new conclusions. We all do this from our unique perspective and in our own corporate culture where we apply this new thinking.

At ERA we work hard to bring you scheduled education like the Virtual Sales Training sessions and breakouts at the National Management Conference as well as the podcasts and Water Cooler sessions – where fresh, relative topics are presented to feed new thinking. Virtual Sales Training 2022 is complete but the national ERA Conference is around the corner. The topics are evolving as we find our balance in this new era. Relationship-building is tough in our current climate (Who is working in

*Our value is greater
than ever. Our local
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ing campaign for the
products we represent.*

the office or can meet for coffee or get on a Microsoft Teams call??) But our value is greater than ever. Our local knowledge is key to building the marketing campaign for the products we represent. Digital marketing is a field we didn't know we needed to

know, but it is here and there is a lot of expertise we can all share. Communication will always be the key to our achievements. If we can't express the need, we can't find the solution. Time management is difficult as we will never have more than 24 hours in a day. (Another math problem to solve –

how to do more, but live in the moment and still get a good night's sleep!) All of these challenges can be explored with new approaches. We need to challenge our brain to keep trying new things and if things work, make them stick!

Don't forget to introduce your new employees to the ERA NEXGEN group who connects and shares their challenges, as we encourage their investigation into issues at hand while listening to their perspective and helping to find a solution together. We all learn from them! ERA is helping you find interns with the White Pin Internship program to establish the NEXGEN group to show the value of the rep model in new and creative ways!

As we close out 2022 and the temperature starts getting colder outside, we take our laptops to our favorite perch while we keep the emails flowing, analyze spreadsheets, and listen to books or podcasts or people that keep us moving forward. The learning (wind) never stops – we just adjust our sails. ■

EDUCATION UPDATE

Ellen Coan, CPMR
C C Electro Sales
Sr. Vice President/Education
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School is always in
session at ERA



DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

Craig Sanderson
Sager Electronics
Sr. Vice President/Distributors
csanderson@sager.com

Distribution and
ERA: The value and
teamwork continues to
grow



Perhaps you have heard of the college psychology class that had a written final exam. The anticipation was very high as the final exam made up 100 percent of the final grade. Many of the students studied long and hard as the course professor was known for his teaching ability and was held in high esteem. Achieving a high grade in this course would go a long way to determining an individual student's success in the field, even beyond graduation from college.

The date for the final exam came. All of the students were in their seats, prepared to use the full hour allotted to complete the exam. The exam was distributed in paper form and the students were to complete their response in a handwritten format. After the tests were handed to each student in the room, all began to work on the exam and almost all took the full amount of time allotted. Except for one student. One student spent only one minute to complete and turn in the exam to the professor at the front of the room. The student then left the room.

How could one student complete the exam so quickly, while everyone else toiled away? The reason lies in the exam's questions or, in this case, the exam question. The exam handed out by the professor of this highly regarded psychology course had only one question: "Why?" The answer provided by the student who completed the exam in one minute was: "Why not?"

That was a long story for a single punch line, but the scenario, which actually did occur, reminds me of ERA. There are some in our industry that may ask "Why join ERA?" I strongly suggest that the answer is "Why not join ERA?"

ERA continues to make strides that benefit all members, reps, distributors and suppliers. While it would be a bit too long to detail all that the ERA has to offer, let me mention a few of the aspects of the ERA that might interest you.

The **ERA Virtual Sales Training**. This is the second year of creating and delivering sales training to its members and non-members. This training provides value that is so important to our industry and

can assist all of those in sales. Created in bite-sized chunks, this training addresses many of the needs in today's environment. Here were a few of the key titles of this year's training sessions: Effective Communication; Bridging the Gap in a Multi-Generational Workforce; Value-Based Selling; Digital Marketing; Tips & Tricks on Setting Appointments. These and more are addressing today's needs. Why not attend?

Industry experts available to members. This is a bit on the "Can you believe it?" scale. For some members access to professional help on such key topics as accounting and taxes, legal issues, employees benefits and more, is important. But what about being able to access experienced leaders such as Steve Cholas, Craig Conrad, Cesare Giammarco, Bryan C. Shirley, and John Simari on sales, marketing & business strategy? Who wouldn't take advantage of this valuable service?

The ERA Hover Map is one of the recent developments that brings real value to all members. It expands what once was only a listing of reps to now being enhanced to provide: a definition of the geography for each ERA Territory, a list of the USPS zip codes for the specific territory, a DTAM profile for the specific territory, and a complete list and profile of the rep organizations in each territory. Do you think that you could use that info? Why not?

The annual ERA Conference. The ERA Conference is without a doubt one of the most value-driven events in our industry. Held annually in Austin, Texas in late winter/early spring, the upcoming event is scheduled for Feb. 26-28, 2023. Professional speakers bringing new ideas, fresh thoughts, and addressing key aspects of our industry. There will be networking with suppliers, reps and distributors. There will be breakout sessions that help us all navigate the many changes to our industry while learning best practices from our peers. Does all of this equal value? Of course it does. So why not attend?

From my view, there are so many valuable aspects to joining the ERA. I could

(continued from previous page)

continue but will provide a flash round of important value items: lines available notices, ERA Water Cooler sessions, local chapter events, professional development; ERA podcasts, monthly POS reports – the list goes on and on.

My message is clear. If you haven't become a member of ERA, why not join this month? You can thank me later.

Budget season is upon us

This year, as with almost every year in the past twenty, companies will soon begin the budgeting process for sales, profitability, expenses, head count, inventory, marketing communications, capital expenditures, real estate and facilities, IT expansion, and so many of the financial aspects of running our businesses. Over the past three years and for many of the last twenty years, factors beyond our control will impact our company results.

What will it be this year? Will the U.S. and international shipping ports continue to improve from the serious issues of the last two years? Will the U.S. government infrastructure spending impact your business positively? Will the Russia-Ukraine conflict continue to have a bigger impact on raw materials and energy than originally anticipated? Will the severe weather all over North America and the world have a continued negative impact on our lives, and our food and water availability? Will the growth in the use of electric vehicles and the move away from fossil fuels improve the environment?

What about those factors seemingly within our control? Will inflation negatively impact the U.S. economy? Can suppliers utilize the capacity expansion investments they have made to continue to grow their business? Does new product design continue to fuel the electronics industry? Could OEM and CEM customers continue to extend their delivery horizons to avoid shortage and line down situations? Will OEM customers begin insisting on multiple sources for all of their design components? Should distributors continue to invest heavily in expanding their inventories to better support customer demand?

So many questions and yet there are even more. But I will stop here. I'm looking forward to budget season and hope that you and your company foresee sales and profitability growth for 2023.

Thank you, New England ERA!

The New England chapter of the ERA's second annual golf tournament, held in July 2022, was a well-attended event with participation from member rep firms, suppliers, customers and distributors.

The event included a raffle which enabled a donation to charity. This year the decision was made to donate the proceeds to the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in the names of two industry veterans who had recently passed away, Jamie Noble of Kemet Electronics Corp. and Ed Tully of Sager Electronics. John Hutson spoke about both Jamie and Ed. John cited Jamie's successful career both before and during his time with Kemet. John captured Ed's importance to the Sager team and spoke of Ed's love for his family, along with his passion for his work, his over-the-top attitude, and of course his "Ed-isms." This meant a lot to both Jamie and Ed's families, so a big thank you to the New England ERA. ■

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).

CALCUQUOTE provides quoting and supply chain software for the EMS industry. With a focus on the future, CalcuQuote improves the speed, accuracy and efficiency of the quoting and supply chain process by optimizing operations and implementing sustainable digital solutions. CalcuQuote currently serves over 200 EMS companies and is based in Dallas, Texas. Visit calcuquote.com.

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. Visit sfbbg.com or call Adam Glazer at 312-648-2300.

REP FABRIC 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.

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. Contact Patrick Knoelke at 913-499-6014 or visit spyregroup.com/rep.

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. Account-Manager, 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.

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. 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. Visit 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.

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. Visit jjmsearch.com.

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

MATERIALS, ASSEMBLY, PRODUCTION & SUPPLY

Troy Gunnin - Sun Rep Inc. - Tampa, Fla.

Which way will the pendulum swing?

While pondering what to write and considering the current state of things, I was reminded of a line from an old song, "England Swings" by Roger Miller, where he sings "England swings like a pendulum do." It seems appropriate for what has taken place over the past couple of years, around our country and the world. Let's just take a look at some of those pendulum swings.

For you Yankee fans, before the All-Star break, they were on a course to blow the AL East away, leading by about 15 games. As I write this, they are playing the Rays and their lead is down to 4. Now, will the pendulum swing back? By the time you read this, you will know the answer.

Over the past couple of years, we have seen the COVID-19 pandemic swing. Currently it appears that the pendulum is on the downward curve. How about monkey pox? The pendulum is on the upswing. When will it begin its swing in the other direction?

Gas prices hit an all-time high recently. Again, as I write this the pendulum appears to be swinging. But don't get too excited, because the AAA and others are saying that we can expect this pendulum to have another upward tick.

The pendulum has swung so far in the transportation world that I believe it is stuck in the up mode. I keep hoping that the supply chain situation will ease and perhaps the pendulum will begin to swing back.

Well, how about the hurricane season? We went through August with no hurricanes, but come September, guess what? The pendulum has swung. As I write this, there are two hurricanes in the Atlantic with another likely in the next couple of days.

Then, there is the housing price situation. The pendulum has been on an insane upward swing and we keep waiting for the swing to reverse. (Remember, it did that in 2008!) But at the moment, it does not appear to have reached its peak.

Now let's talk about the need for a new or used car. Remember when we would negotiate down from the MSRP? Well, the pendulum has swung there, big time. Now we try to get the price back down somewhere close to the MSRP.

Let's address the everyday things, like a trip to the grocery store. The pendulum has certainly been on the upward curve for some time and there's no indication that it is ready to change course. Just a side note to that: I just saw on a news program that consumer buying habits have been shifting from name brands to off-brands and store brands, in an effort to save.

Let's just remember that through the years, we have seen the pendulum swing and at some point, it has come back to neutral. Let's hope it does that again – soon. ■

Electronics Representatives Association



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Tax benefits of paying pass-through entity tax



by Bruce E. Bell, CPA/Attorney

Bruce E. Bell is a CPA/Attorney practicing at the Chicago law firm of SFBBG. A founding member of the firm, Bruce chairs the firm's transactional and tax practices. He concentrates on federal tax, estate planning and general business matters. Bruce can be reached at 312-648-2300 or bruce.bell@sfbbg.com.

In the last several years, many states have enacted legislation imposing a pass-through entity tax. The tax is designed to help business owners pay a tax-deductible state income tax at the entity level to avoid limitations on deducting state income taxes on their personal federal income tax returns. For those entities which are eligible, the entity tax can provide a meaningful benefit for business owners.

Pass-through entities are, generally speaking, those organizations that are not subject to federal income tax at the entity level. Rather, income is reported by the owners on their personal income tax returns who are taxed on their respective shares of company income. The most common types of pass-through entities are limited liability companies owned by more than one person, partnerships and S corporations. Pass-through entities do not include regular or C corporations as these entities are subject to income taxes at the corporate level.

To understand the benefits of the new pass-through tax, a review of two key provisions of the last major piece of federal tax legislation is necessary. The 2017 Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act imposed a \$10,000 limit on the amount of state and local income tax that taxpayers can deduct for federal income tax purposes. Prior to this legislation, taxpayers could claim as itemized deductions on their personal income tax returns real estate taxes, state income taxes and certain other state and local taxes paid. Coupled with another change in the 2017 Tax Act, the increase in the threshold for claiming itemized deductions, many taxpayers are now either limited in the amount of state and local taxes they can deduct and/or prevented

from claiming any itemized deductions on their personal income tax returns. The laws which have been enacted by many states are designed to afford taxpayers the benefit of the state and local tax deductions they lost under the 2017 Tax Act, regardless of whether they itemize deductions on their personal income tax returns.

While the rules vary from state to state, under a common statutory scheme, income tax can be paid by a pass-through entity if the entity so elects.

When the entity pays the state income tax, the business owners receive corresponding credits on their personal income tax returns for their share of the tax paid by the entity. Essentially, the pass-through entity is paying the tax on behalf of the entity owners. The amount of the tax the owners pay to the state will not change. The benefit to the owners is that the pass-through

entity tax the owners pay will reduce the owners' share of the income the owners report for federal income tax purposes. The owners are then left in the same position as if the owners were able to claim as itemized deductions the state tax payments.

Assume Glen is the sole owner of his S corporation and reports income from the corporation of \$300,000 per year, apart from his salary. Also assume Glen is subject to income tax of \$15,000 on this income and he will not be able to fully deduct this amount on his personal income tax return. This is due to the 2017 Tax Act which limits the amount of Glen's state tax itemized deduction to \$10,000. Moreover, unless Glen has other deductions which cause his itemized deductions to exceed the increased threshold, he will receive no tax deduction for the \$15,000 state tax payment.

The benefit to business owners is that the pass-through entity tax will reduce their share of the income they need to report for federal income tax purposes.

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Now assume that Glen's S corporation elects to pay the \$15,000 pass-through entity tax. In this case, Glen will only report income from his S corporation of \$285,000, the difference between his \$300,000 of total pass-through income and the \$15,000 of tax paid by Glen's S corporation. Glen will receive a \$15,000 credit against his personal state income tax obligation. By reporting only \$285,000 of pass-through income, Glen is in the same position he would have been in before the 2017 Tax Act where he would report \$300,000 of pass-through income and be able to deduct his \$15,000 state tax payment as an itemized deduction.

The imposition of these new state entity taxes should cause business owners to reevaluate their organizational structure. With S corporations and multi-member LLCs being the primary beneficiaries of the pass-through entity tax, many business owners may opt to convert their entities to become pass-through entities eligible for the pass-through entity tax. In some states, the pass-through entity tax will not apply to single-member LLCs so a single-member LLC may consider adding a member or owner to become a multi-member entity that qualifies for the tax and the accompanying credit. Alternatively, single-member LLCs may elect to become S corporations thereby qualifying for the new pass-through entity tax. Regular corporations may elect to become S corporations for the same reason.

As counterintuitive as it may seem, eligible entity owners will actually enjoy an overall tax benefit by having their pass-through entities pay a tax they are not otherwise obligated to pay. Unless Congress chooses to rescind the limitations on state and local income tax deductions and reduce the threshold for claiming itemized deductions, small business owners which reside in states which have enacted pass-through entity taxes should take advantage of this new opportunity. ■

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Jury delivers complete victory for sales rep (as deadline looms)



By Adam J. Glazer
ERA General Counsel

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Your author was on trial in late August 2022 with this issue’s deadline fast approaching. Fortunately, the federal jury returned a quick verdict in favor of the plaintiff sales rep, simultaneously furnishing this article’s content and enabling The Representor’s deadline to be (nearly) met.

Many sales reps will see themselves in this tale. The prevailing plaintiff, Thompson Corrugated Systems (TCS), was a father and son team who reluctantly went along with their principal’s changing demands and contract deviations because they valued the relationship and believed in the quality of the product and its strong potential in the marketplace.

Then, when the principal went too far – much too far – TCS finally pushed back. Hard.

Agreement reached

It was approximately 2004 when TCS reached an oral agreement to represent Engico, an Italian manufacturer of corrugated box machinery. These custom-built, multi-million-dollar euro machines are so intricate and immense that Engico can only produce two per year for worldwide distribution.

The terms of the Engico-TCS agreement were somewhat sparse: eight percent commission on all sales into North America, a continent on which Engico had never made sales and was virtually unknown. TCS also relied on the well-known Code of Ethics promulgated by the Manufacturers’ Agents National Association, or MANA, the cross-industry association of sales reps and manufacturers.

MANA’s code includes provisions calling upon manufacturers to refrain from unilaterally changing the terms of sales rep agreements, and to specifically avoid reducing commission rates without sales reps’ consent.

Fred Thompson, Sr., recalled that Engico’s president, Rinaldo Benzoni, agreed to the MANA code at the beginning of their relationship. Benzoni would alternatively refer to the Code of Ethics as “a beautiful document” and claim to have never read it. It was undisputed that TCS sent this

“beautiful document” to Engico several times, pointing out it contained the essential terms of the parties’ agreement, and Engico never repudiated it.

Agreement performed

Both Fred Sr. and Fred Jr. worked diligently to pioneer the expansive territory for Engico and effected the first sale of an Engico machine in 2005 to a Kansas paper company. Then the Great Recession and the global manufacturing slowdown struck, the market eroded, and Engico approached TCS about changing the commission terms to a less lucrative sliding scale.

To enable its principal to withstand the challenging economic conditions, TCS agreed to the sliding scale – limited to the next three sales. When a second Engico machine was sold in 2017 to a Nebraska paper company, TCS was paid at the sliding scale commission rate.

In 2018, Benzoni met with the Thompsons and the parties discussed termination for the first time. The parties agreed to amend their oral agreement by having it terminate at the end of 2021, when Fred Sr. was considering retiring.

Agreement breached

By 2019, the Kansas paper company was ready to replace its 12-year-old machine with a newer Engico, but Benzoni cut TCS out of this transaction and dealt directly with the purchaser.

Relying on the parties’ agreement that TCS would receive commissions on all sales into North America, a term he frequently reminded Engico of, Thompson was not overly concerned about this move, and invoiced Engico at the sliding scale commission rate for this sale. In response, Engico acknowledged its obligation to commission TCS on the sale but issued no payment.

Despite the agreed 2021 termination date, by May 2019 Engico informed TCS it had selected a successor rep and termination would now occur at the end of 2019. Reluctantly, TCS accepted this new termination date.

Then, Engico demanded that TCS provide a list of its “hot prospects,” and promised

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to “protect” TCS by paying commissions should any company on that list purchase a machine before year end. TCS complied by furnishing the list two days later.

In August 2019, Benzoni scheduled a meeting with TCS at the offices of its new rep firm. Fred Sr. traveled to Indiana for the meeting, believing he would finally receive the overdue commission payment on the third machine, and that they would discuss transitioning the line at year end consistent with their recent amendment.

Upon arrival, however, Fred Sr. discovered it was a sandbag. Rather than arrange for an orderly transition process, Benzoni informed Fred that the new rep firm was taking over effective immediately, and TCS would get paid only on sales it directly produced to its “hot prospects” before the end of the year.

For good measure, Benzoni dropped a third bomb on TCS. As Benzoni later recounted, he informed Fred Sr. that Engico would only commission TCS on the third sale, a sale to a customer it indisputably secured, if TCS agreed to assert no further claims.

Fred Sr. not only rejected these demands, he also left the meeting and headed home. His abrupt departure spooked Benzoni, who proceeded to lawyer up. TCS soon received a letter from Engico’s counsel documenting the termination, and thereby confirming its breach of the parties’ agreement, and offering to pay only an insulting 50 percent of the commission due on the sale to the Kansas customer. A follow-up letter from its attorney reduced Engico’s offer to 45 percent – and demanded a release in exchange. Engico paid no commission on this sale to TCS or anyone else.

Agreement honored (by TCS)

As far as TCS was concerned, its contract with Engico rendered all sales into North America commissionable through the end of 2019, so it continued to perform. When one of its “hot prospects” heated up by expressing high interest in purchasing the used machine Engico bought back from the Kansas paper company, TCS did everything it could to get Engico to react during 2019, including e-mailing, calling and personally discussing this customer’s interest.

Alas, Engico not only waited until the first few days of 2020 to proceed with this sale, it also structured a sham transaction to make it appear the purchaser was actually the successor sales rep, whose name was decidedly not on TCS’s “hot prospects” list. While the new rep testified it did re-sell the machine, it admitted that TCS brought in the customer. Moreover, the successor rep never took title or possession of the machine, and the used machine shipped directly from the Kansas paper mill to TCS’s customer in Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, another sale took place in October 2019 to a customer TCS had previously called upon, and who informed Fred Sr. that it would not purchase from a manufacturer without a service technician in the U.S. Although this was duly reported to Engico, no technician was dispatched stateside until the successor rep was in place. TCS was not aware of this sale when it occurred, but notably, this sale was the fourth following the sliding scale amendment.

Agreement litigated

Filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, TCS’s complaint sought to recover for breach of the parties’ oral contract, and also sought exemplary damages under the Illinois Sales Representative Act. Engico responded by throwing everything it had up against the judicial wall to see if anything might stick but found only Teflon.

Engico’s motions to transfer the case, to dismiss for summary judgment, to bar TCS’s expert witness and to limit evidence were all denied on the way to trial. Meanwhile, the judge granted summary judgment in favor of TCS on the 2018 sale to the Kansas paper company.

Further, Engico made no real effort to settle the dispute, so a jury was empaneled in tiny Benton, Ill., hometown of actor John Malkovich. Engico flew in its two witnesses from Italy, who attempted to testify against a native father and son using a time-consuming translator, until the judge discerned both spoke English, and relegated the translator to stand-by duty.

The evidence presented at trial showed the parties originally agreed that, in exchange for TCS’s “pioneering” efforts, Engico would pay an eight percent commission on all sales made into North America. The jury then heard that the only three amendments to the oral agreement were: 1. Changing the commission rate after the first sale to the sliding scale for the next three machines; 2. Enabling the agreement to terminate after 2021, when Fred Sr. planned to retire; and 3. Moving up the termination date to the close of 2019.

Accordingly, the jury had little difficulty concluding that the agreement to commission TCS on all North American sales through 2019 was still in effect when Engico’s October 2019 sale took place, even though TCS did not directly participate in that sale. It had even less trouble seeing through the Engico smokescreen around the sale that, on paper, was made to its new sales representative that technically didn’t close until the first days of 2020. This sale too was deemed fully commissionable to TCS.

Because this machine comprised the fourth sale by Engico since the parties agreed to the sliding scale, TCS sought its eight percent

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SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW: Brooks Mattice

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of Indianapolis. We’re highly experienced in our market and have always been committed to being the Midwest’s most technically proficient, effective and professional manufacturer’s representative. Today, as part of the MFC Group, we continue to demonstrate that commitment though reinvestment in our people, facilities, processes and systems.

The MFC Group is comprised of Mel Foster Co., EAS Sales, FH Sales, WesTech and TMC; each maintaining its own brand, line card and P&L within each respective territory. The organization covers a total of 15 states across the Midwest.

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

MFC Group is structured as an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). When TMC became part of MFC Group, we immediately became eligible to participate in the ESOP as partners. It’s a nice financial benefit, but much greater than that, it leads to a collaborative culture and cooperative spirit within our company. Every employee is invested in and receives benefit from our mutual success. The ESOP structure also lends itself towards financial stability, succession planning and has certain tax benefits. It really is a fantastic way to structure a rep firm.

I’m also very proud of how our organization responded to the pandemic. I think we recognized early that the remote/hybrid workforce wasn’t going away. We realized that we needed to get more creative in the ways we touched customers. We instantly outfitted our team with the tools necessary to support the new virtual workspace. We spent significant resources making sure our employees were trained in communication techniques, prospecting techniques and organizational methods to adapt to the new world. We opened those trainings up to principals and distributors so that they could not only learn with us, but also to broadcast our innovative approaches to our partners. We now have two full-time marketing personnel supporting our own content: technical webinars, vertical marketing campaigns, micro-marketing campaigns, newsletters, social media strategy, website content and more. Most recently, we’ve invested in a business development person focused on lead management and emerging accounts. We used the pandemic as an opportunity to put the pedal-to-the-metal and invest in our business, and we’re really seeing it pay dividends now.

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

The ERA does a fantastic job of creating programming and educational opportunities for its members, and that has given me opportunities to learn from some of the best in our industry.

Through the ERA’s affiliation with Manufacturers’ Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF), I recently graduated from the Certified Professional Manufacturers’ Representative (CPMR) program. That has been a transformational experience in learning all the different facets in managing a rep firm.

The ERA Conference in February 2022 was the first I’ve had the chance to attend. I thought it was fantastic! The general sessions were relevant, on point and entertaining! The breakout sessions were fascinating – I loved hearing the different perspectives from suppliers, distributors and different rep firms on each of the topics. The opportunity to network with industry colleagues in person was invaluable.

The ERA Water Cooler sessions have been a great resource to help share ideas on the pertinent topics of the day. The ERA’s Virtual Sales Trainings are an awesome tool to help train the next generation of salespeople in our industry. They’ve also represented an opportunity for me to give back and pass on some of my experience. I moderated a session for Virtual Sales Training earlier this fall: “Bridging the Gap: Relationship Building & Collaboration in Today’s Multigenerational Electronics Industry.”

All of these experiences and opportunities within ERA have exposed me to so many new friends and colleagues around the industry. We all face similar challenges, so it’s invaluable to network and collaborate with each other as often as we can. Anything we can do to help ERA and our industry get stronger only serves to help us each as individual organizations. A rising tide lifts all ships!

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

Yes, yes and yes! LinkedIn is clearly the social media leader for our professional community, so that’s where we spend the bulk of our effort. The ERA content and posts on LinkedIn are always relevant and informative. I also like seeing ERA chapter activity from other areas – good inspiration and ideas for activity for our local chapter.

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

I’m a certified USA Swimming Referee. It takes a volunteer army to run a swim meet, so that’s one way I’ve been able to help support my kids’ passion.

NEWS BEAT

ERA WILL ATTEND ELECTRONICA IN MUNICH

ERA is proud to be counted among the many exhibitors that will attend electronica 2022, the premier international electronics industry tradeshow and conference that will bring together companies from more than 50 countries. This year’s electronica, with the theme of “Driving Sustainable Progress” will take place November 15-18 in Munich.

ERA has been attending electronica for more than 20 years. ERA’s goals when attending electronica are: to advocate for ERA’s North American members who are looking for representation and/or channel solutions in EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) territories; and, to explain the North American rep model to the manufacturers in EMEA who are interested in rep coverage in North America and/or channel partners in North America.

2023 ERA CONFERENCE REGISTRATION AND SPONSORSHIPS OPEN

We look forward to seeing you at the 2023 ERA Conference in Austin, Texas! The highly regarded annual event, taking place Feb. 26-28, provides an unparalleled opportunity to bring together manufacturers’ representatives, distributors and manufacturers in a collaborative and energetic environment, and offers all attendees a truly unique opportunity to learn, connect and grow.

To register for attendance, or sign your company up for a sponsorship, visit era.org/era-events/2023-era-conference/ for more information.

2023 CONFERENCE GENERAL SESSION SPEAKERS ANNOUNCED

ERA is excited to announce two general session speakers who will present at the 2023 ERA Conference.

Bernard Baumohl, chief global economist at The Economic Outlook Group, will be returning for the third year in a row to present the all-important economic update general session. His familiarity with our audience and industry will promise an interesting and useful economic outlook for our attendees. For more information on Bernard Baumohl’s career and expertise, visit: www.economicoutlookgroup.com/chief-economist.php.

Michael Knight, president of the Exponential Technology Group and senior vice president of corporate business development at TTI, Inc., will once again present the closing general session on Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023. Conference attendees are always enthralled with the in-depth industry information that Michael delivers.

ERA MOURNS GENE STRAUBE

Gene Straube, longtime ERA member of the Northern California chapter, White Pin member and founder of Straube Associates, Inc., passed away in September.

Born in New York City, Straube received a degree from Columbia University in electrical engineering and completed his Navy service in 1953. He relocated to Manhattan Beach, Calif., and started his career working for the infamous Howard Hughes at Hughes Semiconductor. Straube founded Straube Associates, Inc., in Mountain View, Calif., in 1960 and worked there for 50 years. He was inducted into the ERA White Pin group in 1979. He passed away one week after his 94th birthday. For more information on Gene, visit the Industry News section on the homepage of era.org

NEW MEMORY MANUFACTURING PLANT TO BE BUILT IN IDAHO

U.S. semiconductor manufacturer Micron announced it will invest \$15 billion through the end of the decade to construct a new memory manufacturing fab in Boise, Idaho.

The company said this will be the first memory fab built in the U.S. in 20 years, and the project will create an estimated 2,000 direct jobs and an additional 15,000 ancillary jobs.

The project will be aided by federal grants and credits from the CHIPS and Science Act as well as the state of Idaho. ■



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

The Arizona chapter sponsored a Q-3 Industry Gathering on September 14. Since there had been quite a few changes in the first half of the year, it was time to reconnect and reaffirm relationships. There was also a presentation by Tim Dinielli, senior global supply chain manager for Nikola Motors that addressed the rapidly growing electric vehicle (EV) industry in Arizona. Electronics sales representatives, distributors, manufacturers and customers attended this fun-filled evening of networking.

The goal in hosting this event was for Arizona ERA to become the catalyst to bring the Phoenix-area electronic component industry community together to elevate professionalism, promote the representative function and create a fellowship and bond with fellow sales professionals.

CAROLINAS

After a brief break over the summer, the Carolinas Chapter of ERA is continuing their online virtual event series coordinated by Penny Langdon. The chapter hosted a virtual breakfast on Sept. 23 that focused on the topic of “Engaging Young Engineers.”

Additionally, the chapter hosted its 19th Annual CERA Memorial Golf Tournament on Oct. 7 at Tot Hill Farm in Asheboro, N.C. Since 2005, the CERA has given over \$40,000 in scholarships to college-bound dependents of member reps and distributors. The chapter has also donated to the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society. This is all funded by the annual golf tournament.

CHICAGOLAND-WISCONSIN

The Chicagoland-Wisconsin chapter remains active, hosting a successful educational in-person breakfast on Aug. 26. The event featured a presentation by Anurag Rana, senior analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence. Rana discussed current market trends with OEMs/ODMs with an audience of over 25 reps, manufacturer and distributors.

The chapter will host a holiday event benefitting Toys for Tots in December.

EMPIRE

The Empire ERA Chapter proudly raised \$35,000 at its Aug. 1 Julie Baker Memorial Golf Tournament to donate to the Willow Domestic Violence Center in Rochester, N.Y. Julie Baker, an engineer who worked in electronic component sales for GMA, was tragically taken by an act of domestic violence in 2020. Baker was a Board member of the

Empire ERA chapter and helped plan the annual Empire ERA golf tournaments. “This tournament, renamed and rededicated in Julie’s honor, further supports her legacy with this substantial contribution,” said Patrick Coyne, vice president of membership and communications of Empire ERA chapter.

INDIANA-KENTUCKY



The Indiana-Kentucky ERA Chapter reported a great turnout at Golf Club of Indiana for the Annual Indiana-Kentucky ERA Industry Golf Outing. The event hosted over 80 golfers and 10 volunteers.



The chapter thanks ERA National and the many other sponsors for their generous support. It was a successful outing! R. O. Whitesell and Associates were the winners of the outing, with TTI, Inc. coming in second. It truly was an electronic industry event that has become an annual tradition for Indiana-Kentucky ERA member reps, customers and distributor colleagues. All rep members participated in the



event, along with many customers. There were over 30 players and volunteers from six different distributors!

METRO NEW YORK

Metro New York Chapter hosted its Steve Alford Memorial Golf Tournament on Oct. 6. This event, taking pace at St. Georges Golf and Country Club in East Setauket, N.Y., is being held to honor Metro New York Chapter President, Steve Alford, who passed away suddenly in November 2021. Steve was president and owner of Superior-Tek, a rep firm in New York, and was well known and very well-respected within New York’s high-tech electronics industry where he had spent his entire 37-year professional career.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

On July 25, the Northern California chapter hosted a virtual event featuring a presentation by Steve Turner, CEO & Founder of Turner Time Management, who presented, “Work Smarter, Not Harder: Powerful Time Management Strategies to Boost Your Productivity.” The virtual event was open to all chapters, and had attendees join from across the country. After the call, Steve provided handouts for technology best practices, plus Gmail/Google Calendar reference guides. He also offered attendees a complimentary 30-minute consultation call. The attendees all learned valuable time-saving tips and tricks!

The Northern California Chapter also enjoyed a social outing on August 18 to watch the local minor league baseball team play at Excite Ballpark in San Jose, Calif. About 35 ERA members and prospects watched from a private field-level deck as the San Jose Giants beat the Inland Empire with a score of 11-9. The group consisted of manufacturers’ reps, OEMs and distributors – including some recent hires and interns that are new to the industry. Several attendees even caught foul balls. This event was a home run! The NorCal ERA looks forward to our next meeting and continuing to service our members in a fun way that enhances their knowledge and expertise.



SOUTHWEST

The ERA SW Chapter is going to be hosting an event in the Dallas, Texas area on Nov. 16 or 17! Please keep an eye out for upcoming details with date, time and location. The chapter welcomes ERA members and readers in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area to join this event.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

A great time was had by all at the SoCal ERA’s Summer Social event hosted on Sept. 8. Newly retired Steve Farley and his band Burnt Toast supplied the entertainment to over 75 industry professionals. Reps, distributors, manufacturers and customers all joined in on the fun. A big thank you to fellow ERA rep Bill Herold of Conquest Technical Sales and Andrea Pacholek, chapter administrator, for planning the event.

Renowned economist Dr. Raymond Sfeir, Ph.D., from Chapman University’s Gary Anderson Center for Economic Research gave his expert advice at an in-person event on Sept. 27. ERA members not only learned about what to expect from the economy, but they also had an opportunity to ask questions that are directly impacting their business. This was an industry-wide event where reps, manufacturers, distributors and anyone else from the electronics industry were welcome. The event was widely attended.



The chapter’s Charity Golf Tournament in November will support Operation Homefront, a national nonprofit organization that helps build strong, stable and secure military families. Robert Thomas, COO of Operation Homefront states: “We are grateful to the Electronics Representatives Association of Southern California for their ongoing commitment and steadfast support allowing us to accomplish our mission of building strong, stable and secure military families. Since 2013, they have helped us deliver our portfolio of highly-valued relief, resiliency and recurring support programs to military families in Southern California and across the country, enabling tens of thousands of these very deserving citizens to thrive, not simply struggle to get by, in the communities they have worked so hard to protect.”

The Southern California Chapter is looking forward to the rest of the year and have already started planning events for 2023! ■

XCOM MANUFACTURING UPDATE: Issues in 2022

(continued from page 18)

to their knees for more than 30 days before they could get all aspects of their organization back on track after the attack. Every one of us – manufacturers, distributors and reps – need to do everything we can to avoid a cyber attack on our companies. Do you have a strategy or action plan should your company be targeted by an attack?

Sustainability. Managing operations in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner is becoming imperative to business growth. As the cost of energy and materials rises, regulations tighten and consumers gravitate toward sustainable brands and businesses, many companies are already developing business practices that are more sustainable. For many manufacturers this has become a major priority to remain competitive within their market. A good amount of time and focus should be given to this issue to stay ahead of the curve when dealing with overall sustainability.

It seems that for many, these new issues are directly related to our current situation and are an outcome of the current business climate. Again, it is important that all the members of the ERA work together when dealing with these very important issues.

As I mentioned, these are just a few of the issues that I see that have affected each one of us on how we run our business in 2022. What are some of the issues you are experiencing that are an outcome of the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath? Please feel free to share them with me for further discussion in future issues of *The Representor*. You can reach me at ken.bellero@schaffner.com. My door, phone and email are always open! ■

LEGALLY SPEAKING: Jury delivers complete victory for sales rep

(continued from page 27)

commission per the parties’ original agreement. Benzoni testified that the sliding scale rate remained in effect and he never agreed it applied only to the next three sales, a position that proved inconsistent with other testimony and e-mails admitted at trial. The jury awarded an eight percent commission on this sale.

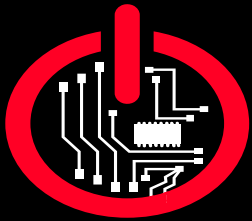
Agreement validated

After finding Engico breached the parties’ oral agreement, the jurors were tasked with deciding whether exemplary damages were warranted under the Illinois statute. The judge instructed them to apply the same standard that governs punitive damages in Illinois, a notoriously high standard, and yet the bar was met in this case.

Evidence of hiding sales and manipulating the process to avoid an unmistakable commission obligation, coupled with a lack of candor on the witness stand from Engico’s witnesses, and the failure to pay any commissions on the three sales at issue – even the 2019 sale on which the judge had awarded summary judgment – convinced the jury to apply the full reach of the sales rep statute. And, in the nick of time.

Post-deadline, attorney’s fees, costs and prejudgment interest are expected to get added to the judgment. ■

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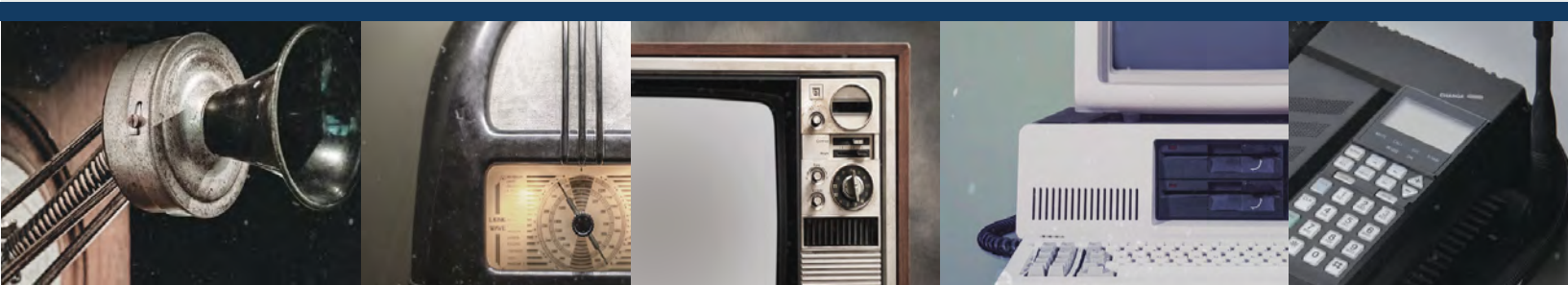
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1887

Emile Berliner receives the patent for the gramophone.
James Blyth builds the first electricity generating wind turbine.
Herman Hollerith receives a U.S. patent for his punch-card calculator.
Sager opens its first location in Boston, Massachusetts.



All great things begin with a single step – or in Sager's case a single storefront.

Recognized as the first distributor in the industry, Sager opened for business one hundred thirty-five years ago in downtown Boston, Massachusetts, servicing the growing interest in radio technology.

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