

ERA to support the rep advantage at Electronica

by John Hutson, CPMR

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Four years ago I had the opportunity to attend my first Electronica show, and I was blown away. It was certainly exciting to see our industry showcased front and center with a level of energy that we have not seen in North America for some time now.

Because the majority of my principals attend the show, Electronica has offered me the opportunity to see new products, discuss applications and break bread with them — much like we would during the days of the Electro show in the northeast. The global nature of Electronica also allowed me to meet management from my European principals, something that I do not get the opportunity to do often. As a result, attending Electronica proved to be a very productive week.

Manufacturers' rep model

As productive as the show is, personally, what I found most interesting was the lack of knowledge about the manufacturers' rep model among most of the exhibitors I met.

I was amazed at the number of European manufacturers of high-quality products, many of which had existing sales in North America, that either had no field sales, or a limited network at best. Even among the manufacturers that had a stateside presence, many had a strong emphasis on logistics (i.e., warehousing), with a limited field sales structure. One thing that all of these exhibitors had in common was the desire to grow sales as cost effectively as possible. And what better way to do so than with ERA reps?

At the show, my introductions were not limited to European manufacturers, but included agents as well. These meetings were even more inspiring because most of them welcomed the opportunity to represent more North American manufacturers. However, European manufacturers' reps do not have a network for engaging potential principals. In addition, many of these agents see the European model of a stocking rep being threatened

by the wave of global distributors who are entering their markets. This creates a number of challenges for them, and adding manufacturers for which they do not carry inventory could be vital for their survival.

Closing the gap

These two dynamics — European manufacturers needing North American reps and European agents needing North American manufacturers — is the ideal breeding ground for ERA.

My enthusiasm to capitalize on this opportunity for ERA to assist in closing this divide was shared by Holly Myers, CPMR, with Wallace Electronic Sales, and Tom Shanahan, former ERA CEO. We dedicated ourselves to return two years later to the following Electronica, and to go booth to booth to share the advantages that ERA has to offer to as many people as possible.

I am proud to say that we were successful in this cause, and that our efforts resulted in the creation of a database containing more than 75 new contacts as well as new members.

Although ERA was well represented at the last Electronica show, it still has a long way to go to educate its European counterparts. This is why I am excited to inform you that ERA will be attending the 2016 Electronica show, and my expectations are higher than ever. We have a busy week planned in November, but if you plan to, or are considering attending this year's show, please let us know. We would love to know what your goals and expectations are of the show, and we hope that you might be able to stop by ERA's booth.

If you have any questions about the show, we would be happy to share with you what insight we have. Prost!

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