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Electronics Representatives Association

SUMMER 2023



SELLING WITH AI

Generative AI applications offer immense potential for sales teams

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ERA IS A MEMBER OF THE:
- Alliance of Manufacturers' Representatives Associations
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■ THE REPRESENTOR (ISSN 1057-0373) (Vol. 34, Issue 3), is published by Electronics Representatives Association, 1325 S. Arlington Heights Road, Suite 204, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. First annual subscription per ERA member company or manufacturer member is $15.00. Additional ERA member company or manufacturer member annual subscriptions are $12.00 each. Non-member annual subscriptions are $24.00. Foreign annual subscriptions are $40.00. Single copies are available at $6.00 per copy. (All prices quoted are payable in U.S. dollars.) American Express, MasterCard, Visa and Discover charges accepted.

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SUMMER 2023



SELLING WITH AI

Generative AI applications offer immense potential for sales teams

By Sam Richter

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been around for several decades and was first coined in 1956 by John McCarthy. Its use as a practical tool probably dates to Alan Turing, the brilliant British mathematician best known for breaking Nazi Germany's Enigma code during World War II and for creating the Turing Test.

Yet as a salesperson, AI probably hasn't entered your mainstream lexicon until earlier this year. Even though you work in the electronics and technology industry, you probably first heard the term "generative AI" and more specifically, OpenAI's language model ChatGPT.

What is generative AI? In its simplest form, think of generative AI — particularly large language models (LLMs) like GPT — as supercharged versions of the auto-suggest feature you experience when conducting a Google search. LLMs are trained on vast amounts of text data, learning to predict the likelihood of a word given its preceding context.

An LLM learns from the patterns featured in the data it uses for its training. OpenAI has not disclosed the data it uses, yet suffice it to say it is millions of websites, books, articles, research reports and more.

LLMs make predictions based on patterns they have learned. For instance, given the prompt "the color of the sky is," the model will likely suggest "blue" as the next word. This prediction is based on the frequency with which "the color of the sky is blue" occurs in the LLM's data.

What makes an LLM different and more powerful than any previous auto-suggest, however, is that the algorithms consider the context. For example, if the phrase is "at sunset, the color of the sky is," the model is more likely to suggest "orange" or "red" as the next word. The LLM does not understand the concept of a sunset or the sky changing color. Yet, it has learned from the data that the words "orange" and "red" often follow the phrase "the sky is" when the word "sunset" is mentioned earlier in a given sentence.

The preceding is probably more than you needed to know about LLMs and how ChatGPT can be a tool in your business and sales arsenal. Yet it is essential to understand how LLMs work and that programs like ChatGPT are not some super-powered magical resources. LLMs do not understand the world as humans do. They do not have experience, and even though amazingly impressive, an LLM's ability to provide context is limited to the statistical prediction models used in its training. In business, particularly sales, we know that tone of voice, non-verbal reactions, the meeting environment and many more variables are all imperative in how you communicate, present your message and ensure relevant value.

While LLMs have the potential to make the "order taker salesperson" obsolete — because a customer could enter a product type into a custom-trained LLM and the prediction model could suggest the correct part to go with that product — for the value-based salesperson, LLMs like ChatGPT will not replace your job. However, if you don't leverage these new technologies, salespeople who know how to use LLMs like ChatGPT will replace your job.

ChatGPT is a game changer for businesspeople and salespeople who understand how to use it effectively. It can create massive efficiencies. It can take complex documents and make them easier to understand. It can make your communication clear, and even help you craft emails, LinkedIn posts and comments, proposals, strategic plans and articles. And, in case you are wondering, I did use ChatGPT to help write an outline for this article, yet all that you're reading was written by me.

Accessing a LLM

Before you can take advantage of a LLM, you have to know where to go to access one. The good news is, it is super easy.

The Bing search engine, www.bing.com, uses ChatGPT to help it produce generative search results (Bing is a Microsoft product, and Microsoft is the primary investor in OpenAI). Enter a search query or ask a question in the Bing search form. The results page will include a ChatGPT-generated answer; below that, you will find a list of traditional search results.

Like Bing, Google, www.google.com, has its own LLM called Bard. Just like Bing, when you enter a search query or ask a question in the Google search form, if Google determines Bard can help answer the question, you will first see a LLM-produced result followed by a traditional list of search results.

You can access ChatGPT directly by creating a free account at https://chat.openai.com. You can also purchase a premium account to leverage the latest ChatGPT LLM models and advanced features like plug-ins.

To use on a mobile device, for Apple iPhone or iPad users, you can visit the App Store and download the official ChatGPT app. For Android mobile devices, you can access your ChatGPT account using your mobile web browser.

The following are some ways you and your organization can take advantage of LLMs, generative AI and ChatGPT.

Streamlining pre-call research

ChatGPT is not a search engine. It is not a powerful sales intel resource like SearchLink.ai, found inside the ERA website at era.org/era-searchlink/. Unlike ERA SearchLink.ai, ChatGPT cannot find decision-makers. It is not programmed to find the various synonyms and

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responsibilities of different job titles. It cannot find a person's contact information (in fact, it is prohibited from doing so). It cannot access current events, so it will not help you discover sales triggers. And because ChatGPT's dataset does not include any information post-2021, it won't help you find relevant information about a prospect or customer on its own.

However, what it can do is streamline the data-gathering process by helping you better understand the information that you do find. For example, you could:

- Ask ChatGPT to summarize a prospect's website
- Copy/paste a person's LinkedIn profile information into ChatGPT and have it summarized
- Enter an article web address, or better, copy/paste the article content into ChatGPT and in your prompt ask for a summary of the key points
- Use a ChatGPT plug-in that allows you to upload PDF files and then upload a prospect or customer's product sheets, manuals, annual reports, etc., and then ask ChatGPT to summarize the information

Using ChatGPT in this way can help you analyze data, spot patterns and generate insights, ensuring you have the necessary intelligence before any sales call or communication.

Enhancing communication

In your ChatGPT prompt, enter relevant information about your prospect or customer and let ChatGPT craft an email, letter or LinkedIn message, and even write a telephone script.

For example, prompt ChatGPT with information about a prospect, the company's pain points and/or issues that are going on in their industry (e.g., hiring employees). Then enter your company's solutions to those pain points. Ask ChatGPT to craft addressing potential objections and suggesting relevant products or services. The more you can personalize your messages based on what the other person cares about, the more effective your communication and the more credible you become.

ChatGPT can also help you improve your communication skills by suggesting appropriate language, tonality or phrasing to convey your message effectively. Ask ChatGPT to review an existing email chain (copy and paste the content into ChatGPT) and suggest follow-up responses. You can even ask ChatGPT to create an email sequence you would send prospects about a specific solution.

Make follow-up easy (and fun)

Another way to leverage ChatGPT is in your value-add follow-up messages. We know that statistically, most salespeople stop contacting a prospect after three attempts. Yet we also know that most prospects don't respond until somewhere between the fifth and twelfth messages. So how do you stay in touch with prospects and even existing customers in ways where you're only sometimes selling and instead, provide value to them?

Leverage ChatGPT to craft follow-up messages based on information the other person cares about. Find an article about their company and send a congratulatory note. Locate a research report about their industry and send them a "stumbled across this online and immediately thought of you" message. Seventy percent of your communication should be about providing value to them, while only 30 percent of your communication should be selling.

You can automate the value-add follow-up with the "Follow-Up GPT" feature inside the ERA SearchLink.ai tool. It will help you find an article. Then without even reading the article, copy/paste the article link into the "Craft A Follow-Up Message" section, add in any personal notes and instantly it will create a message that you can copy, revise and send to your prospect and clients via email or LinkedIn message.

Spend 30 minutes weekly on value-add messages, and you will dramatically differentiate yourself from the competition. Before ChatGPT, you could most likely send three messages in 30 minutes because you would need to find the article, read the article and then craft an email. With the ERA SearchLink.ai Follow-Up GPT feature, you can prepare 15 messages or more in 30 minutes.

Ways to use generative AI applications in sales

- ***Streamlining pre-call research*** — Ensure you have the necessary information before communicating with customers
- ***Enhancing communication*** — Personalize your messages to be more effective
- ***Make follow-up fun and easy*** — Spend time personalizing value-add messages that will get noticed
- ***Sales training*** — Ask ChatGPT to role-play and act as a potential customer
- ***Chat support*** — Use generative AI applications to build a chatbot customer support for your company

Sales training

Enter information about your company and product into ChatGPT. Then enter that you are a salesperson for the company, and you would like ChatGPT to act as a potential customer – make sure to provide details about whom that might be; for example, your customer might be an electrical engineer at an EV charging station manufacturer. Then in your prompt, ask ChatGPT to role-play different scenarios. For instance, tell ChatGPT to play the role of a prospect with an existing supplier. Or ask it to play the role of a prospect too busy to take your call. Try different scenarios you've experienced in real life and practice how you would respond to ChatGPT's responses.

Customer support

While not directly a salesperson's role, most salespeople receive phone calls and emails from customers asking for help. Many third-party customer support automation programs are on the market, and more are introduced daily. According to Oracle, 80 percent of businesses are planning to use chatbots in the next year, so if your company doesn't have one, you'll be at a competitive and efficiency disadvantage. These chatbot systems allow you to upload your current FAQs, manuals, etc., and will enable you to create your own LLM. Embedded onto your website, a well-created customer support chatbot provides 24/7 answers to customer questions — even complex answers that would previously most likely begin with the customer taking time away from a salesperson. This dramatically improves customer satisfaction and

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allows salespeople to spend their time finding and winning more business.

Proceed with a bit of caution

As you integrate LLMs like ChatGPT into your business model and sales process, it's also important to remember the following:

ChatGPT is a habitual liar. It doesn't mean to be, yet you'll find that as you use ChatGPT, it will sometimes completely make up information yet communicate it in a confident manner that appears as fact. Make sure you double-check any data that ChatGPT presents by entering the name of the study or data points into Google (use quotation marks around phrases for the best results) to ensure that the cited information appears in credible publications.

Don't represent ChatGPT-generated content as your own. Yes, ChatGPT can create articles and blog posts for you. However, it's best to use ChatGPT to craft an outline, or if you use it to compose a paragraph, rewrite the content so it's in your voice and you can add your experience and stories. If you copy/paste out of ChatGPT, it's okay to let the other person know that ChatGPT helped you. In any communication, transparency builds trust and helps eliminate misunderstandings.

ChatGPT can be biased. Remember, ChatGPT is based on mathematical models and lacks emotions and empathy. Any content created by ChatGPT should be carefully reviewed to ensure it does not contain language that your audience might deem offensive or discriminatory or use examples that portray someone or something in a negative way.

Data privacy and security. ChatGPT theoretically stores your prompt inputs and uses them to improve its LLM. To be blunt, no one knows what happens to the information you share with it.

From streamlining the sales research and communication process to creating efficiencies that allow salespeople to spend time on more value-added tasks, generative AI and ChatGPT offer immense potential for sales teams. Yet remember that people do business with people whom they like and trust. People do business with people who provide relevant value. People do business with people who have experience and who can share stories of how they've helped others achieve similar goals and alleviate similar fears.

Like email, the internet, CRM, databases and other technologies that have transformed business and how salespeople work, ChatGPT will disrupt industries, companies and jobs. Those who know the proper balance between leveraging AI/LLM tools and providing the value that only humans can provide are the ones who will improve their performance and, ultimately, their company's bottom line. ■



About the author

Sam Richter, CSP, CSAE, is the creator of Intel Engine and ERA SearchLink.ai. He is also a national Hall of Fame speaker, a best-selling author and founder of KnowMore. Learn more at www.samrichter.com.

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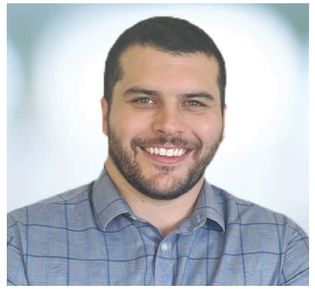
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In-person networking and virtual resources help this rising star



Alex Monetta
Outside Sales Representative
Meridian Technical Sales

To gain better insight into how young professionals in the electronics industry have survived and thrived, The Representor *interviewed Alex Monetta, outside sales representative at Meridian Technical Sales.*

Monetta shared how taking advantage of myriad in-person networking opportunities, as well as learning from LinkedIn and podcasts, have helped him grow his career.

Please tell us a little bit about yourself (personally and professionally).

I am an outside sales representative for Meridian Technical Sales. At Meridian we cover the Northern California and Northern Nevada territories. Although I am relatively new to the electronics industry, I have been in sales for nearly a decade. I am a Bay Area native living in San Francisco and try to spend as much of my free time on the golf course. My wife and I also like to frequent our favorite restaurants, go wine tasting in Napa and spend time with our friends and family.

How long have you worked in the electronics industry?

I have been in the industry for three years. I started at Meridian in May 2020 during the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic and I am proud to say I am still here!

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

Despite growing up in the Bay Area and being so close to Silicon Valley, I never thought of the electronics industry being a possibility for my career until I spoke with Rey Bautista, owner of Meridian. After our initial conversation, I could see a whole new world of opportunity in electronics. The ability to work in an industry that constantly pushes the boundaries and contributes to the development of cutting-edge technologies that have a daily impact on our lives excites me.

What are some of the main challenges you encountered as you embarked on your career journey?

Hands-down my biggest challenge as I entered the industry was establishing relationships with prospective customers, the suppliers on our line card and distribution partners. While I knew starting a job in a new industry during COVID-19 would be a challenge, I was confident in my ability as a sales professional to make an immediate impact. However, I quickly realized without knowing the ins and outs of the electronics industry, I was about to take on my biggest professional challenge. Even with previous experience selling virtually, I didn't account for how difficult building meaningful relationships would be while everyone was working remotely. So much of this industry is based on who you know and when customers only know you as a talking head on a screen or email signature, it is hard to gain trust.

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

At Meridian, we always say, "You have to be present to win." As our world started to open back up and in-person functions became relevant again, it became a priority for me to go to as many networking events as I could and go to our local distribution branches. Honestly, any face-to-face opportunity that came up, I was going to be there. But I couldn't wait around for my territory to "open back up." I had to embrace the virtual world of selling and find ways to stand out. Utilizing LinkedIn allowed me to connect with people across the industry and get my name out there. Also, for any virtual call, I always start with my camera on. I really feel that if I am on camera, the meeting becomes personal and it is such a simple way to nurture a relationship.

What were some training tools or networking/industry events that you found beneficial to your professional growth?

Earlier I mentioned utilizing LinkedIn to connect with people in the industry, but I also value LinkedIn as a training tool. LinkedIn Learning has some excellent online courses that laid the foundation for how I approach prospecting new customers. I also listen to a number of sales podcasts, like "The Advanced Selling Podcast." While that is not an industry-specific podcast, the topics covered on a weekly basis have led me to look outside of my normal scope and identify any blind spots. As for industry events, I attended the 2022 EDS Summit

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and the 2023 ERA Conference and I thought these events were great exposure to learn more from the leaders of our industry. I am also a member of the ERA NEXGEN group and I encourage all newcomers to the industry to join this group. You can learn a lot by engaging with your peers, especially when you talk about your challenges and realize that you're not alone. I always leave our ERA NEXGEN discussions motivated and ready to go.

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

Unfortunately, I don't believe we have enough young talent entering the electronics industry. Across the board — from reps, distributors and suppliers — we have to do a better job of acknowledging this problem and addressing it head on. Promoting electronics education and creating awareness about the exciting opportunities and career paths available at schools, career fairs, workshops, etc., can help attract new talent. Also, creating a diverse and inclusive environment within the industry is crucial for attracting new talent. The last thing I'll add is that the electronics industry cannot afford to be behind in adopting all the new technology out there that other industries have embraced for years. There are so many sales tools to improve sales performance and productivity. This industry can be a lot of fun, and we need to show that we aren't stuck in our ways and are ready to be proactive instead of reactive.

Where do you see your profession and the industry 10 to 20 years from now?

The future of our industry is bright! A few trends that are particularly exciting for me include the expansion of energy efficiency and sustainability, AI and wearable technology. Our world is only going to get more connected, and we play a vital role in that future.

Professionally, what keeps you up at night?

I'm a forward-thinking person and constantly thinking of ways to be better at my job. As someone without a formal engineering background, I have to stay curious and be constantly learning. ■

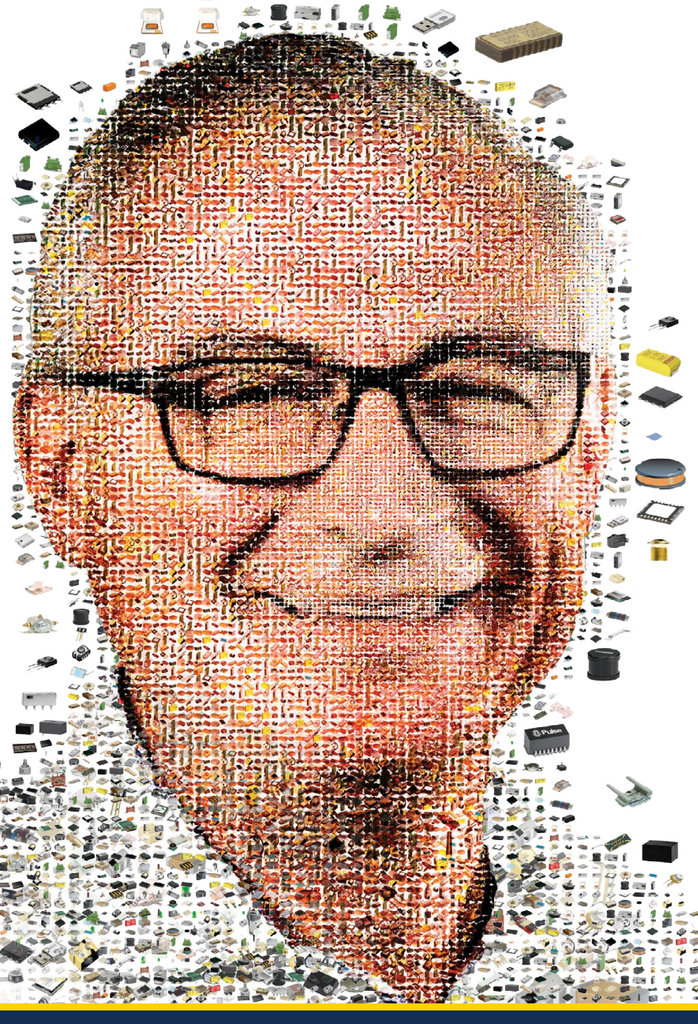


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Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I reside in Chandler, Ariz., with my wife, Allison, and two dogs, Benny and Blue. I obtained a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Arizona State University and although I am not a practicing engineer, I leverage the analytical thinking, data-driven mindset and root-cause approach to problem solving obtained from my engineering background every day.

How long have you been in the manufacturing business?

My career started 10 years ago with onsemi, a leading manufacturer of intelligent power and sensing semiconductor technologies. I held multiple roles during my time at onsemi, all channel-facing and focused on accelerating the adoption of new technologies across the mass market customer base. These roles included leading the global channel marketing organization and responsibility for the high-service and specialty distribution segments.

I am thrilled to have joined Abracon in March 2023 where I have global responsibility for the distribution and EMS segments, and am focused on driving market outperformance while forging strong partnerships and delivering world-class solutions to our customers and partners.

How did you become interested in the electronics industry?

I was a tinkerer growing up. I was always attempting (not always successfully!) to disassemble things, understand how they work and find ways to improve them. Somewhere around 12 years old, this turned into a full-blown hobby of building my own computers and maximizing performance via overclocking and water cooling. This eventually led to my interest in electrical engineering, then into the world of electronic components.

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

Three aspects stand out to me. First, the relationships and deep connections built with my colleagues that will last a lifetime. Second, the freedom to develop new ideas, seeing them through execution, and directly measuring their business impact. Lastly, seeing the innovative technologies we bring to market that solve challenging customer problems and improve the world around us.

Briefly describe your organization.

Headquartered outside of Austin, Texas, Abracon is a trusted supplier of leading-edge and innovative electronic components including frequency control, timing, power, magnetics, RF and antenna solutions. We service world-class companies across the data communication, transportation, industrial, medical, consumer, aerospace and defense industries. Abracon accelerates customers' time-to-market by providing unmatched product solutions, technical expertise and service excellence.

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

Abracon is constantly innovating, whether it be bringing new technologies to market or developing new programs and processes to improve our customer and partner experience. On the technology front, we recently announced a solution partnership providing turnkey IoT solutions by combining Abracon's high-performance antennas with u-blox's IoT module solutions. Regarding customer experience, we recently announced a new partnership with Octopart, unlocking a fast and effective way to source Abracon products via a new inventory search tool embedded into the Abracon website.

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

ERA brings together a wealth of industry experts across its community of members, executive committee and available consultants. The numerous programs ERA provides not only facilitate continued connections between colleagues, but also foster the development of new relationships which has provided immense value to

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Cole Sikes
Vice President
Global Distribution & EMS
Abracon

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 Cole Sikes, vice president, global distribution and EMS, for Abracon.

The Representor *asked Sikes a few questions about his time in the electronics components manufacturing industry and his experiences with ERA. Here is what he had to say.*



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

These companies have joined ERA since the Spring 2023 issue of *The Representor* was published.

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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

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(Call 312-419-1432 or visit ERA.org.)

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- Lines Available Service
- ERA LIVE
- 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.)

- Powering Up Your Brand: Strategies for Successful Marketing and Branding in the Electronics Industry
- The Solution to Cost-Effective Sales Coverage is Hiding in Plain Sight
- 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

STEP (Sales Training for Electronics Professionals).....
.....October 17-19, 2023
Chapter Officer Leadership Training.....Nov. 1-3, 2023
ERA Conference.....Feb. 25-27, 2024

Tighten your belt and continue to march



by Walter E. Tobin
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So, how was your EDS? I bet it seems like a lifetime ago…yet it was only in May! We all got home with a folder full of notes and new business cards or QR code-generated contacts. What did we talk about again? Was I going to reach out to them or were they going to contact me? Do I wait a little bit longer or take the initiative to reach out to them? How long is it when it becomes too long to follow up? My vote is NEVER! It is sort of like sending a thank you note or email; there is no expiration on either.

What message did you hear at EDS from your reps, channel partners or manufacturers? Was it consistent? Positive, flat or doom and gloom? All of the above? How do you take all of these inputs, put them in a pot, let them marinate a bit and then decide what barometers you will use to plan for 2H 2023? Do you listen to these so-called experts or to your gut? My chips are all on your gut…it is almost never wrong!

There is a lot of "FUD" (fear/uncertainty/doubt) out there for sure — order cancellations, book-to-bill ratios less than 1:1, requests for returns with the promise of "Help me now and I will never forget you!" or "If you do not help me, you will never do another dime here!" Perhaps the truth is somewhere in the middle. People are nervous and want help, without giving up too much. How do we sort through all of this?

I think it's pretty simple: Be open and honest. Over-communicate in a true spirit of partnership. Talk about your past service performance and all that you did to help them navigate through the past two years of supply-chain issues and golden screw issues. You kept their supply chain functioning and now they want help in undoing all that you did together. This never feels good but unfortunately, sometimes it is the reality.

But this is when you find out your true sense of partnerships versus opportunity-based relationships. Partners are there through thick and thin for each other and help one another when the other one needs help.

Opportunity-based relationships are just that: you hear from them when they have a need or when the market turns from a buyer's market to a seller's market or vice versa. These are not partnerships, so take them for what they are, no more and no less. It is easy to be a "partner" in good times, but partnerships are tested when times get tough. Get ready to be surprised or disappointed.

We all know right now which of our relationships are in which camp. Be honest with yourself and perhaps even with them.

We heard some tough news at EDS but were any of us really surprised? We have book-to-bill ratios off the charts. Some of us had 2-3 years of backlog on the books — did we really think it was real? Didn't we know deep down that the crash was coming? That more normal times of adjustment were on the horizon?

Well, here we are, and normalcy is here. We are now "paying the price" for huge sales and margins for the past two-plus years and now the chickens are coming home to roost.

So, what now? Pretty simple: Tighten your belts and continue to march.

The worst is perhaps behind us. A recession may happen soon but let's get it over with and put the "FUD" behind us. Let's get through the balance of 2023 and better times should be on the horizon in late Q1 2024.

Hang on to your people! Do not fall into the trap of trying to cut headcount to maintain past bottom-line metrics. When you start to see the market turn back up, it will already be too late for you to find, interfere, train and onboard new folks and you will miss the upturned market.

Keep your people, perhaps watch new expenses, keep a keen eye on travel and talk to each other.

True partners will help each other. Hold them close. You got this! ■

Recovery or reset?



by John O'Brien, CPMR
Coakley, Boyd and Abbett
ERA Chairman of the Board
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Looking back on my experiences at the 2023 EDS show in Las Vegas, I can't help but wonder if we are in a time of recovery or a reset. Will we recover and reach sales levels we saw for 2020-2022? Were those years anomalies and the demand by customers will reset to levels closer to 2019? If I knew for sure, I probably would have won more at the tables in Las Vegas. However, I remain extremely optimistic about the future of our industry.

One of the big reasons I am so optimistic is the shared responsibility I saw in many of the meetings I attended at EDS. Reps, manufacturers and distributors alike are all facing the same issues in 2023. Negative book-to-bill, cancellations, pushouts, customer credit issues and continued allocation on some products. These issues have us all working together to find creative ways to win customers and continue sales growth. We were all in agreement that the best way to work ourselves out of this is to work together. Many discussions I encountered were more strategic and tactical. There was no finger pointing; rather, there were discussions on how best to work together.

Industry challenges have us all working together to find creative ways to win customers and continue sales growth.

A lot of the discussions revolved around those markets that continue to be strong and show long-term growth, and which products and services best address these growing markets. Electrification and EV seem to be leading the way, followed closely by IoT, medical and some applications within the industrial market.

Another reason for my optimism is the influx of youth I am starting to see in our industry. Whether it is industry events like the ERA Conference or EDS, or even a recent New England ERA Chapter event, we are starting to see more young folks enter this industry than any time I can remember. This is exciting as these newcomers bring ideas and an enthusiasm that help drive innovation.

Some industry experts say these cycles last for three quarters, so depending on when you believe we went into this downturn, recovery could come as quickly as Q4 2023. But whether it's Q4 2023 or Q1 2024, the future of our industry is very strong going forward. ■



A riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma



by Chuck Tanzola, CPMR
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"It's a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma…" In an October 1939 radio speech, Winston Churchill used this phrase to describe a situation that was difficult to comprehend. (At the time, he was analyzing the early events of the second war to end all wars.)

That same phrase could describe our industry today — at least as far as I can tell and hear. Conflicting signs and rapidly changing events make it difficult to comprehend what is really happening. Read one report and you'll hear about the slowing orders, increasing schedule push out requests and cancellations by customers. Read another report and you'll be overwhelmed by the growth forecast of specific industries or ongoing product and supply chain shortages due to record demand.

Proximity determines impact. The closer we are to people, the greater influence we have.

Are we entering (or already in) a recession-induced major slowdown? Or are we in a strong economy? The answer is yes — depending upon who you ask. Is what we are seeing the normal, cyclical variations of our market; or is it uniquely attributable to one or more systemic changes in the industry? The answer is again, yes, depending upon who you ask. All this uncertainty leaves us with a conundrum. What do we do? Is this a time to pull back and conserve cash; or is it a time to invest aggressively? Once again, depending upon who you ask… well, you get the idea.

Of course, answering yes to both apparently alternative options is a bit tongue in cheek, but the dilemma of determining what is happening and what to do about it is real. How do we deal with that? It is in these times of ambiguity that we need to rely on principles that have proven true time and again. For this reason, I appreciated the "Things to Remember" presentation by the TTI Family of Specialists at their recent EDS Executive Briefing breakfast. Paraphrasing from my notes, they spoke about the need to be there for their partners; to win and grow together while maintaining a spirit of appreciation, gratitude and humility. These solid, core guiding principles have built a strong foundation and served them well. Their message at EDS was that even in times of uncertainty (maybe especially in times of uncertainty) they will not deviate from them.

Speaking of EDS, universally, the feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. EDS 2023 was outstanding in many ways. The Rat Pack was back (as was the industry!) And, I didn't hear people comment on the elevators once during the week (except for when the power went out in the Mirage, of course.) Yet while I applaud the EDS Show Corporation for the way the Summit was managed, I realistically believe that it was not specifically the traffic management around the elevators nor even the Connections Café lunch options that were the primary causes of the positive reports. From everything I hear (or see posted on LinkedIn), EDS affirmed that it is the associations we have that make a difference.

The lesson of EDS confirmed for me something I have always believed to be true — proximity determines impact. The closer we are to people (or they are to us), the greater the influence we can have. This is true all the time — whether the market is stable or rapidly changing. What to do in times like these? Make sure you are staying in touch — social and digital media is fine, but nothing replaces proximity!

As always, I can be reached at ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com and welcome your comments and feedback. How was your EDS experience? If you attended, I would love to hear your thoughts. ■



2024 ERA Conference Volunteers

ERA extends its thanks to these distinguished and dedicated volunteers who are serving on the 2024 Conference Core Committee and Subcommittees. This group gives selflessly of their time, and their commitment to developing a dynamic and valuable program is deeply appreciated.

Save the date! The next ERA Conference is scheduled for Feb. 25–27, 2024 in Austin, TX. Visit era.org for more info!



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REP UPDATE

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Supply chain volatility and disruptions



The electronics industry has seen a rapid evolution over the last few years, and so has the supply chain for electronic components. A robust and efficient supply chain can help businesses meet customer demands, reduce costs and gain a competitive edge in the market.

Supply chain volatility may be the one issue that commands the attention of all three market players: manufacturers' representatives, manufacturers and distributors have all been impacted by severe supply chain fluctuations from material shortages and long lead times to support critical customer demands.

What do we do now that we know economic conditions are moving toward a cooling-off period after one of the hottest and expansive inflationary periods that we have experienced in decades? Manufacturers continue to suffer due to their dependencies on efficiencies to maximize productivity, while distributors continue to frantically source scarce products for their customers!

The once relied-upon strategy to anticipate change in demand and manufacturing forecasts are proving to be the ever-elusive unicorn of our world. Let's face it: accurate forecasts and accurate lead times are becoming more and more problematic.

Obsolescence, long tail inventory, high MOQs, low-volume unique parts and demand fluctuations may be the greatest challenge facing our industry within the foreseeable future. Distributors propose traditional stock planning for alternative parts that are facing obsolescence. They will state that their deep inventory and knowledge of the options available are the solution. Distribution will offer bill of material (BOM) management, analyzing the relative health of your BOM, in order to anticipate future issues and problem child individual components.

I am now seeing more and more OEM customers send out inquiries asking: Is the following part going to remain in production for the long-term, and if not, when is end of life (EOL) projected? This is an issue not only for them but for all of us within the supply chain industry.

Now let's further complicate the situation by including economic headwinds we are facing: raised interest rates, tightened credit markets and economic contractions with low-projected growth for 2023 and 2024, coupled with supply chain disruptions at levels not experienced since the first impact of COVID-19. Strong fluctuations in demand, inventory build-up, requests for returns and cancellations and dysfunctional book-to-bill ratios continue to be the norm for the remainder of 2023 and into 2024. Encouragingly, OEMs and ODMs appear to be continuing to make progress on lowering on-hand inventory dollars and driving down days.

In conclusion, the paradoxical nature of the economy right now appears to be a direct result of several macroeconomic forces that are pushing and pulling. Some emerging growth industries are encouraging; however, growing inventory concerns from both distribution and OEM components suppliers continue to plague our industry.

Some believe the Fed will continue to lose the battle of inflation versus interest rates — similar to the scenario in the style of a classic Godzilla movie, where we are all confident that the good Godzilla will prevail, but the city is sure to be trashed after it is all over. Our economy is running on momentum and hope, not a solid set of economic-positive characteristics.

What does this mean to us as sales and marketing-focused individuals? During times of great challenge, long-term strategies will prevail. This could be an exceptional time for the relatively financially healthy parties to stay the course, grow market share, build brand image, take their resources and make strategic acquisitions while focusing on emerging growth segments. Representatives in particular are in a great position to see early data on which companies/verticals/markets will continue to prosper in difficult economic times. ■

MANUFACTURING UPDATE

Ken Bellero
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Key factors that contribute to the successful relationship between manufacturers, reps and their distributors



In May many of us attended EDS in Las Vegas and for some, it was the first time in almost three years. I began to think about why many of us plan to go to EDS every year and the answer is quite clear. It is to solidify our relationships with our distribution, manufacturing and their rep partners and spend some business and social time getting to know each other better so that together we can be more successful in selling our products to our customers. That led me to the topic I chose to write about today. What are the qualities that strengthen the relationships between manufacturers, their reps and their distribution partners?

Here are some key factors that contribute to a successful relationship between manufacturers, their reps and distributors in the electronics components industry:

Clear communication. Effective communication is crucial for maintaining a strong manufacturer-distributor relationship. Both parties need to have open and transparent lines of communication to discuss product requirements, changes in demand, technical specifications, pricing and any other relevant information. Regular and proactive communication helps build trust and enables better collaboration.

Mutual understanding. It is essential for manufacturers and distributors to have a mutual understanding of each other's goals, strategies and expectations. Both parties should align their objectives and work towards achieving common business goals. This understanding allows for better decision-making and facilitates a collaborative approach to problem solving.

Reliability and consistency. Reliability is key in the electronics components industry. Manufacturers must consistently produce high-quality components that meet agreed-upon specifications and delivery schedules. Distributors, on the other hand, should be reliable in terms of order fulfillment, inventory management and timely deliveries. Consistency in performance builds trust and ensures smooth operations throughout the supply chain.

Product expertise. Distributors play a crucial role in providing technical support and guidance to customers. Manufacturers should select distributors who have a deep understanding of their product line and possess the necessary technical expertise to address customer queries and provide solutions. Distributors should stay updated on the latest product developments, industry trends and technological advancements to effectively promote and sell the manufacturer's components.

Collaborative planning and forecasting. Collaboration between manufacturers and distributors on demand forecasting and planning is essential to optimize inventory levels, production schedules and customer satisfaction. Sharing relevant market information, sales data and insights can enable both parties to make informed decisions and avoid supply-demand imbalances. Collaborative planning helps minimize lead times, reduces stockouts and improves overall efficiency.

Market development and support. Manufacturers and distributors should work together to develop and expand the market for their products. This can include joint marketing activities, product promotions and participation in industry events. Manufacturers can support distributors by providing marketing materials, training and technical resources. By collaborating on market development, both parties can increase brand visibility, reach new customers and drive sales.

Flexibility and adaptability. The electronics components industry is dynamic and subject to rapid technological changes, market fluctuations and customer demands. Manufacturers and distributors need to be flexible and adaptable to respond quickly to evolving circumstances. This may involve adjusting production schedules, modifying product specifications or exploring new market opportunities together. A willingness to adapt and embrace change is essential for long-term success.

These key factors contribute to building a strong and mutually beneficial relationship between manufacturers, reps and distributors in the electronics components industry. By fostering effective communication, trust, reliability and collaboration, both parties can optimize their operations, enhance customer satisfaction and achieve sustainable growth.

There are numerous examples all across the industry of successful partnerships where manufacturers and distributors work together to provide comprehensive product offerings, technical support and efficient

(continued on page 31)

INDUSTRY UPDATE

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Distributor engagement



A mutually beneficial association between different people or groups is a symbiotic relationship. I cannot think of a better example of symbiosis than the relationship between reps and distributors. Like all relationships, time and energy are necessary to maintain and strengthen bonds. Here are some of the more interesting and exciting ways I see reps and distributors engaging in the industry today.

Virtual meeting technology has been a game changer for all of us, and the impact on distributor training has been a net positive. The training objectives are the same — gaining mindshare, promoting new products and brainstorming target customers. With virtual meeting technology we can now share documents, datasheets, whitepapers and presentations in real time. We can expand our audience to include remote employees and those in the field. Importantly, we can engage our audience more effectively by including our manufacturers' subject matter experts who deliver deeper content. Collaboration can continue in smaller groups or one-on-one after the meeting is adjourned.

Distributors, manufacturers and reps are now co-hosting virtual technical seminars that tackle wide-ranging technical industry topics like electrification or robotics. Virtual technology allows for a broad audience — in this case engineers from multiple key accounts, and offers a platform for best-in-class subject matter expert presenters. Attendees learn and engage on topics they care about, and the hosts have new leads to nurture.

According to Ricky Manahan, director for the sales development components division for Panasonic Industrial Devices Sales Co. of America, "Technical seminars are an enriching experience not only to suppliers but also to our reps and disty partners as well. They allow for information sharing and collaboration with our rep and distribution partners and ultimately with our end customers. These seminars can provide a comprehensive discussion on solutions to one's unique needs. I highly recommend these seminars for anyone seeking synergies in enhancing and strengthening their business partnerships and delivering results to their customers."

While virtual technology has immense potential, it will never replace the personal relationships that drive high-value business. Early engagement with distribution for large opportunities is a strategy that is more important now than ever, considering the supply chain difficulties we have seen during the past few years. When I have a high-value opportunity that will likely go through a preferred distributor, I intentionally reach out early to collaborate with them on a risk assessment for stocking parts. If they agree, they have a better chance of winning the business. If they win the business, I have a better chance of hearing from them about an opportunity for me in the future.

Last month, myself and Susan Leager, director of distribution at Control Sales, had the privilege of visiting one of our key distributor partners to tour their facility, strategize with their product managers, discuss key accounts and get to know each other a little bit better.

I would encourage all rep owners and distribution managers to personally visit their key distributor partners. Visits can be an invaluable learning experience and are the best example of what is, was, and always will be, the truest way to engage. ■

DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

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Prioritizing local relationships



Well, here we are with another EDS Show in the books. If I'm being honest, it's often a difficult week to look forward to. It's on the heels of Mother's Day and it's a scheduling challenge running from meeting to meeting for three days straight, overeating and dare I might add the word, elevators. Yet I always end up leaving energized and more prepared to tackle second-half of the year challenges, and this year was no different.

I'm not sure if there still isn't a hangover effect from COVID-19 – that we went a few years with limited face-to-face contact – it seems to make something we maybe took for granted and make it all the more sweet. While EDS does offer the opportunity for some high-level strategy updates, the real power lies in the ability of the supplier-distributor-rep triangle to sit in a room together and help ensure our local support model is squarely focused on the joint customers we serve.

The simple fact is that our customers benefit the most when our local relationships are the tightest. Often, it's a distributor meeting with a supplier or a supplier communicating with their rep network. Herein lies the magic of EDS. It offers the opportunity for any strategy and organizational updates, but most importantly it offers an audience for real-time, constructive feedback, which allows the teams to make needed adjustments. And of course, the timing couldn't have been better, as the industry navigates through a bit of rationalization. It provided an opportunity for all three groups to share perspectives on the market, both for the next few quarters and beyond.

Lastly, I'd be remiss in not mentioning the personal component and opportunity that EDS provides. In some cases, it's the once-a-year opportunity to rekindle long-standing industry relationships. It's the perfect venue to reconnect with suppliers, extended rep organizations and competitors. Even though we're working through a market that is very different from the past couple years, the optimism regarding the future was on full display. Whether it be AI, the electrification of everything, transportation or the host of additional verticals with ever-increasing electronic content, the future for our triangle is bright. ■

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

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Empowering members with knowledge



It is hard to believe that we are already halfway through 2023, but wow, what an exciting year it has been thus far!

It seems like just yesterday that we were all gathered in Austin for what was a sell-out crowd at the annual ERA Conference where the dynamics of our industry were on full display. The positive energy that culminates when we gather together flowed from Austin to Las Vegas at what proved to be another successful EDS Summit.

I am pleased to report that ERA is doing terrific things beyond supporting these events, with the new ERA SearchLink.ai being top on the list. Centuries ago, Sir Francis Bacon wrote "knowledge itself is power" and ERA SearchLink.ai can provide your team with the knowledge that can power the new sales generation for which we all strive. ERA SeachLink.ai helps our members scrub the internet for all kinds of information that makes for a more informed salesperson, making it an invaluable tool in your sales toolbox. If you are not capitalizing on ERA SearchLink.ai yet, I encourage you to do so.

In addition to ERA SeachLink.ai, our chapters continue to deliver educational and networking events at the local level. Have you attended a chapter event lately? Are you communicating these events to your team members who reside in the territories where these events are taking place and encouraging them to attend? Or better yet, you may want to get your team members added to ERA's email distribution list so that these exciting events can be communicated to you.

It is not a coincidence that all of the excitement that ERA members are generating is also driving membership, although a tip of that hat must go to Ama Derringer, the ERA Membership Services Coordinator, who can communicate the value of ERA membership with so much conviction and grace that it is impossible to say no. Ama is always available to assist in any way.

As we enter the second half of 2023, I look forward to more wonderful things from ERA nationally and at the chapter level, and I hope all of you can be participants to all that we have to offer.

I wish a safe and happy summer to all. ■

EDUCATION UPDATE

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Better together



"Tomorrow looks different and so will we!" and "Change carries risk but NOT changing has more risk" are both quotes from Admiral Linda Fagan, commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. I listened to her on a podcast called "ReThinking" as she shared that what worked yesterday may not work best today and that changes are coming. An example she gave is that her command may now be allowed to leave, join private industry and come back — just one of the new ways the Coast Guard is thinking about how to keep people engaged. People are the root of every rep firm, distribution company, manufacturer and customer. Investing in them and keeping flexible is the key to success.

> *"Change carries risk but NOT changing has more risk." -Admiral Linda Fagan, U.S. Coast Guard*

How do we invest in our people? What do we do in our companies to meet the needs of tomorrow? We listen and educate ourselves on the tools available to make successful decisions and further our growth personally and professionally. ERA prides itself on fresh, new training as we explore AI, cyber security, CRMs, new technology and more. This fall, ERA's virtual education offering, STEP (Sales Training for Electronics Professionals), will offer nine training sessions that address these topics and more with our peers and professionals. This live event will take place Oct. 17-19 and is highly recommended to all in the field of electronic components industry sales. The sessions will also be recorded and archived for future use. This is one way to invest in people while always remembering our "why" (Simon Sinek can help with that – his podcast "A Bit of Optimism" is a great resource.)

One of the hardest topics to tackle is time management. One recent book is *Four Thousand Weeks*, which takes aim at traditional productivity and time management tips, which the author alleges only allow for more tasks or emails to jump into your finally empty inbox. The more productive we get, the more we have to do. How do you control it? We are given so many weeks of life – how will we use them? What gives us fascination that dissolves stress? Music? Art? Photography? Outdoor hikes? Shopping? Gardening?

Stepping back from the day to day and asking that question can show us what drives us each day to find the next big customer or enticing line or helpful co-worker. It is scientifically proven that the essence of quiet and meditation gives clarity. I look for podcasts and books to listen to during my Midwest windshield time on these subjects. We share our best practices at conferences and sales meetings. Face to face, we are once again learning from each other and taking it back to our corporate culture refreshed and ready to tackle it all. We are better together! ■

Solid as a rock: electrolytic for rugged applications

By Sven Miguel Rodriguez, corporate product manager, capacitors, & Christian Kasper, technical expert, capacitors, both from Rutronik

Vibrations are not usually associated with electronic assemblies. However, it is not at all uncommon for these assemblies to be subjected to strong mechanical vibrations. And with electrolytic capacitors, this can lead to sudden failure. Some capacitor suppliers, though, have managed to come up with solutions to this problem.

Vibrations do not only occur in applications with vibrating parts such as internal combustion engines. Electronic components are also exposed to vibrations in industrial punching machines, fast-moving linear actuators, pumps, and gearboxes. All of them generate a vibration profile that can cause an electrolytic capacitor to fail.

A common failure is broken capacitor connections. The breaking point is either directly at the solder joint to the board or inside the capacitor at the connection from the terminals to the anode and cathode foil.

Usually, a capacitor fails completely unexpectedly without significant measurable changes to its electrical properties. The reason for this is that there is little indication of whether the component is exposed to excessive vibrations and, therefore, prone to failure. At best, an increased residual current may be detected if the mechanical stress has damaged the oxidation layer between the winding and the case. If sufficient electrolyte is available, this damage is repaired by the self-healing effect. If, on the other hand, microcracks occur in the capacitor connections, a measurably increased ESR value can usually only be detected shortly before breakage.

Another failure is caused by rubbing of the winding inside the case wall, which also leads to capacitor failure in the long run.



Reliable, vibration-resistant capacitors according to requirements

In order to offer reliable components that can withstand loads of up to 30 G, some capacitor suppliers have developed series featuring a vibration-resistant design. But when is a component considered vibration-resistant?

A common, standardized vibration test profile used by suppliers for testing may look like the one in the table below.

It indicates in which frequency range and with which amplitude the capacitor withstands up to which acceleration. However, since every application has different vibration frequencies, resulting in very different profiles, suppliers also offer individual tests and approvals based on specific customer requirements. This ensures that the approved component meets the respective requirements.

Acceleration	294 m/s² (30 G)
Frequency	5 Hz ~ 2,000 Hz
Amplitude	5 mm
Direction and duration of the vibration	toward the X, Y, Z axis for 2 hours each, for a total of 6 hours

Figure 1. Typical profile for a vibration test

If the capacitor supplier is involved in the development process, they can design the components precisely to ensure they can be used at their load limit. This prevents over-specification and allows a better design-to-cost ratio.

The electrolytic capacitor market offers, depending on the mounting method, various designs and approaches to increase vibration resistance.

Designs and approaches for the ideal result

Axially mounted THT capacitors tolerate vibrations better than radial THT or SMD modules. Since horizontal mounting means that their center of mass is significantly lower due to the reduced height, this results in less leverage forces acting on the connecting pins.

However, vertical mounting is much more common. In this case, the center of mass sits higher, which makes a vibration-resistant design more demanding. One approach is to reduce the free space in the capacitor case. To do so, the winding is wound tighter and the inner diameter of the case reduced. This leaves less room for the winding to move and reduces rubbing effects. Another option is to taper the case at points from the outside so that the winding is fixed inside.

In both cases, the wire diameter of the connecting pins must be reinforced to ensure they can withstand the occurring forces without being damaged. Greater stability is provided by additional retaining pins without electrical function, as is the case with snap-in pins. They generally make sense for large and/or heavy components.

If the capacitor is subject to extremely strong vibrations, it is advisable to additionally fix it to the circuit board with an external holder, which is usually made of plastic. Alternatively, the components can also be potted or fixed with adhesive. In this case, however, it should be clarified in advance with suppliers whether the ingredients of the adhesive or compound could have a negative impact.

With potting, heat can no longer be dissipated that well due to poorer

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MATERIALS, ASSEMBLY, PRODUCTION & SUPPLY

Troy Gunnin - Sun Rep Inc. - Tampa, Fla.
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Half of 2023 is behind us — let that sink in for a moment. Reflect on the roller coaster ride that has been the stock market, world affairs, the economy and our daily lives in general. Inflation is being stubborn and remaining high in spite of continued interest rate increases by the Fed. There is a sense of uneasiness, yet we seem to be going full steam ahead. This past Memorial Day weekend, more people traveled than pre-pandemic.

In the face of this, U.S. manufacturing is doing well. I just read an article in the May issue of *Manufacturing Engineering* that is very encouraging. The article, "All Aboard! U.S. Manufacturing's Reshoring Course for Success," points to some very positive signs for U.S. manufacturing. It states that manufacturing in the U.S. is on a roll, in no small part due to the growing "reshoring" trend of domestic companies moving operations and jobs back home. A record 364,904 manufacturing jobs were announced in the U.S. in 2022 through reshoring and foreign direct investment (FDI). That's a 53 percent jump over 2021.

The growth is widespread, led by a huge surge in battery production for electric vehicles. Electrical equipment remained the top job creator by industry in 2022 followed by computers/electronics and chemicals.

The underlying trend is driven by the recognition that the total cost of offshoring exceeds that of sourcing domestically (or perhaps near-shoring to Mexico) and also reduces the supply chain vulnerability when depending on foreign sources, especially with the current geopolitical situation.

As independent reps, we look forward to this, not only as representatives for domestic companies, but because those same companies are also our potential customers. ■

MEMBER SERVICES

For a complete list of ERA's ***Recognized Resources,*** *check out the Member Services page at* ***era.org/member-services.*** *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).*

- **EDGEWATER RESEARCH** offers research published on technology, digital advertising, ecommerce and consumer. Visit **edgewaterresearch.com.**
- **SCHOENBERG FINKEL BEEDERMAN BELL & GLAZER LLC** offers legal Expert Access services to all ERA members. Visit **sfbbg.com** or call Adam Glazer at 312-648-2300.
- **REPFABRIC** is a mobile efficiency tool that speeds up the entire workflow of business. 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. Contact Patrick Knoelke at 913-499-6014 or visit **spyregroup.com/reps**.
- **EMPOWERING SYSTEMS'** cloud solutions are designed for reps and how reps work. 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. Call 708-301-2111 or email **sales@buddemarketing.com**.
- **LECTRIX** is a results-driven marketing company that serves electronics manufacturers, suppliers and representatives. Visit **lectrixgroup.com**.
- **JJM SEARCH** is the global executive search firm founded by Carla Mahrt, a 20-year electronics industry veteran. 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). ■

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Reaping retirement plan benefits from the most tax-friendly retirement plan



by Bruce E. Bell, CPA/Attorney

Bruce E. Bell is a CPA/Attorney practicing at the Chicago law firm of Schoenberg Finkel Beederman Bell Glazer LLC.

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.

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Suppose you were asked to design the most taxpayer-friendly retirement plan possible. If given a choice, you would want a plan that allows for generous annual contributions. The contributions would be tax-deductible, regardless of whether or not you itemize deductions and regardless of your earnings or taxable income. Dividends, interest, capital gains and other income from the plan would be tax-free. Distributions you receive from the plan could be taken whenever desired, regardless of your age. Finally, as you design your too-good-to-be-true retirement plan, there may be no taxation on the distributions you receive from the plan.

Believe it or not, the ideal retirement plan does exist. It is called a Health Savings Account (HSA).

Believe it or not, the ideal retirement plan does in fact exist. It is called a Health Savings Account (HSA) which contains all of the features described above. Despite the meaningful benefits offered to taxpayers, HSAs remain underutilized and, even when implemented and funded by taxpayers, are often not operated in as tax-efficient of a manner as possible.

The general intention of HSAs is to permit taxpayers to contribute tax-deductible amounts to a separate account and withdraw the funds contributed for the payment of medical expenses. For 2023, the HSA deduction limit is $3,850 for individual coverage and $7,750 for family coverage. An additional tax-deductible contribution of $1,000 can be made by an individual who has attained age 55, as can an additional $1,000 contribution for a taxpayer's spouse for family coverage.

HSAs do have some rules and restrictions, just like other retirement plans. HSA contributions can only be made by participants in high-deductible health plans. To qualify as a high-deductible health plan for the 2023 calendar year, the deductible must be at least $1,500 and the annual out-of-pocket expense limit must not exceed $7,500. For family coverage, the deductible must be at least $3,000 and the annual out-of-pocket expense limit cannot exceed $15,000. Moreover, the high-deductible health plan must generally be the only plan for which the taxpayer can be enrolled and the taxpayer may not be enrolled in Medicare. That being said, a taxpayer who participates in vision, dental, disability and/or long-term care insurance programs is not disqualified from HSA participation.

Distributions from HSAs are not subject to income tax to the extent the withdrawn funds do not exceed the medical expenses incurred. Qualifying medical expenses are those which are allowable as itemized deductions for income tax purposes. These include not only routine medical expenses for physicians and medical procedures but also medical expenses which are not covered by a standard health insurance plan such as vision and dental expenses.

One of the unique HSA features is the absence of timing rules specifying when HSA withdrawals must be made. A taxpayer could, for example, incur a medical expense in one year and withdraw funds from the HSA in one or more subsequent years attributable to the medical expenditure in the prior year. There is no requirement that the HSA withdrawals be made by a specified date for expenses incurred in a

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particular year. The absence of withdrawal rules is distinguishable from pension plans, profit sharing plans, 401(k) plans and IRAs which require that distributions commence by specified dates and continue during the participant's lifetime and after the participant's death.

HSA participants tend to withdraw funds as and when medical expenses are incurred and, as a result, are missing out on a big opportunity. The better technique for taxpayers who can afford to do so is to pay medical expenses from personal funds and postpone withdrawals to reimburse themselves for medical expenses incurred, thereby allowing HSA funds to continue to earn returns on a tax-deferred or tax-free basis. With the proliferation of HSA accounts in recent years, there are a growing number of investment institutions offering not only money market accounts but investments in a broad selection of equity and other mutual funds which can enable HSA participants to enjoy enhanced growth in their accounts.

Employers sponsoring health insurance plans for employees should consider offering a high-deductible plan option. If a high-deductible health plan is made available as an option to employees, those who can afford to do so will enjoy utilizing an HSA and its tax benefits. At the same time, employees with significant cash flow needs may neither desire nor be able to take advantage of the tax savings opportunities that are available with high-deductible health plans and can elect to participate in a health plan option with a lower deductible. Both employers and employees who share the cost of employees' health insurance premiums will usually experience lower premium costs with a high-deductible plan. This may permit employees to utilize the premium savings to fund their own HSAs while employers may choose to utilize some or all of the premium savings to make HSA contributions on behalf of their employees. Together, both employers and employees can take advantage of this most desirable opportunity.

As with many too-good-to-be-true tax planning opportunities, HSAs may not be available in their present form forever. The savvy taxpayer will no doubt want to take advantage of the opportunity while it is available. ■



Sometimes proving the willful withholding of commissions is "f*#!ing easy"



By Adam J. Glazer
ERA General Counsel

Adam J. Glazer is a partner in the law firm of Schoenberg Finkel Beederman Bell and Glazer LLC, and serves as general counsel to ERA. He is also a regular contributor to The Representor*, and participates in Expert Access, the program that offers telephone consultations to ERA members.*

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California's sales rep protection statute, among the nation's strongest, mandates an award of treble damages to a rep who does not receive commissions as provided in the contract.

Some state statutes are mealy-mouthed and provide that a rep whose commissions are withheld "may receive treble damages," or enable the rep to recover "up to three times" the unpaid commissions. Not so in California. Under its statute, a manufacturer who does not pay commissions when due "shall be liable to the sales representative in a civil action for treble the damages proved at trial."

A California statute requires an aggrieved rep to show not only that the manufacturer failed to pay commissions when due, but did so willfully. Proving willfullness can sometimes be a tall order.

The Golden State's rep statute, however, requires the aggrieved rep to show not only that the manufacturer failed to pay commissions when due, but did so willfully. And proving willfulness can sometimes be a tall order, seemingly requiring the reading of minds.

Fortunately for sales rep Med Tech/Med Care, LLC ("MTMC"), no mind-reading was required to determine whether Hemosure, Inc. acted willfully. "I'm not going to f---ing pay those guys," bellowed Hemosure's president, effectively removing willfulness as a disputed issue in their case.

The underlying dispute

After MTMC dutifully made Hemosure's cash register ring, the parties entered into a new rep contract providing for the payment of a commission on all net sales to medical distributors of Hemosure products. When Hemosure then stiffed MTMC on two months of commissions worth over $64,000, MTMC complied with the contract's terms by filing an arbitration demand with the American Arbitration Association ("AAA") in Los Angeles, seeking damages both for breach of contract and under the California statute.

Rather than cherish the mutual benefit that results from deploying a successful sales rep, some unscrupulous principals engage in the foolish practice of seeking to keep the rep's contractually earned commission for themselves. Unable to identify any genuine breach of the agreement committed by the rep, such a principal may turn to vague, catchall provisions in the contract and claim that no matter how objectively successful the sales efforts were, the rep failed to adequately "promote and solicit sales."

Hemosure chose to defend its non-payment at the arbitration on precisely such arbitrary grounds. It also sought to avoid the reach of the California rep statute by claiming that it did not apply because MTMC was not a "wholesale sales representative" and did not participate in "soliciting wholesale orders" within the statutory meaning. Alternatively, Hemosure argued treble damages were not available because MTMC did not show a willful failure to pay.

The decision

The arbitrator made short work of these arguments. Rejecting Hemosure's "novel defense" that it can withhold commissions "because it decided after entering into a new

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agreement with MTMC that its performance under the parties' prior agreement was not satisfactory is not persuasive and must fail."

Continuing, the arbitrator recognized that "the words and actions of Hemosure's president" were "unambiguously willful ('I'm not going to f---ing pay those guys')," thereby triggering the treble damages provision of the statute. Notably, the arbitrator did not specifically address the arguments concerning "wholesale sales," but implicitly rejected them by finding the rep statute did apply to the case.

For good measure, the arbitrator added to the award 10 percent interest on the unpaid commissions plus attorney's fees and costs for a total award of nearly $300,000.

The appeals

Unwilling to lick its wounds and go home, Hemosure fought on, challenging the award in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. The argument it devised to challenge the arbitration award in court proved no stronger than its positions in the arbitration. Hemosure claimed the award was defective because the parties did not receive the required "reasoned award" from the arbitrator.

The Los Angeles court had little difficulty dismissing Hemosure's arguments to escape the arbitrator's decision. Finding that the award was indeed "reasoned," including as to the applicability of the California rep statute, the court readily confirmed the award.

Still not done, Hemosure's next and final stop was the Court of Appeals of California. The welcome it received on appeal in its all-consuming effort to "not f---ing pay" MTMC proved no warmer.

Noting that neither the AAA rules nor any California court decision specifies what constitutes a "reasoned award," the appellate panel unanimously disagreed with Hemosure that more was required than the two-page decision generated by the arbitrator. The court concluded that the award must merely contain "the basic reasoning of the arbitrator on the central issues," and need not "delve into every argument raised by the parties."

While "the better practice would have been for the arbitrator to provide his analysis" explaining his rejection of Hemosure's wholesale sales argument, this was not a sufficient basis to overturn him "in light of the deference we give to arbitration awards." The parties received the reasoned award they were entitled to from the arbitrator.

MTMC was even awarded its costs on appeal.

The takeaway

As this case demonstrates, arbitrations are not always faster, more direct or less expensive dispute resolution formats. Yet, this is a story of redemption for hard-working and effective reps like MTMC who prove unwilling to succumb to the exploitative and heavy-handed practices of a non-paying principal. And ultimately, the determination of MTMC shows that reps can indeed get paid what they are due, including full reimbursement of the expenses incurred, by insisting on the enforcement of their rights. ■



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.

COLT 2022

ERA has confirmed the Chapter Officers Leadership Training (COLT) program will once again be held virtually this year. The dates for this dynamic, hands-on educational program will be November 1-3. Registration will open soon. Visit www.era.org for more information.

ARIZONA

Arizona ERA hosted its 2nd annual golf tournament on May 31. Fifty-four golfers that included customers, OEM suppliers, distributors and manufacturers' reps, participated in the event. And, a handful of folks came to simply enjoy lunch with the group. It was a great opportunity to connect with so many people in the Arizona electronics industry! The weather cooperated staying under 90 degrees, and the Legacy Golf Club was both beautiful and challenging.

The chapter would like to extend their deepest thanks to the following sponsors for supporting the event: ERA National, English Technical Sales, Kruvand-FTS, Techni-Source, Spectrum Marketing, Earle Associates, Arrow Electronics, TTI Inc., Master Electronics and Honeywell.

The players ranged from first timers to highly skilled golfers, and the scorecards showed it clearly. The winning foursome, sponsored by Kruvand-FTS, had a score of 58 (12 under). Each one in that group walked away with a $100 gift card. Chris Beeson and Cameron English received the "Most Honest" (highest score) award and each took home a $50 Amazon gift card along with a lot of friendly jabs.

The men's longest drive was from Matt Wilhelm of InterLnx who took home a $400 Amazon gift card. The women's winner was Claudia Guerrero of Techni-Source who walked away with $250 in Amazon gift cards. Phil Krass of Glenair won a $100 gift card for closest to the pin shot. In addition to these prizes, $100 gift cards were raffled off to five lucky winners during lunch.

The Legacy Golf Club served a southwest BBQ lunch. The food and service were great, and the camaraderie was fantastic. The success and feedback certainly seem to support making it an annual event.

CANADA

Canada ERA kicked off 2023 with a member breakfast meeting hosted in Toronto. The event had a great turnout, with more than 30 people in attendance. Chapter leaders Adam Grigor, Rob DeRose and Gerry Iuliano presented their vision and value proposition along with a calendar of events for the year including education and social events.

Topics of discussion during the meeting included dealing with face-to-face principal meetings and how to best manage those with customers still using the hybrid method of both remote and in-office work. Many meetings take place face-to-face and additional meetings will still be virtual with customers regardless of visiting or not. The consensus was to ensure the agenda is clear to the principal.

The chapter is also looking at potentially hosting educational webinar-type forums.

The chapter is grateful that many volunteers are able to help with the various projects and events that Canada ERA wants to move forward with. Here's a summary of chapter events in 2023: April 20 — Chapter breakfast; June 21 — Chapter meet-and-greet with Walter Tobin; June 22 — Golf tournament; September — Education meeting; November — Dinner & toy drive.

CAROLINAS

Carolinas ERA continues to host their monthly virtual networking events focused on various industry topics of discussion for each session. The chapter held a virtual lunch in early June, hosted by Penny Langdon of TT Electronics, which featured a presentation on market trends analysis from Buzz Reynolds, account manager/distribution manager at Performance Technical Sales.

Regarding the chapter's annual fall golf tournament, Carolinas ERA is pleased to offer yet another challenging, pristine golf course for this annual charity event to be hosted on Friday, Oct. 6: the Challenge Golf Club, located in central North Carolina. The event will draw more than 100 manufacturers' representatives, distributors, manufacturers and OEMs. This year promises to bring yet another full day of fun, camaraderie and sportsmanship!

CHICAGOLAND-WISCONSIN

Chicagoland-Wisconsin ERA hosted an industry social gathering at Summerfest on June 22. This fun-filled networking event was open to reps, manufacturers, distributors and customers.

It is with great honor the Chicagoland-Wisconsin chapter presented revered colleague Jeff Huntsinger with the Life Member Award during its Board meeting in April. Jeff has set the gold standard in service and has a lifetime of accomplishments in the electronics industry. Jeff has also been a past recipient of the Jess Spoonts ERA White Pin Award in 2013. The chapter wishes many congratulations to Jeff on this well-deserved award!



EMPIRE

Empire ERA is excited to host its 3rd Annual Julie Baker Charity Golf Tournament on July 31 at Ravenwoods Golf Club. Based on previous success of this event, the chapter looks forward to another great turn-out this year. For more details, and to sign up as a sponsor and register online, visit: https://empireera.org/events-golf-2023/.

This tournament is hosted to generate funds for a donation to the Willow Domestic Violence Center in memory of long-time Empire Chapter Board member Julie Baker.

METRO NEW YORK

Metro NY ERA is delighted to announce it has donated $3,000 to Long Island Cares, a local hunger relief organization, from the proceeds of its 2022 Steve Alford Memorial Golf Tournament event. The event took place last October at St. George's Golf Course in East Setauket, N.Y., and was attended by more than 100 ERA members and guests who enjoyed a day of golfing, networking and fun.

The chapter hosted its 2023 Steve Alford Memorial golf event at the end of June — a sold-out event! The chapter hopes to be able to donate even more to Long Island Cares this year.



MICHIGAN

Michigan ERA held a best practices-sharing discussion in early June at R.O. Whitesell & Associates' Novi, Mich., office. Attendees discussed a range of issues including managing your organization and line card during turbulent times, managing multiple CRMs to ensure critical project milestone dates are being met, and ideas for CEM principals that are looking to hire and motivate reps. It was a great discussion over coffee and bagels among some of the most respected and passionate members of our industry. Plans for the chapter's next event were also discussed to drive further conversation and networking among the best of the best!

Pictured from L- R: Matt Cohen, C C Electro Sales, Inc.; Jay Patel, Amtech Electrocircuits; Amy Rathsburg, Rathsburg Associates; Brook Merchant, R.C. Merchant & Co; John Wiedemann, R.O. Whitesell; Mike Pecar, Mike Pecar Sales.



MID-LANTIC

Mid-Lantic ERA hosted a "Night at TopGolf" in Mount Laurel, N.J., on April 25. The idea behind the event was to bring people together to "reinvigorate" the local chapter. The event received sponsorships from 10 distributors and people from 18 different rep organizations were in attendance. The feedback from the 55-plus guests has been extremely positive. The chapter looks forward to hosting another event sometime in the near future.



NEW ENGLAND

New England ERA hosted a social gathering in early June, bringing together an incredible crowd of eager young professionals at SPIN, a ping pong social club in Boston. The enthusiasm for the event was so overwhelming that it sold out in record time; the chapter even had to start a registration waiting list! In attendance were more than 55 young professionals, with a few industry veterans helping to work the event.

Throughout the night, attendees from all corners of the electronics industry mingled, connected, fostered new relationships and even played some competitive ping pong. Attendees were encouraged to connect via LinkedIn. The number of entries received translated into raffle tickets for incredible prizes donated by the event's sponsors: Arrow, Avnet, Coakley Boyd & Abbott, Heilind, MacInnis Group, MEAN WELL, Sager and TTI.

The night concluded with some wise words from current ERA Executive Committee Chairman of the Board John O'Brien, who encouraged the attendees to reach out, get involved, network, build their brand and most of all recognize that the industry is dynamic and filled with possibility. The night was a huge success measured by the outreach from the attendees themselves, many of whom expressed thanks for the opportunity to participate, and all asking to be notified of future chapter events.



The chapter looks forward to seeing everyone at the New England chapter golf event scheduled for Sept. 7 at Four Oaks Country Club in Dracut, Mass. Additional information, sponsorships and registration details will be announced soon.

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Northern California ERA's charity golf tournament was held in mid-June at the beautiful Coyote Creek Golf Club in Morgan Hill, Calif.

The tournament drew a remarkable turnout of 72 players, with dedicated volunteers and enthusiastic non-golfers who contributed to its success. The event received generous support and sponsorship from rep firms, distributors and suppliers. It was an honor to have ERA CEO Walter Tobin travel from Boston to attend.

Special Olympics Northern California was the chosen beneficiary, and thanks to the collective efforts of the participants, $12,000 was raised to support their important work in empowering athletes with intellectual and physical disabilities. Notably, at the 13th hole, a Special Olympics golf pro was stationed to assist with putting, enhancing the game and fundraising efforts.

The event truly showcased the power of community and compassion in making a positive impact.





OHIO

Ohio ERA was thrilled to host its first event in more than 10 years! The group met up at a Lake Erie Crushers minor league baseball game in May in an attempt to attract Board members and volunteers for future events. There were 23 attendees consisting of both reps and distributors. It proved to be a great afternoon of baseball, collaboration and fun!

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

2023 is flying by and Southern California ERA is ramping up to finish the year strong!

The year started off with the chapter's Rock N' 2023 Social at Rock N' Brew; then continued with the "Work Smarter, Not Harder" virtual event; then the chapter went "old school" and got in front of customers one-on-one in the first-ever Tijuana Table Top Show. The chapter also promoted ERA at the 2023 Del Mar Electronics & Manufacturing Show (DMEMS), where it hosted its "set-up day" social with more than 100 attendees. SoCal ERA walked away with more than 20 new referrals from the show for reps, manufacturers and distributors that were considering ERA membership and wanted to stay up-to-date on the latest industry trends and events that the Chapter is hosting.

In mid-June, the chapter presented an informational session on AI, including ChatGPT and Bard. Matthew Amato from IBS Electronics Group presented the session and empowered attendees to leverage advanced AI language models to streamline business operations and drive efficiencies. The audience learned how to utilize AI's potential for data analysis and customer insights, ensuring maximized sales and business growth.

On Sept. 14, the chapter will host its 18th Annual ERA Sagebrush Summer Social from 5:00–7:30 p.m. PDT at Sagebrush Cantina in Calabasas, Calif. This is a free event for attendees based on the generosity of our sponsors. Sponsorship opportunities are still available if your company is interested. Last year's event topped almost 100 attendees.

Next, you can find Southern California ERA at the Anaheim Electronics & Manufacturing Show Sept. 27 – 28. Stop by and say hello at booth #204.

The annual SoCal ERA golf tournament benefitting Operation Homefront will be held on Oct. 10 at Black Gold Golf Course in Yorba Linda, with a goal to raise more than $10,000 for Operation Homefront to help ease the burden of the military families that serve and protect our great country. Four veterans will be joining the event to enjoy a day of golf and an amazing dinner with friends.

The year will finish up with an "Owners Forum: Engaging with Engineers" in November and year-end planning meeting. Last, but not least, look for a refresh of the Southern California ERA website! ■

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW: Cole Sikes

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me personally. I am already looking forward to the next ERA Conference!

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace?

When not at the workplace you'll likely find me traveling with my wife or exploring the outdoors. Whether I am hiking, fishing, hunting, kayaking or playing golf, I am always looking for an adventure!

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

One of my hobbies is collecting Scotch Whisky, traveling to the distilleries and learning the history behind them. In fact, my wife and I were married in Edinburgh, Scotland and my wedding band is made of wood from a Balvenie Whisky barrel. ■

XCOM DIGEST - MANUFACTURING UPDATE: Ken Bellero

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supply chain management. These collaborations have played a significant role in driving business growth, expanding market presence and improving customer satisfaction in the electronics components industry.

As always, if you would like to reach out to me to discuss this topic or any others that are pertinent to our industry, please do not hesitate to email me at ken.bellero@schaffner.com or give me a call 732-910-1717 anytime. ■

TECH CORNER: Solid as a rock

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thermal conductivity, which leads to a shorter service life. In both cases, bonding and potting, material incompatibility of the adhesive and the compound could also occur in the component. Therefore, the utmost care must be taken when selecting the materials to be used.

For SMD capacitors, the approach is similar to that for THT components. This restricts the movement of the winding in the case. However, to prevent the connections from breaking off, the SMD components offer yet another option: They are equipped with a base plate with additional plastic bars attached to the sides. This fixes the capacitor case in place. Vibration-resistant models also have enlarged solder pads to mechanically strengthen the solder joint. Other external supports are not used. However, bonding and potting as with THT modules are also possible with SMD designs.

Supported by the board layout

In addition to selecting vibration-resistant components, it is also important to pay attention to vibration safety in the circuit board layout. This prevents the creation of areas with strong vibrations. The force acting on the capacitor can be minimized by shifting the resonance points. But this does not solve the vibration problem. Therefore, vibration-resistant capacitors are of key importance. Suppliers are constantly working on their further development, and we can expect to see new series in the future that are able to withstand even higher forces. ■

ERA ANNOUNCES MEMBER SURVEY PARTNERSHIP WITH EDGEWATER RESEARCH

ERA is pleased to announce the launch of a new monthly Business Environment Survey in partnership with leading research firm Edgewater Research. The survey and its results will focus on valuable industry intelligence such as sales and booking trends, revenue growth trends, pricing outlook, book-to-bill ratios, end markets, inventory, lead times and more. ERA members will have the ability to respond to this survey directly and confidentially, and only ERA members will be able to view the results, which will be posted monthly at: era.org/era-member-surveys.

ERA looks forward to our members participating in this monthly survey and finding significant value in the results.

STEP 2023 TRAINING REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

You're invited to register for STEP 2023, ERA's third annual virtual sales training program! This live training will take place Oct. 17-19; sessions will be recorded and archived. The program will feature nine robust 75-minute educational sales training modules, presented by a mix of high-caliber professional sales training executives and industry sales executives.

Visit era.org/era-events/step for more information and to register.

ERA DEBUTS ERA LIVE SESSIONS

ERA introduces its new series of virtual information and discussion sessions: ERA LIVE!

These virtual sessions will take place frequently throughout the year and will feature electronics industry experts and peers who will present a variety of hot topics. The sessions will be 1 hour in duration and facilitated by ERA staff. Anyone in the electronics industry is welcome to attend. There is no registration required. Visit era.org/era-events/era-live-2/ for more details.

ERA AWARDS LIFE MEMBER RECOGNITION TO TWO ERA MEMBERS

In Spring 2023, ERA awarded Life Member recognition to Jeff Huntsinger, CPMR, of the Huntsinger Group, LLC (Chicagoland-Wisconsin ERA) and Mike Boswell of Blair Electra/Blair Engineering (Southwest ERA).

Chicagoland-Wisconsin ERA national officers were pleased to present Huntsinger his award at a chapter meeting in April. Tobi Cornell, CPMR, president of Southwest ERA, presented Boswell his award at a chapter meeting in May.

ERA congratulates these two individuals on their Life Member status and recognizes the extraordinary time, talent and effort they have dedicated to ERA and the manufacturers' rep function within the electronics industry. ERA Life Members are individuals who have been employed by or associated with one or more firms as members in good standing of the association (regular, at-large or international) during a 20-year period, and are nominated by fellow chapter members at biannual ERA Board meetings.

ERA ANNOUNCES 2024 CORE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ERA is pleased to announce the 2024 ERA Conference Committee responsible for planning the 2024 ERA Conference, taking place Feb. 25-27 in Austin, Texas. Adam Anderson, CPMR, vice president, Norris & Associates, Inc., will serve as the Conference committee chair, and Jeff May, president, Logix Sales & Marketing, will serve as Conference committee vice chair.

Ryan Baldinelli, global channel manager, Anderson Power Products, and Julie Carr, distribution sales manager/partner, MacInnis Group, will co-chair the Keynote & General Sessions committee. Adam Grigor, president, Tech-Trek, Ltd., and Maryellen Stack, director of marketing communications, Sager Electronics, will co-chair the Breakout Sessions committee. Mike Swenson, CPMR, president, Mel Foster Co., and Zach DeVillers, CPMR, CSP, president, Brainard-Nielsen Marketing, will co-chair the Sponsorship committee. Ellen Coan, CPMR, vice president of operations, C C Electro Sales, Inc., will once again serve as acting ERA Executive Committee liasion to the Core Committee. ■

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****No registration required****

Visit ERA.org for more details.

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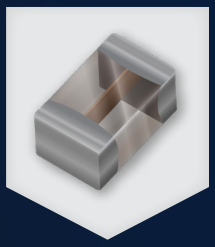
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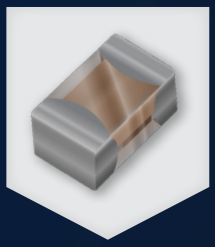
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