

Moving ERA forward

Let me begin by thanking the ERA Board of Directors for the distinction of being elected your president — I am truly humbled; and in recognition of the trust inherent with this honor, I will work hard with you, the Executive Committee (XCOM), our CEO, and the entire talented ERA staff to continue to strengthen the association.

Speaking of the XCOM, let me also welcome Cameron English, CPMR, of English Technical Sales Southwest; Dave Fitzgerald of WESCO Sales Group Inc.; and Tom Griffin, CPMR, of Catalyst Sales Inc. as they join the committee. I look forward to your collective insight, and working with each of you.

And, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the significant contributions of Dan Parks, CPMR, of West Electronic Solutions and Kathie Cahill, CPMR, of Net Sales Company, whose terms on the XCOM have come to an end. You have both served with wisdom, distinction, and faithfulness — and I speak for the entire association in extending our sincere thanks and appreciation to you both. While your terms on the XCOM have ended, your contribution to our association continues.

Impressions from Austin

As I write this, I've just returned from the ERA 50th Anniversary Conference in Austin, Texas, where we "Celebrated the Past" while learning to "Embrace Tomorrow." This conference continues to be one of the premier networking and educational events in our industry; and our association should be very proud of both the product and the devoted efforts of the large team of volunteers and staff who put the conference together. Thank you all for a job well done!

A number of takeaways from the conference are running through my head: What better questions can I ask? How do I get the distracted customer's attention? How do I apply data analytics more effectively? What is

your non-verbal communication telling me? (More importantly, what are my non-verbals saying to you?) I'm sure I will need some time to process these and other thoughts, but two things from the conference stand out to me.

First, when we celebrate the past, it is the people and relationships in our industry that are the focus of our attention.

Second, as we embrace the future, it is the accelerating rate of change in the technologies of tomorrow that dominate our thoughts. I

invite you to take a look at the conference opening video — available on the ERA website. I think you'll see what I mean.

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Embrace the future: ERA objectives

With these two points providing perspective, I believe ERA must continue to move forward as an association, facing the inherent challenges in front of us with the following objectives and priorities.

1) Focus on our mission and relationships; prioritizing and never losing sight of providing value to the people of the 600-plus member companies of our association; including on the national level and through our unique local chapter structure.

2) Work to strengthen the operations infrastructure of our association; including providing staff development and growth opportunities as appropriate; widening volunteer opportunities and engagement points for our members; and building our financial base within the guidelines of our association by-laws to position us to both capitalize on future opportunities and weather future storms.

3) Continue to be a good industry citizen — globally; seeking to work collaboratively with complementary organizations such as ECIA, EDS, MRERF, electronica and others.

The XCOM has been working on all of these issues (and others); and will continue to

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do so over the coming days, weeks and months. We also welcome your input.

Closing thoughts – and off to EDS and Las Vegas

As I move to a close of this article, I also move to thoughts of the upcoming EDS Summit in Las Vegas the week of May 6th.

From multiple discussions with colleagues about EDS, I can tell you that the weather will be gorgeous (probably). The elevators will be easy to navigate (probably not). All of the presentations you attend will be stimulating (you decide); every committed action item will be accomplished (or not); and you will win in the casinos (odds are against it). If this seems to be a bit “tongue in cheek,” it is. However, from those conversations, and years of personal experience, I can tell you that, in all seriousness, relationships will be made and built in Las Vegas (for sure), but only if you are there.

That’s it for now – I think this weekend I’ll watch my favorite movie – Fiddler on the Roof (with the sound off). #Tradition #IfIWereRichMan

As always, I can be reached at ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com and welcome your comments and feedback. If you attended the ERA Conference, I would love to hear your thoughts. If you didn’t attend, you will get another chance next February and I encourage you not to miss it.

Oh, and see you all in Las Vegas at EDS! ■

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Bruce Anderson

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Educational Research Foundation (MRERF). The XCOM asked me to get it started. We recruited an education doctoral student, Marilyn Stevens, and provided her with an office in our building. Dr. Stevens completed her doctoral studies in continuing education and became the Executive Director of MRERF. I was president and Ray Hall used his contacts to recruit 40 other industry associations to become members of the foundation. This led to the CPMR program, where I served as president earning my own certification. My sons, Craig and David, followed my lead.

After retirement in 2000, Ann and I purchased a home in Bonita Springs, Fla. We spent half the year in Florida and the other half in Illinois. Besides travel, boating, golf and making many new friends, we did volunteer work. Ann helped raise money over an eight-year period to build a hospice facility for the community. My cause of choice was Habitat for Humanity where neighbors formed a group to raise funds for H4H building homes for families in need in our area. I was assigned the task as construction supervisor for 80 “nail pounders.” We built as many as six homes in a four-month season. It was very rewarding at the end of a day when you can step back and see what you have accomplished. Other activities included programs for local veterans in need, raising funds for after school educational programs, and securing and improving land for low income housing. The late President George H. W. Bush discussed the “Thousand Points of Light” in support of volunteerism. They are everywhere! Participating in them is a very gratifying experience for an old rep.

The highlight has been the circumnavigation of the eastern half of the U.S. (5,000 miles) on my own boat. On several legs we were assisted by fellow boaters and ERA members: Gene Foster, Tim Coakley and Dave Locke with their wives. In April this year, I will complete my final cruising leg on my circumnavigation of the earth by ship.

I have maintained a relationship with Sumer Inc. They kept me on as non-executive chairman, bouncing ideas off of me and occasionally asking my advice. Sadly, my son David recently died which drew me closer to the firm again. Meanwhile, two of Craig’s sons have joined the firm: that makes Sumer Inc. a fourth generation firm! Is that a record for ERA?

My wife, Ann passed in 2010 after a five-year battle with cancer. She was my light, my compass and a terrific “first lady.” I now live with my partner Judy and plan to move into a retirement facility in Naples. Come see us when you are in southwest Florida. ■

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