

# Recapping my first 90 days as ERA CEO

My first 90 days as CEO ... wow! Where do I begin? The 90 days went by so fast ... and that is a good thing! Let me try to give you a brief summary of my thoughts, perspectives and activities as I began this very exciting role.

**People:** The staff at ERA have all been wonderful. As you know, most of them have been with ERA for many years. They have been VERY patient with me as I continued to ask some very basic questions of them about the ways of the association as I pick their brains about the history of ERA and how we got to where we are today. So, without this tireless team, my first 90 days would not have been as productive as I feel it has been. They are a great source of all sorts of good stuff!

**Executive Committee:** Like the ERA staff, the XCOM has been both supportive and informative. Our collective conversations and many individual chats on specific topics have allowed ERA to move forward on many fronts — to make assessments and decisions to affect the needed changes to help take this organization into the “New Era at ERA.” We are blessed to have such an active and involved XCOM. They always manage to find the time for ERA while doing their “other full-time jobs” of running their rep companies.

**Website:** A website is a window into the very soul of the organization. If it is hard to navigate or ineffective in allowing the user to access the information that they are looking for in as few clicks as possible, folks will “click out,” vote with their feet and walk away from the organization. Our staff website team members have been tireless (and a bit relentless!) in listening to my “suggestions” as to how to make our site “best in class.” I hope ALL of you have been to [era.org](http://era.org) to see for yourself! Come in and kick the tires — and expect an

amazing experience! I have been very impressed with our face on the Internet.

**Chapters:** I have been “on the road” visiting our chapters as a part of my “listening tour” — to get the inputs, criticisms, comments, suggestions, etc., from both members and non-members. I have visited the following chapters or regions: Canada, Ohio, Mid-Lantic, Chesapeake, Minnesota, New England, Empire State and Texas. Some of the chapters have been more active than others. However, in ALL cases, the people have been both warm and welcoming to me and displayed a strong desire to help make their ERA chapter even stronger in 2016. As we all know, the chapter structure is unique to ERA. It is what makes us a strong organization, and the strength of any chapter lies on its members. I leave each territory even more pumped up than when I arrived.

**New Rep Membership Drive:** The ERA staff emailed out nearly 6,000 messages to former members and prospective “never been” members to help drive new membership. The response to this initiative has been strong so far, and we expect to add many new rep members over the next several weeks as the follow up efforts continue.

**New Manufacturer Membership Drive:** We are also continuing our drive to add new manufacturer members to our ranks. Once we sign a manufacturer up, we then look at its rep network and see which reps are NOT members. We then work “upstream” to convince them to join ERA along with their manufacturer. The drive for new manufacturers has been very effective.

For both reps and manufacturers, look for the listing of “New Members” on the scrolling box on our website home page. The list

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## SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW: Gregory Pace

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learned a lot about the selling cycle through ERA and were fortunate enough to form our own rep council years ago. To this day, the council advises us on best practices (and how to stay out of trouble!).

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

I am not active on Facebook, but Ohmite has a terrific Facebook page. I do use LinkedIn as it is more of a professional networking site and keeps me close to our industry relationships. I read all of the ERA releases and related industry data.

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

I may be the last straight-on, non-soccer-style kicker in the Big 10 Conference (graduating in 1977). I was so good, the Illini let me kick off in order to protect the other kicker, who was an All American. ■

## EXECUTIVE COMMENTARY: First 90 days

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continues to grow!

**National Conference:** ERA's 47th Management and Marketing Conference continues to gain momentum. Tom Griffin has assembled a great conference committee and has positioned this event to be our best ever! I have been thoroughly impressed with the passion and professionalism of the members and the end-product that they have assembled. We expect a record turnout, so book your travel and hotel as soon as possible. You do not want to miss this! The fact that our conference is in February has helped me a lot in explaining what we do.

Whew! I am exhausted just reflecting back on my first 90 days, but the exhaustion is abated by the tremendous response from the reps, manufacturers and the industry to the value proposition of ERA. Our members are looking to us to ADVOCATE FOR THEM in these times of change. I realize that ERA members have given the association a sacred trust, and in turn, ERA has a responsibility to provide a tangible, relevant value proposition to all members.

I continue to be amazed at how highly ERA is regarded by all. They want and need us to be strong and to get stronger — one rep and one manufacturer at a time.

Many thanks to all for your support and guidance. Remember: My bags are packed and my phone is always on. ■

## BOOK REVIEW: Cultural intelligence

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- Avoid colloquial expressions and idioms.
- Repeat important points using different words to explain the same thing.
- Avoid long compound sentences.
- Use visual representations.
- Mix presentations with a balance of stories and principles.
- Hand out written summaries.
- Pause more frequently.

I liked this book and found it very useful. I think you will too. ■

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