

ERA 2018 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES THEME AND KEYNOTER

The Electronics Representatives Association (ERA) Conference Committee has announced the theme of the association's 49th Management and Marketing Conference, scheduled Feb. 25-27, 2018, at the AT&T Center in Austin, Texas. Conference Committee Chair Rick LaPiana, president of the Cain-Forlaw Company, says the theme, "Tools of Our Trade — Constructing a Successful Future," was selected because "this conference will heavily focus on practical takeaways that can be readily implemented. In my experience, ERA has a rich history of delivering use-it-now information and advice to the reps, manufacturers and distributors who attend our conferences, and this year our emphasis will be even stronger on tactical know-how and resources."

The Conference Committee has also announced that the 2018 keynote program will be delivered by Wayne Cotter, a well-known humorist, self-described electronics "geek" and former electrical engineer who was one of David Letterman's favorite guest comedians." Ken Bellerio, president of Schaffner EMC and chair of the Conference Keynote Sub-Committee, says, "Wayne Cotter's background as an electrical engineer along with the right amount of comedy, humor and experience as an entertainer will provide a unique start to this year's conference."

Further details about the conference, including online registration and a link to make hotel reservations, are available at era.org.

MRERF NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF) recently announced the hiring of a new executive director. Kate Rhoten, whose experience includes 20+ years in sales and training as well as working in the non-profit sector, joined the foundation in August. Susannah Hart and Liz Beerman, both of whom have served as executive directors of MRERF in the past, are continuing in support roles with the organization.

The final MRERF event of this year is slated Oct. 10-13 when the Certified Sales Professional (CSP) course is offered in Chicago. For details, go to mrerf.org.

EMPOWERING SYSTEMS ACQUIRES MACS

Empowering Systems, Inc., one of ERA's long-time Recognized Resource providers, reported in late September that it had acquired MACS Software and would be transitioning all MACS Software employees to Empowering Systems. Scott Mayo, founder and senior partner of Empowering Systems, comments, "For over 20 years, we've pursued growth primarily through organic channels. (Now) we are excited that the acquisition of MACS brings us to the next step of our company's evolution."

LINKEDIN INVITATIONS DO NOT VIOLATE NONCOMPETES

A panel of the Illinois Appellate Court has held that networking with a former colleague on social media does not amount to a violation of a noncompete agreement. Howe & Hutton, Ltd., a Chicago law firm whose clients include many not-for-profit trade associations, reported in a recent newsletter on a case involving a former employee of an insurance company who was sued by that company for violating a noncompete agreement when he invited three of the company's current employees to connect on social media. The court's opinion included the caution that, "as social networking websites continue to grow, the issue of social network usage will repeatedly arise in noncompete cases." Howe & Hutton lists several key facts in the court's decision in this case, i.e., that the LinkedIn page didn't mention either the worker's former employer company or his new employer company, contained no suggestion that anyone view the worker's job description and offered no solicitation for anyone to leave his former employer company.

SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY IS BOOMING

The semiconductor industry just experienced one of its best second quarters in revenue growth, driven by the memory device market, says a recent report by EPS News, and the DRAM market, in particular, is expected to reach record levels in 2017. The semiconductor industry posted 6.1 percent growth compared to the first quarter, reaching near record growth in the second quarter of 2017, according to the market research firm IHS Markit. "This is the highest growth the industry has seen in the second quarter since 2014," states IHS. Over the past few months, market analysts have increased their overall semiconductor growth forecasts due to continued tight supply and higher tags in the memory market. IC Insights expects the DRAM market to be the fastest-growing IC segment in 2017, increasing by 55 percent this year.