

The Representer

THE VOICE OF MULTIPLE-LINE SELLING IN THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY

ERA Electronics Representatives Association

SUMMER 2026

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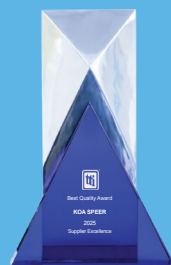


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The Representor



ELECTRONICS REPRESENTATIVES ASSOCIATION

Advancing and supporting the professional field sales function in the global electronics marketplace through programs and activities that educate, inform and advocate for manufacturers' representatives, distributors and their principals.

Founded 1935

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SUMMER 2026

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Your Best Rep Just Retired. Now What?

COVER STORY

Your best sales rep just retired. Now what?

Every electronic rep firm has one.

The salesperson who's covered the same distributors, OEMs and key accounts for 20 or 30 years. They know which contacts actually drive decisions and which ones slow things down. They know which opportunities are real and which ones will never move forward. They remember every design win, every lost socket and every project that slipped away to a competitor. And when they retire, all of that knowledge leaves with them.

The electronic components rep channel is running straight into this challenge. An aging sales workforce, specialized product lines and long project lifecycles are all converging. Replacing the person is tough. Replacing what they knew is the real problem.

The stakes are higher than they look

In the electronic rep world, relationships and context drive everything.

A rep isn't just selling components. They're managing trust between manufacturers and distributors, while working with engineering, purchasing and program teams. That trust takes years to build and can fade quickly when a familiar face disappears, and a new one shows up without context. Timing only increases the pressure.

A new rep who doesn't understand where a project stands can easily miss an opportunity. They might spend time chasing something that's already been lost, or overlook a program that's about to move into production because they didn't know the history.

That's not just a small miss. That's revenue tied to an entire product lifecycle. And across the industry, firms are seeing the same issue: the most valuable knowledge in the business isn't captured anywhere; it's sitting in someone's head.

Why knowledge doesn't transfer on its own

Most firms try to tackle this with overlap time, ride-alongs or asking reps to document their accounts before they leave.

But in practice, that rarely works the way people hope. Veteran reps are busy right up until the end. Their knowledge isn't organized in a clean, transferable way; it's built from years of conversations, emails and instinct. Even when they try to document things, what gets written down is often high-level, missing the nuance that actually drives decisions.

Ride-alongs help, but they only capture a snapshot. They don't recreate the history behind a stalled program or the context behind a long-standing relationship.

And once the rep is gone, the new person is left piecing things together from scattered notes, inbox threads and whatever they can gather from distributors or customers.

The issue is not a lack of effort; it's a lack of structure. Most organizations rely on individuals to carry context in their heads instead of building a consistent way to capture it as work happens. Without that structure, even well-intentioned handoffs fall apart under the pressure of day-to-day selling.

by John Mitchell
Founder, Repfabric

Building a system that captures as it goes

The strongest firms don't wait for transition moments. They capture knowledge continuously. They treat account intelligence as a shared asset, not something owned by one rep.

That means going beyond contact lists and open opportunities. It includes tracking project history, key relationships, competitive dynamics and why deals were won or lost. More importantly, that information gets captured as part of the normal workflow, not as an extra task that gets skipped when things get busy.

When a rep logs a customer visit, updates an opportunity, or follows up on a program, those actions create a



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permanent, searchable record tied to the account and the product lines involved. Over time, that builds a living history the entire team can rely on.

Where technology (and AI) changes the equation

This is where modern tools are starting to close the gap. Instead of asking reps to sit down and document everything after the fact, today’s platforms allow information to be captured in the moment. A rep can dictate a call summary right after a meeting, and the system organizes and files it automatically.

What used to require disciplined manual entry at the end of the day can now happen in a couple of minutes between meetings. That reduction in friction matters. It’s the difference between a system that gets used consistently and one that gets abandoned as soon as things get busy.

Managing multi-line complexity

For most rep firms, this challenge is even more complex because they manage multiple manufacturers across the same accounts. The context behind one product line can’t bleed into another. Conversations, opportunities and strategy need to stay organized by line without creating more work for the rep.

Firms that handle this well have a clear, structured way to keep activities separated while still giving leadership a full picture of what’s happening across the territory. Without that structure, information either gets siloed, or worse, lost entirely.

What the next rep inherits

When a territory changes hands, the real question is what the next rep walks into. If knowledge hasn’t been captured, they’re starting from zero. Rebuilding relationships, rediscovering opportunities and repeating mistakes that have already been made.

But when activity and context have been captured consistently, the starting point looks very different. A new rep can open an account and see the full history: conversations, opportunities, past wins and losses and the current state of each program. They understand where things stand before they ever make a call.

It’s not a substitute for experience, but it dramatically shortens the learning curve. Managers benefit too. When activity is visible, they can see which accounts are being covered well, which ones are going quiet and where the real opportunities are building. That turns knowledge from something reactive into something that can actually be managed.

It’s not just about retirement

While retirement is often the trigger, this problem shows up any time a territory changes hands. Growth, reorganization and turnover all create the same risk. The difference is that most firms only feel the full impact when someone with decades of experience leaves. By then, it’s already too late to recover everything that was lost.

The bottom line

The electronic components industry has always been relationship-driven. That’s not changing. But the way firms preserve and share what those relationships represent has to evolve. Because the real risk isn’t losing a salesperson. It’s losing everything they knew. If your organization has not yet taken a hard look at how dealer and account intelligence is being captured and protected, do not wait for the next retirement announcement to find out what you stand to lose. Start closing the gap now. ■

About the Author

John Mitchell is the founder of Repfabric, a CRM and commission management platform built specifically for manufacturers’ representatives and the multi-line sales channel. A former rep himself, Mitchell created Repfabric to solve the operational and data challenges he experienced firsthand running his own agency. For more information, visit repfabric.com.



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ERA Meetings & Programs

STEP 2026.....Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2026
electronica.....Nov. 10-13, 2026
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EXECUTIVE COMMENTARY

Reflections on year one: Building a stronger foundation for ERA

It is incredible how fast time flies — it has been almost a year that I've joined ERA as CEO. It has been awesome for me to learn about ERA and manufacturers' reps and what both do and how they do it. I have spent a lot of time visiting different markets to speak to the local reps and hear what's on their mind and what they would like ERA to do going forward. I have now had one ERA conference and one EDS under my belt as ERA CEO.

The first new program that we have implemented is the new MentorUP program sponsored by Master Electronics. Let me first thank Master Electronics for stepping up and providing funding to build our mentorship online platform and professional design. I have personally had some of the best mentors in the business and still rely on them for guidance and support. I believe one of the greatest gifts someone can give is their time, guidance and support. The initial response and sign-up for the MentorUP program has been robust and extremely positive. The first cohort of mentors and mentees will meet July through December 2026. This program can be a game changer for our organization and membership!

The next new program that will be rolled out will be a Market TAM portal for ERA members only, hosted on ERA.org. This portal will show extensive market TAM data for U.S., Canada and Mexico by HTS codes and area. Data will be able to be sorted by area and product type. Mexico ERA started this program and then ERA National took it over and expanded this to cover all three regions. There is a lot more to come in this department, so stay tuned.

We have also spent time with distributors and helped them shape new programs for reps, in order to work arm-in-arm with them in the local markets. I'm pleased to say there is strong engagement in this area from both sides. Working with all "three legs of the stool" is fundamental to making for a stronger community to help the end customers get the best service possible. More information is coming on this in July and August.

On the manufacturer's front: with the help of Mike Swenson and other people such as Cesare Giammarco, we have prepared three new presentations that show the value of reps to manufacturers, which we will post on

ERA.org in the near future. The one that I am most excited about is a "Rep vs. Direct Calculator" that can be adjusted by marketplace or used as an overall look at across regions. We continue to show it and get feedback from our community and will continue to improve these value-add tools.

We have a busy summer at ERA National planning another fall STEP (Sales Training for Electronics Professionals), sponsored by TTI. This live, virtual sales training should be taken by all ERA members to sharpen sales skills and make you personally more valuable to your business and customers. Most professional industries have a mandated amount of continuing education; if we want to call ourselves professionals, we should continue to learn the latest and greatest tools and ways to go to market.

We have picked Julie Carr and Brooks Mattice as our 2027 ERA Conference Chair and Co-Chair, respectively, and I want to personally thank them for their time and effort. They have one of the most important roles in leading the ERA Conference. The number of volunteers in the committee is also very humbling and impressive, so thank you all for your time and effort.

Last but not least — the charity work being done by local ERA chapters in raising funds for local charities really humbles me when I visit the different regions and see the amount of effort and results in giving back to the local communities. We will continue to visit and support as many of these events as possible. Keep up the great work. The local chapters are what differentiates ERA from all others.

As you can see, there is a lot going on and I am excited about the future of ERA and our industry. We are in a super cycle so sit back and enjoy it. ■



By Ed Smith
ERA CEO



Colin Doyle
Sales Engineer
R.O. Whitesell and Associates

To gain better insight into how early career professionals in the electronics industry have turned challenges into opportunities to ensure continued growth, The Represantor interviewed Colin Doyle, Sales Engineer at R.O. Whitesell and Associates.

Doyle shared how he started in this business during the MLCC allocation and then the pandemic — and he's still here!

Please tell us a little bit about yourself, personally and professionally.

I am a graduate of a small school named Slippery Rock University. After graduation I worked for Aramark at the Steelers and Pirates stadiums for a few years before migrating into a sales role. In addition to working in the electronics industry, I own a small business vending food at a Medieval festival — we serve up a mean meatball sub. I am currently engaged to be married, and we are expecting our first baby boy in September 2026! He'll be our little ring bearer for our wedding in September 2027.

How long have you worked in the electronics industry?

I have been working in the electronics industry since 2018. Eight years really flies by!

What made you choose this industry as your current career path?

The opportunity to work with engineers designing products that we all encounter in our lives was and is extremely interesting to me. I love that in our role, every day is a little different. I may be speaking to someone designing an electric breaker one day, and someone working on a self-driving vehicle the next. It keeps me on my toes and every day is exciting!

What are some of the main challenges you have encountered as you embark on your career journey?

I started in 2018 during the MLCC allocation. Everyone said, "Don't worry, once this is over everything will be back to normal." Then the pandemic happened, and the issues that the post-COVID era brought. Maybe one of these days we will be back to "normal" but until then I'm embracing the challenge.

What steps have you taken to overcome these challenges and ensure that you can establish and nurture a successful career?

I believe that a large portion of this job is building strong relationships. I changed markets about two months before COVID-19 hit, and needed to build new accounts and relationships. Once we were all locked inside, it was very challenging to build new relationships. I've been working to build those ever since. I think every day will bring a new challenge and you never know what that might be. If you have great relationships with your customers, principals and distributors, these challenges will seem easier to overcome.

What are some training tools or networking/industry events that you have found beneficial to your professional growth?

I was lucky enough to attend the EDS Summit in 2024, which was a very interesting event. It opened my eyes to the sheer size of the industry outside of my own territory. Local networking events such as the Pittsburgh Technology Council and ERA Ohio Chapter events have been great for meeting others in the industry. Also, some of the local distributor events are incredible for building relationships and meeting with customers.

Do you think that there is enough new talent entering the electronics industry? What could make this field more attractive to young professionals?

I cannot speak to the volume of new talent entering the industry as I am not in a hiring role. I will say that I think that the opportunity for young talent entering the industry is vast. There will be many people in the industry reaching the age of retirement soon, and that will leave a lot of opportunity and room for advancement for a new generation.

Where do you see your profession and the industry 10 to 20 years from now?

I don't see a world where the electronics industry shrinks. Every day electronics are added to more and more products and that trend, I believe, will continue. I'm sure we will witness more supply challenges and geopolitical issues that will affect us all.

Locally, in the Pittsburgh market, I expect some of the robotics companies that are currently in their start-up stage to become Tier 1 customers in the next 10-20 years.

Professionally, what keeps you up at night?

Always looking for the next PO! ■

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RISING STARS

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SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW



Diana Nawrocki, CPMR
Executive Vice President
Control Sales, Inc.

With so many ERA members, it is not easy to get to know every rep, manufacturer and distributor in the business. The “Someone You Should Know” Q&A gives readers the chance to learn about fellow ERA members, including how their time is spent both in and out of the office. Meet Diana Nawrocki, CPMR, Executive Vice President at Control Sales, Inc. Nawrocki shared how she has always enjoyed the interaction, problem solving and competitive nature of the rep business.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I joined the Control Sales team in 2020, following the merger of my firm, ESA Technical Marketing. I have more than 20 years of outside sales experience in the electro-mechanical product space. Married to my husband Adam for 23 years, we are the proud parents of two daughters, Elizabeth, 19, and Annabelle, 17. I’m a former collegiate swimmer, and both of my daughters are swimmers as well. Elizabeth swims for the Georgia Bulldogs, and Annabelle will swim for the SMU Mustangs in the fall.

How long have you been in the rep business, and how did you become interested in working at a manufacturers’ rep in the electronics industry?

I have been in the rep business for 25 years, beginning right out of college at my father’s representative firm, ESA Technical Marketing. I was drawn to the business from a young age. Hearing my dad talk about the industry, watching the way he served customers and principals, and seeing the lifelong relationships he built all made a lasting impression on me. I appreciate that the manufacturers’ rep business is built on trust and strong personal relationships. Those qualities are what first attracted me to the industry, and they continue to motivate me today.

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

For me, the most rewarding part of the rep business is building meaningful relationships with customers and distributors, especially when it takes persistence to earn their trust. There is a real sense of accomplishment in breaking through with a challenging account, understanding their needs and then working alongside our principals to grow that opportunity into new business. I enjoy the personal interaction, problem solving and competitive nature of this industry, so the rep business has always felt like a natural fit for me.

What is something challenging about the rep business that you are hoping you can positively influence over time?

One challenge is responsiveness from customers who hide behind layers of communication. I believe that providing the best product options, along with strong, relevant content tailored to each customer is essential. Representing companies with top technical FAEs, combined with our own team’s deep product knowledge, makes us a stronger force for the customer. Being consistent and present for the customer also helps improve the value of every interaction

and build stronger relationships over time.

Briefly describe your rep firm, and please include how long your company has been a member of ERA.

For more than 50 years, Control Sales has served OEMs across Illinois and Wisconsin, supporting a diverse range of markets including industrial, medical, off-road vehicles, consumer products and more. Our team brings deep industry knowledge and a strong commitment to responsiveness, helping engineers, buyers and distributors navigate the complexities of today’s evolving supply chain. Control Sales has been a proud member of ERA for more than 30 years, and that involvement has helped us continue refining our best practices in sales, management, technology and customer service.

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

One of the most important changes we have made is strengthening the role of our inside sales team to better meet the data and reporting requirements of our manufacturers. We have focused on elevating, training and supporting that team so they can manage information more effectively and respond more quickly

While analytics are valuable, we also believe there is still no substitute for product knowledge, account history and hands-on review. We regularly combine data tools with our own customer and application knowledge, manually reviewing POS and FTB reports to spot leads.

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?

Becoming more involved with ERA has led to some wonderful friendships and valuable professional connections. The opportunity to learn from other reps, share ideas and hear how different firms approach similar challenges has been extremely helpful. Kate Van Hise’s energy on every conference call is contagious and always makes me smile.

What are some things you enjoy outside of the workplace and what is one interesting fact that people may not know about you?

I am a 16-year breast cancer survivor, as well as a very active person, and when I’m not at work or cheering at a swim meet, you can find me playing tennis, pickleball or enjoying time with family and friends. ■

2027
ERA
CONFERENCE

2027 ERA Conference Volunteers

ERA extends its thanks to these distinguished and dedicated volunteers who are serving on the 2027 Conference Core Committee and Subcommittees. This group gives selflessly of their time, and their commitment to developing a dynamic and valuable program is deeply appreciated.

Save the date! The next ERA Conference is scheduled for February 21-23, 2027 in Austin, TX. Registration and sponsorships will open mid-August! Visit www.era.org for more information.

2027 CONFERENCE CORE COMMITTEE

Julie Carr, MacInnis Group – Conference Committee Chair	Holly Myers, Sager Electronics Scott Lindberg, Quell Corporation Maryellen Stack, Sager Electronics Diana Nawrocki, CPMR, Control Sales Inc. Toby Lasley, Ion Associates, Inc. Zach Anderson, Harper and Two	Rob De Rose, CST-Arwin Heather D’Amico, CPMR, Brainard Nielsen Marketing Inc. Lori Bruno, CPMR, MaRCtech2 Todd McAtee, Flip Electronics
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2027 CONFERENCE SUBCOMMITTEES

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Holly Myers, Sager Electronics – Co-chair
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Jake Metzger, Hughes Peters
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Doug Petroskey, Littelfuse
Patrick Coyne, Senntec/MacInnis
Arthur Guerra, Brainard Nielsen Marketing Inc.

Conference Committee Advisor

Todd McAtee, Flip Electronics

Paving the way for the All-Electric Society: electronica 2026 unites the global electronics industry

“Empowering the All Electric Society” is the vision at the heart of electronica 2026, which will open its doors in Munich from November 10 to 13. The world’s leading trade fair for electronics covers the entire spectrum of technologies, products and solutions in the industry that help pave the way towards an All Electric Society—from tiny components to complex systems and their forward-looking applications. Once again, electronica will occupy all 18 halls of the Munich fairgrounds, alongside SEMICON Europa, which takes place concurrently in two and a half halls. For 2026, the hall layout has been made even more coherent and clear, and the semiconductor section has been expanded by an entire hall as a result.

As far as exhibitor registrations are concerned, electronica is at the same high level as for the previous event. All the key players are back on board. There will be a strong international presence, with a high level of interest from companies from the U.S. and Asia as well as significant growth from European countries such as France, Italy, Poland and the U.K.

In 2024, more than 3,480 exhibitors and over 80,000 visitors from around the world attended, making electronica the most important meeting place and driving force for the international electronics industry.



Insights and industry exchange in the supporting program

electronica places great emphasis on a comprehensive supporting program that provides ample opportunity to exchange expertise and ideas and to network. Thematically, electronica 2026 will focus on three overarching key topics: cyber resilience, artificial intelligence and energy efficiency. These topics will be explored in various formats according to the application areas that are most relevant to the industry. On the electronica stages in the respective exhibition areas, international experts will share practical knowledge on a wide range of application fields through presentations.

New for this year is the special showcase edge lab LIVE, a hands-on area dedicated to edge computing featuring workshops and presentations. There will also be award ceremonies, pitch sessions and several career initiatives. The event kicks off on Monday evening before the trade show opens with an Executive Event

featuring a CEO Roundtable and high-profile speakers. Also on Monday, the electronica Automotive Conference will take place, where trends and challenges in the automotive value chain will be discussed.



Long-term analysis confirms industry’s optimism for the future

Messe München, the organizer of electronica, has recently published a Future Monitor based on exhibitor surveys from the past 13 years. Companies were asked to evaluate the current and anticipated future economic situation in their sector. For the electronics industry, the long-term analysis produced exciting results: The electronics companies surveyed are remarkably confident about the future and are far more positive about the economic prospects than the current situation.

“This optimism clearly shows the key role of the electronics industry,” said electronica Exhibition Director Caroline Pannier. “With its solutions and innovative strength, it is helping to tackle current social challenges. Our excellent booking situation underscores just how important world-leading trade fairs such as electronica are. They bring the entire world of electronics together in one place and offer a stage for new products, professional exchange and new impetus.”

For further information, visit electronica.de/en. ■



November 10–13, 2026

Empowering the All Electric Society



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

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What if we kept some
of that graduation-day
mindset?



Your future is bright! You can do anything! We can't wait to see what the future has in store for you! Looking forward to seeing you embrace life and live it to your fullest potential! The future has so much in store for you!

These are all things that we say to graduating seniors, whether it's from high school or college/university. We impress upon them that the world is their oyster, and they can be anything they want to be. We try to inspire such passion in the young, and we push them to believe in themselves, to know that they can do absolutely anything. I have just done this as well with my own son, who graduated from high school in May. Every graduation card I picked up to read had the same sort of message — praising the student for their achievements and letting them know that the world is waiting for them to make their mark upon it. It is a beautiful thing to think about.

It made me wonder...do we still push ourselves in this same way? Do we push our teams this same way? Do we remind ourselves and encourage each other with endless inspiration and belief in what we/they can do? Do we share our passions with our team, and the desire to be our best selves, or have we become jaded and beat down, and have found reasons or excuses for why we aren't achieving the things that we want to achieve? *Do we even still believe in ourselves?*

I really hope that we do. Each of us has a responsibility to get energized in our own skin. We need to remember what it was that brought us into this industry, and what we loved about it when we first started. Think about why it is that you stay in this industry, and why you still love it. Use that passion to drive yourself to be better at what you do every single day, and find a way to share that internally within your own organization. If your team isn't energized, how can you turn that around, or how can you get them through this slump they may be in? How can you help your team tap into what brought them to this industry, and what made them love it? What questions do we ask to learn what inspires others, and what behavior do we display that shows our dedication to our teammates and our organizations? It's just something to really think about.

One of the speakers at my son's graduation

Think about why it is that you stay in this industry, and why you still love it. Use that passion to drive yourself to be better at what you do every single day, and find a way to share that internally within your own organization.

ceremony said that reaching graduation does not mean that your goal is done. No matter what your next path is, each day is a new goal, and you continue to evolve and grow so that being a better version of yourself each day is the real goal; it is never done.

The working world teaches us an equally important truth to what is heard at graduation: you can become things you never even knew existed. So, continue to be curious, resilient and create opportunities. Always choose to do your best, and to inspire the best in your colleagues. Motivate others with passion and compassion, and strive to be your strongest self. You will never be unhappy or dissatisfied with your performance if you have done your best.

So, here's to our amazing industry! Each of you can do anything you put your mind to, and the world is out there waiting for you to continue to make your mark on it. I can't wait to see what the future has in store for you. ■

If you have consistently conducted Rep Council meetings over the years, much of this article may already be familiar. But for manufacturers who have never held a Rep Council, or whose program has quietly disappeared over time, it may be time to take another look.

Count E-T-A among the latter. It had been several years since our last Rep Council. Looking back at the agenda from that meeting was almost like opening a time capsule, with discussions centered around the challenges of virtual sales calls, hybrid work schedules and navigating business during the pandemic. It was clearly time to jump-start our commitment to the Rep Council and refocus on the challenges and opportunities shaping today's markets.

If you're considering launching a Rep Council, I recommend starting with ERA's Guidelines for Establishing and Benefiting from Rep Councils, available on the ERA website. (Use the QR code on this page to access it.) It provides an excellent framework for organizing and operating an effective council.

A Rep Council is meant to be a strategic planning forum, not a sales meeting. While it can be helpful to open the meeting with a high-level review of sales trends and business conditions, spending too much time on territory performance or detailed sales activity can distract from the council's real purpose. The discussion should focus on strengthening the supplier-representative partnership and identifying opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the relationship.

A Rep Council should never feel like a report card for either the manufacturer or the rep. Instead, it should function as a collaborative planning session where both parties work together to identify opportunities, solve problems and position the business for future growth.

What's working? What isn't? Where should we focus our efforts?

Here are a few practices I would suggest:

- **Hold the meeting at an off-site location.** It eliminates distractions and creates a setting that invites a more honest and open exchange of opinions. Creating the right environment is critical to maximizing your

Rep Council discussions should focus on strengthening the supplier-representative partnership and identifying opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the relationship.

return on the meeting.

- **Consider a pre-meeting survey** to gather thoughts from both supplier and rep sales teams. They are in fact the most important stakeholders in the relationship. Having that feedback before the meeting helps ensure discussions focus on the issues that matter most.
- **Have a structured agenda and plan** for your meeting. Here's where survey feedback can be most valuable, allowing for more focused and productive discussions.
- Leave enough flexibility in the agenda to **allow important discussions to develop naturally.** Some of the most valuable conversations won't be the ones you planned.
- **Don't overlook the value in planning informal time together,** whether dinner or a shared activity. Sometimes the best ideas are shared after the day's formal discussions have ended.

Perhaps the greatest measure of a successful Rep Council is what happens after everyone goes home. Action items should be documented, responsibility assigned and progress communicated back to both the representative network and the supplier's sales organization. When reps see ideas implemented, trust grows and future discussions become even more productive. Indeed, the fastest way to undermine the efforts of a Rep Council is to ask for honest feedback and never act on it.

Ultimately, the value of a Rep Council is measured by stronger partnerships, better-informed business decisions and tangible improvements that benefit both the manufacturer and its representatives.

When manufacturers make a genuine commitment to listen before the meeting, foster open dialogue during the meeting and follow through afterward, a Rep Council becomes much more than an annual event, it becomes a strategic advantage that strengthens the interests of everyone involved.

In the end, after several years away from the process, our biggest takeaway wasn't simply the value of conducting another Rep Council—it was realizing we should never have paused holding them in the first place. ■

MANUFACTURING UPDATE

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The Rep Council, revisited



Scan QR code to access the ERA's Guide to Establishing and Benefiting from Rep Councils:



EDUCATION UPDATE

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Beyond the data sheet:
Why the best reps never
stop being students



I've spent 33 years in this industry, and if there's one thing I've learned, it's this: The moment you think you've "graduated" from learning is the moment you start becoming obsolete.

When I started back in 1993, I didn't have a background in electrical engineering. I had a degree in human development and a fascination with how people tick. At the time, some might have seen that as a detour. Today, I see it as my superpower. Why? Because while data sheets tell you what a part does, curiosity tells you what a customer needs.

But raw curiosity alone isn't enough to scale a business or navigate today's supply chain. To turn that curiosity into revenue, you need a structured framework.

This is exactly where the ERA Education Initiative comes in.

When we talk about the value of ERA, it's easy to focus on networking. But as your SVP of Education, I want to challenge you to look at our association through a different lens. The ERA is the premier global campus for the electronics industry, designed to give our members a distinct competitive advantage through continuous professional development.

Our educational framework is built on three pillars that transform how we do business:

- **Professionalizing the "moxie" (CPMR & CSPC):** Grit and hustle get you in the door, but university-level certification is what keeps you at the table. Through the Certified Professional Manufacturers' Representative (CPMR) and Certified Professional Sales Consultant (CPSC) programs, we don't just teach people how to sell—we train them how to architect and run highly profitable businesses.

- **The "holy trinity" masterclass:** The electronics marketplace is a complex ecosystem. Our educational programs bring manufacturers, distributors and reps into the same classroom to solve real-world channel friction. We don't just advocate for the

ERA is the premier global campus for the electronics industry, designed to give our members a distinct competitive advantage through continuous professional development.

representative model; we actively educate the entire supply chain on how to optimize it.

- **STEP & NEXGEN empowerment:** Knowledge gaps are business risks. Through targeted initiatives like STEP (Sales Training for Electronics Professionals), we provide continuous learning opportunities required to keep independent firms agile. This is where we equip everyone—from the 40-year veteran adapting to new tools, to the NEXGEN leader just finding their wings—with the tactical skills to win.

We are operating in an industry that moves at a breathless pace. You cannot rely on yesterday's knowledge to solve tomorrow's supply chain challenges.

As we look toward the final quarter of the year,

I'm asking you to make a deliberate commitment to your team's development. Don't just view ERA as an association you belong to—view it as your organization's external training and development department. Invest the time, utilize our resource library, enroll your people in the STEP sessions and commit to certification.

The data sheets will always change. But the value of being the most curious, best-educated professional in the room? That is an absolute constant.

Andiamo—let's keep learning. ■

As society considers how to best support children in a fast-paced, technology-driven world, I often think back to my own childhood. I was fortunate in the ways that mattered most: I was safe, secure, loved and well educated. Those who know me will not be surprised that my character was also shaped by something else.

I began playing youth hockey at age five because my best friend, Scott, played. I later devoted myself to baseball and tried soccer, tennis and lacrosse. One of the saddest days of my life was hanging up my skates after college.

Is playing sports required for a sales career? Of course not. But for children who are interested, sports offer a direct path to developing foundational sales skills:

- **Competition.** The best salespeople I know love to compete—not at the expense of collaboration, service or long-term thinking, but as a complement to them. Winning creates a natural high; once you experience it, you want more.

- **Discipline.** Mastering a physical skill takes determination and repetition. I believe my work ethic in sales grew directly from the discipline I learned while perfecting my slapshot and fastball.

- **Teamwork.** I mostly played team sports, and my teammates became like brothers. When we truly played as a team, it felt like a symphony and left a lasting memory. Together, we experienced something greater than any of us could have achieved alone.

- **Conflict.** Even the best teams face internal struggles. The lesson is to set ego aside and put the team first.

- **Coaching.** As a young athlete, I experienced the full range of coaching styles and learned what worked for me. In my career, that helped me recognize mentors who could inspire me. As a leader, I try to model the coaches who brought out my best.

Playing youth sports helped me develop a skillset that came from real human experience — not virtual, digital or artificial.

- **Support.** My father never pushed me into sports. He used to say he did not need to because I pushed myself. But my parents drove me everywhere, and for that sacrifice, and many others, I would not be who I am without them.

I am fortunate to have two grandsons. My hope is that each of them finds a passion, whether in sports or somewhere else, that I can help support, something that builds character and teaches foundational life skills.

What sports gave me came from real human experience—not virtual, digital or artificial. My wish for all children is that they live in real time, in the physical world, with engaged human beings. There truly is no substitute. ■

INDUSTRY UPDATE

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The playing field: The
ultimate training ground
for a career in sales



INDUSTRY UPDATE

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**Building tomorrow's
leaders: An update on
MentorUP, COLT and
STEP**



By the time you read this, ERA's MentorUP has launched and you are either in or out of our first mentorship cohort! My first SVP of Industry initiative is mentoring, as it is near and dear to many of us – Eddie Smith, ERA CEO, especially – as we monitor this endeavor.

Our industry is rich with experienced people and they all have wisdom to share. Our ERA mentors are great listeners and have a unique perspective influenced by their own career path, while building confidence and mutually fostering growth. This is reciprocal mentoring at its finest as we all learn from each other. On the flip side we have new talent entering our industry, anxious to hear how to do their best in their career as they advance in ways a title does not reflect. We all have a story and listening and sharing that story can move us all forward in every situation. We will learn from this first cohort and repeat the process each July through December.

The MentorUP program is guided by a virtual platform called Chronus that contains features such as mentor training, goal setting, conversation paths, note-taking, video meetings and more. There are ideas for meeting questions based on the goals of the mentee and virtual forums for mentees and mentors to exchange best practices. As you contemplate joining the next cohort, a good podcast to listen to on this subject is Brene Brown speaking with Janice Omadeke as they discuss, "The Mentor Method and Why Values Matter."

Quarterly chapter leadership meetings will continue to help keep the communication flowing from ERA National to all

chapters, as we share best practices. Amanda Derringer and I will encourage less active chapters to find their champions to carry the ERA message forward, while recruiting for new talent at college job fairs and encouraging participation in all ERA programs.

- COLT – ERA's Chapter Officer Leadership Training will take place Dec 1-3, 2026 and there are so many testimonials from past trainings about the value of this program, as chapter leaders learn practical knowledge about running a chapter, member recruitment, hosting

events, using ERA National resources, organizing educational sessions and more.

- STEP – ERA's Sales Training for Electronics Professionals will be held Sept 29 – Oct 1, 2026 where reps, distributors and manufacturers will come together to future-proof their skillsets with tactical takeaways on a virtual platform that is recorded. (If work gets in the way of education – you can listen and learn later.)

I look forward to the challenges ahead with you all by my side. Together, we are better! ■

The first ERA MentorUP cohort has launched — this will be reciprocal mentoring at its finest, as we all learn from each other.

TALKING TAXES

The benefits of an S corporation for the self-employed and small business owners

For small business owners, paying taxes can feel like a heavy burden. However, operating as an S Corporation offers a unique legal way to reduce your federal tax bill. By splitting your business income into a salary and shareholder distributions, you can save thousands of dollars every year on employment taxes.

When you operate as a sole proprietorship or a standard Limited Liability Company (LLC), the IRS views you as self-employed. This is also true for multiple owners of an LLC which is taxed by default as a partnership. This means you (and your partners) must pay 15.3 percent in self-employment tax on 100 percent of your net business earnings. This tax consists of 12.4 percent for Social Security and 2.9 percent for Medicare. As a result, if your business earns \$100,000 in net profit, you will owe 15.3 percent on that entire amount, regardless of how much money you actually take out of the business for personal use.

Forming an S Corporation or electing S Corporation tax status for your existing LLC changes how the IRS treats your income. Instead of being classified strictly as self-employed, you become an employee-owner of your own company. This allows you to split your business income into two distinct categories. First, you pay yourself a regular W-2 salary through a standard payroll system, which is subject to the 15.3 percent FICA payroll tax. Second, any remaining profit after your salary and business expenses is passed through to you as a shareholder distribution. This money is subject to ordinary income tax, but it is completely exempt from the 15.3 percent employment tax.

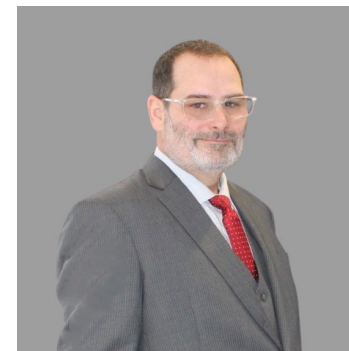
To see the financial impact, compare a standard LLC taxed as a sole proprietor (or partnership) to an LLC taxed as an S Corporation with each earning \$100,000 in net business income. As the owner of a standard LLC or sole proprietor, you pay the 15.3 percent self-employment tax on the full \$100,000, resulting in an employment tax bill of roughly \$15,300. As an LLC taxed as an S Corporation, you could set a salary of \$60,000 and take the remaining \$40,000 as

a distribution. In this scenario, you only pay the 15.3 percent payroll tax on the \$60,000 salary, which equals \$9,180. The \$40,000 distribution faces \$0 in employment taxes, dropping your total employment tax bill to \$9,180 and saving you \$6,120 in a single year.

This tax strategy hinges entirely on one critical rule: you must pay yourself a "reasonable salary." The IRS is well aware that business owners want to minimize their salary to avoid taxes, so they strictly enforce this guideline. A reasonable salary is defined as what an independent company would pay an outside person to do your exact job. To determine a defensible salary, you must consider your specific duties, your experience, your time commitment, the local market rate for your position and what similar businesses pay for comparable services. If you set your salary too low, the IRS can recharacterize your distributions as wages, hit you with back taxes and apply penalties and interest.

Ultimately, an S Corporation tax election is a powerful tool to preserve your hard-earned profit. The only downside is the added cost of hiring a payroll company to assist you with collecting and reporting payroll taxes.

If forming an S Corporation or electing S Corporation tax status for your LLC sounds like a good opportunity for you, I recommend working with an attorney or certified public accountant to make the election and to establish a reasonable salary. If you have any questions about the tax election or implementing it in your own business, please feel free to contact me. ■



by J. Christian Manalli
Partner, SFBBG

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When a commission is earned v. when it's due



by Adam Glazer
ERA General Counsel, SFBBG

Adam J. Glazer is an attorney with law firm SFBBG, and serves as general counsel to ERA. SFBBG advises reps and rep firms on transactional strategy, succession planning, contract drafting and commission recovery.

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Consider this brief hypothetical – devised not by your author, but by the Honorable Albert Berry III of the Chicago federal court:

A home builder signs reps to contracts calling for them to solicit sales, while stating their “commissions become due 10 days after closing, but they do not earn commission until they complete a list of tasks that includes presenting the keys to a new homebuyer at closing.” Once such a contract is signed, the home builder seeking to avoid any payment obligation could terminate the rep “a week before the closing was scheduled to occur and successfully argue that the commission never became due.”

This hypothetical principal extracting everything possible from its sales rep, and then construing their contract to deny fair compensation, may sound familiar to many readers. Fortunately, the law does not support such an unreasonable construction. Here’s how Judge Berry came to offer his hypothetical:

The background

Audra Fox and Jean Green both solicited home sales for Phillippe Builders, Inc., a custom home builder in the Chicago area pursuant to a written contract. Phillippe expected them to show prospective buyers around its model homes and discuss the available floor plans and other home options. Once a floor plan and other fixtures and modifications were selected, Fox and Green would solicit the sale of the home by getting the prospective buyer to sign a contract.

Buyers had a 5-day revocation period to change their minds, and were then locked in and became Phillippe customers. Owner Robert Phillippe claimed that Fox and Green were expected to assist buyers during the building process with any structural or material changes they desired, and then ensure those price differences were included in the final tally at closing. His view was “the work begins” once a contract is signed because he must make whatever changes the buyer wants.

These two reps were to be paid under a sliding scale commission structure between 1.75 and 2.5 percent under the contract. Yet, Fox solicited sales for Phillippe for nearly 10 months, and was only paid between 0.5 and 0.87 percent on certain sales. Green endured

for 14 months, but did not get commissioned at all on several properties where she had solicited the sales prior to leaving Phillippe.

Robert Phillippe admitted that Phillippe did not commission them when a sales contract was signed, stating it was because they had not “done all the work to get to the closing.” He further admitted that if sales reps resigned or were terminated before closing, it was not his practice to pay commissions, even on sales they had successfully solicited.

The lawsuit

When Phillippe failed to pay commissions under the contractual pay scale, Fox and Green were forced to litigate. Their complaint alleged Phillippe violated the Illinois Sales Representative Act (ISRA), a statute requiring principals to pay “all commissions due at the time of termination of a contract” within 13 days of termination, and “all commissions that become due after termination within 13 days of the date on which such commissions become due.”

Their case proceeded to trial before Judge Berry, who recognized that “the nature of sales work often leads to a gap between when an agreement for a sale is made between a sales representative and a customer and when the payment is received by the principal.” This can produce situations where the rep gets terminated “between when the order is solicited and when payment is received, and commissions may become due” after termination.

When is the commission earned?

A “problem” he identified with the language in the ISRA “is that it considers when commission shall be paid to the sales representative (i.e., when it “becomes due” or owed), but not when it is earned in the first place.” In order for the statute to “work properly,” these two concepts must be distinct. Were a commission not earned until after the order is solicited, “it leaves an enormous amount of space for an unscrupulous principal to exploit a sales representative.”

As the judge demonstrated in his hypothetical, such a result “would be antithetical to the ISRA, which is designed to protect sales representatives like Fox and Green.” Accordingly, “the more logical reading of the ISRA

(continued from previous page)

demands that sales representatives earn a commission upon soliciting orders. At that point, the principal owes the sales representative some future amount to be determined by percentage of the final sale price.”

Orders solicited by Fox and Green became locked in after the 5-day revocation period expired, and the evidence at trial showed “it was exceedingly rare for a sale to fall through.” Once the five days were up, “it was a virtual certainty that Defendant would receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue from the home sale solicited by Plaintiffs.”

This finding led the Court to conclude that after the five days, “Plaintiffs had successfully solicited orders for custom homes built by Defendant and had earned a commission on the sale.” Phillippe’s argument that commissions weren’t earned until Fox and Green completed certain post-contract duties with the buyer was firmly rejected.

When is the commission due?

That left the question of when the earned commissions became due. Phillippe argued that no commissions were due until all of the work between execution of the sales contract and closing was completed, such as “maintaining positive client contacts, assisting buyers through the selection process for structural and design elements, etc.”

Judge Berry quickly deemed this position “untenable” due to the host of questions it raised. For example, which job duties need to be completed for a commission to be earned and who gets to decide if they were done satisfactorily, and what if Phillippe felt Fox and Green did not properly complete the work but the sale closed anyhow. Phillippe could choose to terminate their contracts, but not withhold commissions on sales already solicited and closed.

“Allowing the principal to determine which commissions are earned based on nebulous post-solicitation tasks leaves open the potential for abuse, or at the very least, creates significant uncertainty for sales representatives. The Court does not believe the ISRA supports such a reading.”

The Court recognized that under the ISRA, sales reps “are not contracted to close transactions or collect funds; they are not contracted to maintain positive client experiences or assist with selections of finishes,” as Phillippe contended. “Under the plain language of the ISRA, they are contracted to solicit orders.”

Further, the Court recognized that by calling for commissions that become due after termination to be paid within 13 days of the due date, the ISRA contemplates how sales reps can “earn commissions by soliciting sales, but for those commissions not to become due until after termination.”

Because the contracts did not specify when commissions became due, Judge Berry turned to the ISRA’s common sense provision stating: “if the terms of the contract do not provide when the commission becomes due, or the terms are ambiguous or unclear, the past practice used by the parties shall control.”

The trial evidence showed that, when paid, neither Fox nor Green ever waited more than 22 days after closing to receive a commission check. Accordingly, this past practice of the parties, taken together with the statutory language requiring commissions to get paid 13 days after they become due, meant they “should have been paid within 35 days after the relevant closing date.”

The ruling

The Court found Phillippe was in violation of the ISRA, and awarded Fox and Green their full commissions, plus attorneys’ fees and costs. The exceptionally astute reasoning in this decision should prove beneficial to many reps caught in similarly unfair, and non-hypothetical, situations. ■

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Chapter News reports the activities of the active regional/local chapters of ERA. The chapters sponsor educational and training workshops, local trade shows, legislative and industry projects to enhance the professionalism of individual members and to advance the goals and mission of the national association.

CAROLINAS

The 23rd annual CERA Memorial Golf Tournament will take place Thurs., October 8! Bring your team and enjoy all the fun events we have planned at The Challenge Golf Club in Graham, N.C. Proceeds will benefit the American Cancer Society and CERA Scholarship Fund.

The event is open to reps, distributors, principals, customers, family and friends. Register to attend, sponsor or volunteer: <https://event.racereach.com/ceragolf>.

CANADA

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us for the Canada ERA golf tournament in support of Make-A-Wish Canada at Glen Eagle Golf Club in June.

Because of the generosity of our golfers, sponsors, volunteers and industry partners, the event was once again a tremendous success. It was a fantastic opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, strengthen relationships across our industry and most importantly, raise funds to help grant life-changing wishes for children facing critical illnesses.

Events like this simply aren't possible without the continued support of our members and sponsors. Your commitment to giving back is what makes the ERA Canada community so special.

Thank you to everyone who participated, donated, sponsored a hole or helped make the day run so smoothly. We also want to recognize our organizing committee and volunteers whose hard work behind the scenes made this event another great success.

We're already looking forward to doing it all again next year!

CHICAGOLAND-WISCONSIN

Chicagoland-Wisconsin ERA is proud to announce registration is open for its second annual golf event on Thurs., Aug. 13. Let's tee up for a fantastic cause, network with industry pros and enjoy a day on the course you won't forget!

Proceeds of the event will benefit First Robotics, helping inspire young minds in STEM in our territory.

Prizes will be awarded for "Closest to the Pin" and "Longest Drive" once golf concludes. Register at: <https://era.org/chi-wis-era-golf-event-2026-registration/>.

CHESAPEAKE

Chesapeake ERA hosted a successful second annual TopGolf social event in June.



There were 23 people there with about an equal representation from distribution and representatives. The weather was not looking good most of the day, with constant rain showers drenching the area all day. Around 4:30 p.m., the storm broke and the sun came out. By 6:00, it was blue skies and sunshine.

There was some friendly competition with the golf clubs, a lot of good eating, a lot of catching up from old friends and excellent networking. As far as we know, nobody poached any employees from anyone else!

EMPIRE STATE

Registration is open for the upcoming 2026 Empire ERA golf outing. Please join us on August 3 at the Clifton Springs Country Club. Donations will be made in honor of Chuck Tanzola. We look forward to seeing everyone at this great yearly event and look forward to a day of golf, networking and giving back.

Register and view sponsorship opportunities at: empireera.org/events-golf-2026.

NEW ENGLAND

New England ERA hosted its 3rd Annual Next Gen Networking Night in late May at Broken Records Beer Hall in Boston, drawing more than 55 emerging professionals from across the electronics industry. Attendees represented manufacturers' representatives, distributors, manufacturers and cus-



tomers, creating a dynamic environment for networking and relationship-building.

The event featured great food, interactive

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icebreaker activities and raffle prizes donated by industry supporters.

Now in its third year, the event has become one of the chapter's most anticipated gatherings, reflecting the strong demand for opportunities that connect and develop the industry's future leaders. The enthusiastic participation and positive feedback reinforced the importance of investing in our next generation of talent. The chapter plans to make this signature event an annual tradition.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Northern California ERA proudly hosted its 3rd annual golf tournament in June at Coyote Creek Golf Club in Morgan Hill, Calif. The event continued to build momentum as one of the chapter's premier networking and relationship-building opportunities while also supporting Special Olympics Northern California. It brought together members of the Northern California electronics community for a day of golf, collaboration, philanthropy and professional engagement.



This year's tournament welcomed 80 golfers and approximately 125 total attendees from across the electronics industry, making it one of the chapter's largest and most successful events to date. The event provided an opportunity for manufacturers, representatives, distributors, and customers to strengthen relationships, develop new connections and reinforce the collaborative spirit that drives success throughout the industry.

The day featured golf, networking, sponsor engagement and an awards luncheon. Throughout the course, hole sponsorships from various industry partners served as a visible reminder of the collaborative relationships that drive success throughout the electronics industry. The tournament also benefited Special Olympics Northern California, reflecting the chapter's commitment to supporting both the electronics community and

the communities it serves. These partnerships remain the foundation of a healthy and growing electronics ecosystem.

The chapter would also like to thank its sponsors, volunteers and attendees whose support helped make the tournament a success. Their contributions continue to strengthen the local electronics community and reinforce the value that ERA chapters provide throughout the industry. Planning is already underway for future chapter events as it continues to deliver meaningful networking, educational and professional development opportunities for members throughout the region.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Del Mar Electronics Show on April 22 & 23 brought the Southern California ERA chapter's best showing yet. Our booth stayed busy with members stopping by to connect, and we helped link suppliers with rep firm members exhibiting at the show.

The chapter's monthly Microsoft Office 365 training series is one of the best-kept secrets in the industry, and one of the best values. Through a partnership with a Microsoft Certified Trainer, ERA members receive this training at a significantly reduced cost. Sessions cover productivity and sales-effectiveness topics that help your team get more out of the tools you already use every day.

Summer sessions are packed with practical tips for rep firms. In July, the session will cover pitching faster using Copilot + PowerPoint with embedded videos via Cameo. In August, the session covers building a repeatable notebook structure in OneNote. In September, the session covers bringing personal tasks and team plans together in the Planner app, unifying ToDo, Planner and Project for the web to optimize territory activity visibility. To register your rep firm for these sessions, email Anna Baker at era@erascal.org.

Tee up with us as we head back to Alta Vista Country Club for the annual Southern California ERA golf tournament, held in partnership with Operation Homefront, a non-profit dedicated to building strong, stable and secure families for military service members and veterans. If you have not joined us before, this is the year to change that: great golf, great colleagues and a great cause. All electronics industry professionals are welcome. Get details, secure your sponsorship and register at <https://www.erascal.org/golf-1>.

Join the chapter at the 21st annual Sagebrush Social on Sept. 24 for an evening of conversation, connection and cocktails. This free event takes place from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m. at the Sagebrush Cantina in Calabasas. Free drinks and appetizers are included, and all electronics professionals are welcome. To become a sponsor or register, visit: <https://www.erascal.org/sagebrush-social>. ■

STEP 2026
REGISTRATION IS NOW
OPEN

Registration is now open for 2026 ERA STEP! Mark your calendars for Sept. 29-Oct. 1, because ERA's Sales Training for Electronics Professionals (STEP) is returning to elevate your sales game. Designed specifically for frontline electronics industry sales reps, manufacturers and distributors, STEP 2026 is live, virtual sales training in the comfort of your office or home. This year's program features nine robust, 75-minute educational sessions led by a mix of professional sales trainers and seasoned industry executives. Register today at <https://era.org/era-events/step-registration-2/>.

ERA ANNOUNCES 2027
ERA CONFERENCE CORE
COMMITTEE

ERA is pleased to announce the 2027 ERA Conference Core Committee leaders responsible for leading the planning of next year's Conference. Julie Carr, Vice President, MacInnis Group, will serve as Conference Committee Chair, while Brooks Mattice, Vice President of Sales, Mel Foster Group, will serve as Conference Co-Chair. The remainder of the 2027 Conference Committee leaders are as follows:

- **Keynote/General Session Committee Chairs:** Toby Lasley; Diana Nawrocki, CPMR; Maryellen Stack
- **Breakout Session Committee Chairs:** Adam Anderson, CPMR; Scott Lindberg; Holly Myers
- **Sponsorship Committee Chairs:** Zach Anderson; Heather D'Amico, CPMR; Rob DeRose
- **Executive Committee Liaison:** Lori Bruno, CPMR
- **Conference Advisor:** Todd McAtee

"It is a privilege to serve as Chair of the 2027 ERA Conference," said Carr. "Together with Brooks and our exceptional committee chairs, we are committed to delivering an unforgettable event that inspires, motivates and drives meaningful value for every attendee." "With a committee of this caliber, we aren't just planning another event—we are shaping a definitive industry experience that will resonate for years to come," said Mattice. The 2027 ERA Conference will be ERA's 58th national conference and will take place at the Hilton Austin Downtown on February 21-23, 2027.

ERA ANNOUNCES 2027
ERA CONFERENCE
THEME

The theme for the 2027 ERA Conference will be, "Adapt Today, Win Tomorrow: Igniting Our Future." The Conference Committee selected a theme that is a call to immediate action, urging our members to embrace the emerging tools, digital transformations and market realities so we are in a great position to handle future challenges. "In a market defined by rapid technological evolution, complacency is the greatest risk," said Julie Carr, Vice President, MacInnis Group, and 2027 ERA Conference Chair. "This theme is critical because it reminds us that tomorrow's victories are dependent on today's agility. The companies that are willing to pivot their strategies, upskill their workforces and diversify their partnerships today are the ones that will dominate the market landscape tomorrow." "This conference theme is about passion, innovation and proactive growth," said Brooks Mattice, Vice President of Sales, Mel Foster Group, and 2027 ERA Conference Co-Chair. "It means we aren't just trying to survive market disruptions; we are using them as fuel to spark new opportunities, drive engineering breakthroughs and lead the global electronics supply chain into its next great era."

ERA ANNOUNCES
ZENODE AS NEWEST
RECOGNIZED RESOURCE

ERA announces the addition of Zenode, an AI-driven component search platform, to its list of Recognized Resource vendor partners. In an industry where speed is critical, electronics sales representatives often spend hours manually cross-referencing customer bills of materials (BOMs) against their represented lines. This complex evaluation—which involves comparing technical specifications, pinouts, footprints and functional differences—traditionally requires days of back-and-forth communication with engineers. Zenode is set to transform this workflow with its Alts tool, which performs comprehensive part comparisons in approximately one minute per component, providing sourced documentation for immediate engineering review. "We're confident our AI-driven tools can give reps the answers they need on parts quickly and accurately. Our tools don't replace the rep's relationships or judgment, it gives them a faster, more accurate way to show up with the answer," said Brandon Bourn, CEO of Zenode. ■

MEMBER SERVICES

For a complete list of ERA's **Recognized Resources**, visit the Member Services page on ERA.org or scan the QR code below. **Avis and Hertz Car Rentals** member discounts are **ONLY** accessible via the ERA website).

- **BUDDE MARKETING SYSTEMS** is a leading provider of point-of-sale (POS) reporting. Call 708-301-2111 or email sales@buddemarketing.com.
- **EDGEWATER RESEARCH** offers research published on technology, digital advertising, e-commerce and consumer. Visit edgewaterresearch.com.
- **G&G CREATIVE SERVICES** creates impactful brands, websites, email & marketing campaigns, managed hosting, website policies, ADA compliance & ongoing technical support. Visit ggcreative.nyc/era.
- **JJM SEARCH** is the global executive search firm founded by Carla Mahrt, a 20-year electronics industry veteran. Visit jjmsearch.com.
- **LECTRIX** is a results-driven marketing company that serves electronics manufacturers, suppliers and representatives. Visit lectrixgroup.com.
- **REPFABRIC / EMPOWERING SYSTEMS'** efficiency tools for manufacturers and representatives. Sync data with partners, see trends with analytics and manage your sales pipeline in one system. Contact Carroll at carroll.boysen@repfabric.com, or 888-297-2750 x709.
- **SCHOENBERG FINKEL BEEDERMAN BELL & GLAZER LLC** offers legal Expert Access services to all ERA members. Visit sfbbg.com or call Adam Glazer at 312-648-2300.
- **UPS** is an ERA member service provider for shipping of all kinds. For discounts of up to 34 percent, call 800-MEMBERS (636-2377).
- **ZENODE** has AI-based tools that transform the labor-intensive, days-long process of crossing BOM components into a minute-per-part evaluation, providing reps with the sourced documentation and speed they need to deliver accurate results while augmenting their professional judgment and engineer relationships. Visit zenode.ai. ■

Scan QR code for more
ERA Member Services
information:



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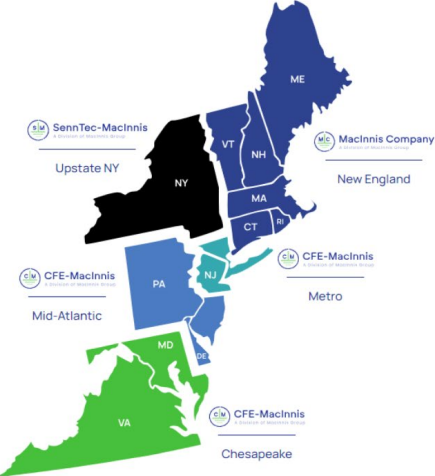
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Update: Dytec-NCI successfully acquired Ft Wayne, IN. Based TX Sales. We merged both companies in 2023 forming Dytec-TX Sales, Today it's Dytec Sales. We are interested in continuing our growth via organic, merger or acquisition.

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Sept. 29—Oct. 1, 2026

The 6th annual ERA Sales Training for Electronics Professionals (STEP) returns this fall! Designed specifically for frontline electronics industry sales reps, manufacturers and distributors, STEP 2026 delivers elite professional development directly to your screen. This year's program features nine robust, 75-minute educational sessions led by a powerhouse mix of professional sales trainers and seasoned industry executives.



Why STEP 2026 is the Smartest Investment in Your Career This Year:

- **Unmatched value for your registration fee:** STEP packs high-caliber expertise into a single, highly affordable registration fee — giving you massive ROI and direct access to strategies that win business in today's market.
- **The power of virtual training:** Our live, interactive virtual format delivers the intensity of an in-person workshop with the ultimate flexibility. You get real-time engagement, collaborative learning and immediate application without expensive flights, hotel bills and days away from your territory.
- **Future-proof your skillset:** The electronics market shifts rapidly. In STEP, you aren't just sitting through lectures; you are developing a professional toolset to close deals faster and excel in your career.
- **Immediate, tactical takeaways:** Walk away with downloadable checklists, frameworks and practical materials you can implement the very next day to see measurable results.



[REGISTRATION INFO](#) [REGISTER TODAY!](#) [VIEW AGENDA](#)



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- Elevate chapter activities and networking opportunities



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