



Jim Gleason
Owner and Managing Partner
FJM

With so many ERA members, it's not easy to get to know every rep and manufacturer 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 Jim Gleason, the owner and managing partner of FJM, headquartered in Victor, N.Y. Although he is a relative newcomer to the rep business, Jim now serves as president of Empire State ERA.

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

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

A lifelong resident of Upstate New York, I grew up in Binghamton and now live in the Finger Lakes with my wife Katie and our three young children, including five-year-old twins. I am a graduate of Keuka College and spent my years prior to electronics manufacturing in organizational development roles.

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace?

I enjoy watching our children participate in new experiences and sharing time with friends and family. When not with them, I love to travel doing anything outdoors, including golf, fly fishing and anything on or near the water. I find time to participate in local music groups, particularly in the boutique breweries and unique spaces in the Finger Lakes.

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

The company I acquired in 2014 had been a long-time ERA supporter, and so I jumped right in on day one when joining the firm. I've been in electronics manufacturing for five years, all of which have been with ERA.

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

I saw a unique opportunity to participate in a company succession plan that happened to be a manufacturers' rep company. I was attracted by the prospect of having ownership control and deploying my organizational development background into a well-established business model.

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

I've found the culture to be very professional and intelligent, with a lot of people willing to genuinely help you out. On the rep side of things, I have a lot of fun meeting and engaging with industry peers, creating solid friendships and being part of a great community. The electronics industry is challenging yet can be rewarding. There's constant pressure that keeps you sharp and focused.

Briefly describe your rep firm.

We are currently an IP&E rep company covering Upstate New York. Our manufacturing clients represent a truly global marketplace and feature factories on four continents. Our OEM and end user clients are continually

challenging us to bring value and helping us to look toward where the electronics industry will be in the future which is a lot of fun.

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

We are advocates of the franchise model and so spend a lot of time on systems and processes. We've built a board of advisors made up of our close service providers in the business intelligence, strategic marketing, transformative IT and digital spaces to help us understand the current marketplace and how and why our story matters. On the operations side, we use Evernote and DropBox to manage email processes more efficiently in the "do, delete, delegate" model. On the demand creation side, we leverage new product information from our manufacturing clients using MailChimp and WordPress. All of this helps to build and deliver our brand promise.

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 has been fundamental as a resource for me as I had no idea what a rep was five years ago, much less electronics manufacturing. I was fortunate to attend COLT (ERA's Chapter Officers Leadership Training program) where I was exposed to the vast network and resources ERA has available. From working with Expert Access to validate net effective tax rates and rep company valuations to gaining mentors in the industry, I wouldn't be here today without ERA.

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

I am active on several social media platforms and do follow ERA. ERA conversations on social media have demonstrated value in delivering content and, more critically, active discussions on topics relating to our industry from succession planning to supplier consolidation impacts. It's topical and relevant to have the individual voices in our industry shared at a peer level. ERA facilitates this exposure in a conversational way, which is important in social media context.

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

I play the five-string banjo and am an avid bluegrass and folk musician.