

ERA Conference: Join the discussion and accelerate your business

by Holly Myers, CPMR



Holly Myers

Holly Myers joined the North Carolina-based rep firm, Wallace Electronic Sales, as a sales and marketing manager in 2005. She received her CPMR certification in 2011. Holly currently is serving as the chair of the ERA Conference Committee. She was the recipient of the 2015 Jess Spoons ERA White Pin Scholarship Award.

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In February, ERA is returning to the AT&T Conference Center in Austin, Texas, for its 48th Management and Marketing Conference designed around the theme, “Collaborate, Differentiate, Accelerate! Drive to Excellence.”

This year’s event focus emphasizes how critical it is for reps, manufacturers and distributors to collaborate in order to better serve customers and each other, to differentiate their companies and services, and to accelerate the rate at which they evolve to remain profitable in today’s competitive global marketplace.

The conference is ERA’s biggest annual educational and networking event that provides collaborative and educational opportunities for collective discussion to grow your business. There is no better forum that offers reps, manufacturers and distributors the opportunity to learn and exchange ideas in a formal two-day gathering with industry peers.

So what makes this a don’t-miss event?

In today’s challenging business climate, our industry is experiencing rapid changes. They are fueled by the way our customers access information and choose components for designs. Changes also are driven by technological advancements, new market players, emerging

markets, and of course, the challenging economic climate.

The 2017 conference agenda is carefully structured to address these key issues.

From a strong lineup of general sessions to hands-on breakout seminars to various networking events, this year’s conference is sure to strengthen attendees’ business resilience and energize them to get through these challenging and changing times

General sessions and breakout seminars

The 2017 conference agenda will feature a customized keynote program by Jon Petz, author, humorist and former telecon industry executive and manufacturers’ representative of Columbus, Ohio. This is a don’t-miss presentation that will offer attendees a memorable combination of real-life experiences and encourage audience participation, all focusing on the importance of collaborating, differentiating and accelerating your business.

Other general sessions include:

- **Demand Creation, Part 1:** “Who Is (or Should Be) Doing What?” will feature a panel discussion among manufacturers, distributors and reps. It is more important

than ever for each entity of ERA to work together — manufacturer, distributor and rep — to maximize the demand creation process, as well as differentiate each of their value propositions within the process to best meet the needs of the customer.

- **Demand Creation, Part 2:** “From the Design Engineers’ Perspective” will feature a question-and-answer forum with design engineers. The session will educate us how and when engineers engage salespeople and what value we bring from their perspectives.

- **Amazon:** “What You Need to Know about Its Current and Future Sales Model,” presented by Colin Puckett and Andy Auperlee of Amazon. As new fulfillment options emerge in the market, ERA feels it is important to make members aware of Amazon’s presence and future plans for our industry.

- **Emerging Markets:** “New Energy Markets: Where Are the Opportunities?” will feature a general session presentation by Littelfuse, Inc. Executive Chairman Gordon Hunter. He will share his insights of this hot industry sector and explore the latest products in the energy market, as well as what’s coming in 2017 and beyond.

- **New Technologies:** “DO ROBOTS POOP? Technology’s Impact and Influence on the Evolution of Human Life” will feature a closing general session presented by Michael Knight, senior vice president for the Americas, TTI, Inc. Not only is the way we go about doing business driving change in the way we work day-to-day, but the rapid growth in technology continues to affect our lives. Knight will discuss what will drive future growth in our industry and what we can expect in the future. This is a not-to-be missed session!

Further emphasizing the conference theme, the agenda will feature 14 different breakouts offering attendees practical business, legal, management and marketing information for reps, manufacturers and distributors. Some of the key breakout sessions that deserve a mention include:

- Best Practices in Rep-Distributor Relationships: How to Become More Valuable to Each Other;
- LinkedIn Workshop: Maximizing the Sales Tool;
- Minimizing Conflicts in Rep-Distributor Partnerships and How Manufacturers Can

Help Prevent Them;

- Rep Councils: Why Every Manufacturer and Distributor Should Have One; and
- Technology Swap Shop 2017: Who’s Using What and How.

Conference highlights

In addition to the information-packed agenda, the conference will offer attendees a variety of networking opportunities. On Sunday, Feb. 26, ERA has reserved a number of morning

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tee times at the Golf Club at Star Ranch, about 20 minutes from the AT&T Conference Center. Later on Sunday, the conference will open with a Welcome Reception. The always popular Conference Theme Party will take place on Monday, Feb. 27, at the Stubbs Bar B-Q restaurant, located only about a mile and half from the conference hotel. Transportation will be provided. At the Theme Party, attendees will have the opportunity to express their competitive nature by participating in slot car racing.

Join the discussion

Working together as manufacturers, distributors and reps is more important than ever. Planning and strategizing as individual companies and collectively as

a group are key to growing and succeeding in our industry. Differentiating your company's role and processes, requires strategic planning, execution and evaluation as an ongoing cycle.

The 2017 ERA Conference provides opportunities for growth in all of these areas: general sessions for future predictions, breakout sessions in collaborating as a collective team, as well as talks on strategic planning in business practices and marketing for your individual businesses.

There is no time to waste. We must accelerate our plans to adjust to the changing business environment to remain competitive and relevant. I invite you to join the discussion and conference with us in February in Austin to learn, strategize and network with your peers! ■

FROM THE TOP: ERA reflections

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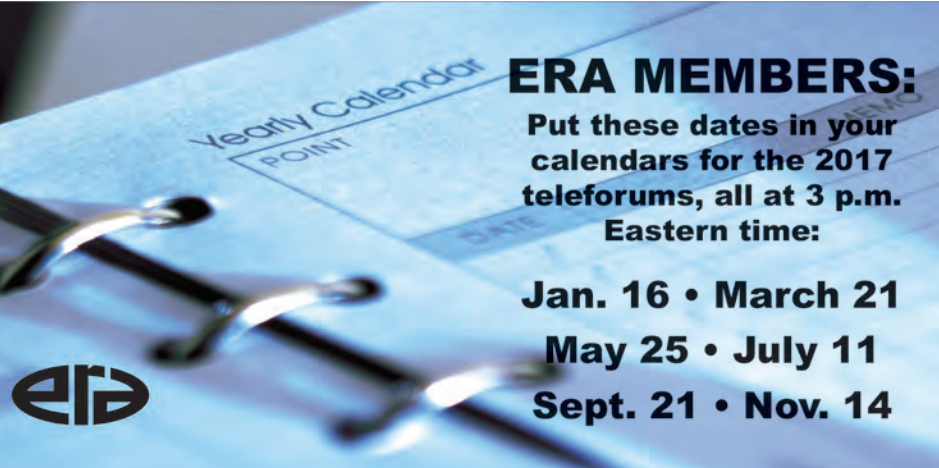
know that it is not intentional. Much like my flip phone, I have memory limits.

Going forward fearlessly into 2017, the current ERA Executive Committee Senior Vice President/Fiscal and Legal, David Norris, will ascend to the presidency, and I will gladly move up to Chairman where I lead from behind. We will kick off 2017 with what should be a great conference in Austin in February. I expect that the new 2017-2019 Executive Committee — which will include Ken Bellero, president of Schaffner EMC, representing our manufacturing members, and Chris Beeson, executive vice president of sales and supplier management for Digi-Key Electronics, representing our distribution members — will bring new

and fresh ideas that will make ERA an even more effective organization.

Walter will continue his never ending quest for new members, and I'm certain that he will find a way to grow our membership significantly next year. ERA's Communications Director, Neda Simonova, taking the place of the irreplaceable Tess Hill, who will remain an integral part of ERA, is a wonderful addition to the ERA team, and the entire ERA staff will continue their excellent work.

All in all, next year should be really special. I personally can't wait for 2016 to end as it has been a tough year for our firm. So bring on the New Year, and see you all at the ERA Conference in Austin! ■



ERA MEMBERS:
Put these dates in your calendars for the 2017 teleforums, all at 3 p.m. Eastern time:
Jan. 16 • March 21
May 25 • July 11
Sept. 21 • Nov. 14