

SPRING 2016 || VOLUME 8 || ISSUE 1

DISTRIBUTION & SUPPLY

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INSIDE

What are Best Managed
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TECH, OPPORTUNITY, MEANING & CHALLENGE

We uncover the desires of
Millennials in electrical. P.10

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DISTRIBUTION & SUPPLY

Spring 2016 || Volume 8 || Issue 1

DISTRIBUTION & SUPPLY magazine serves electrical distributors across Canada. It provides distribution personnel with the information they need to perform their jobs better and run their businesses more efficiently and profitably.

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FROM THE EDITOR

ANTHONY CAPKUN

Determination and survival drive our industry

Several months ago, I thought I had a great idea for an article but, as it turned out, I didn't... well, that's not quite true. I ended up stumbling upon an altogether different revelation. Here's what happened:

Many months ago, one of our industry curmudgeons mentioned that while every company says they invest in their employees—and that their employees are their No. 1 asset—the bitter reality is most don't give a *hoot* about them (not the actual word he used). No one trains and develops their employees like they used to in the good old days.

I questioned the veracity of his words. But how to proceed?

Were I to ask current employers whether they pay lip-service to their employees, would they answer honestly (especially if that's exactly what they do)? And would any employees turn on their employers with the truth? Both approaches seemed doomed to failure from the get-go.

So I pondered the curmudgeon's assertion that training

and development was better in the good old days. Now this was something, I thought, that people could get behind and talk about openly. Who were the industry's incubators for new players? Who created the next generation of leaders?

I asked around. I called a few of EFC's Alumni, and they weren't really quite sure what I was looking for (neither was I, I suppose). I spoke with EFC's Rick McCarten, and—because of the anniversary of the closure of the Phillips Cables plant in Brockville—I also chatted with Shelley Bacon and Todd Stafford of Northern Cables.

And I discovered I was on the wrong track... *again!* But this time I knew where I had gone amiss. I was focusing on companies—corporate entities—and not the one obvious thing I should have been focusing on...

This realization came into clear focus while chatting with Bacon and Stafford. When I spoke with them, I asked what they had learned from Phillips Cables that enabled them to start up Northern Cables.

"They created a survivor mentality," said Stafford facetiously. It was a lesson, he admits, they didn't want to learn... but they were forced to. Within a week of learning the plant would shut down, Bacon, Stafford and few others started talking about creating a business.

"Our partners [when we were just starting] were local business people. They provided mentorship; they sit on our board and made us a well-rounded company," explained Bacon, who had suffered the emotional blow of a closure just eight years prior in Smiths Falls.

And take a look at this year's EFC Industry Recognition Award winner, Bob Shapiro, president of Franklin Empire: while accepting his award, he admitted he had no desire to enter the electrical industry.

"I came into the business in 1968, and it was reluctantly. I was working for IBM and I had other plans. But my father fell ill," explained Shapiro. "My dad got better, and I had the good fortune of working with him for 15 years."

You'll note he never went back to IBM.

Consider, too, last year's IRA winner, Harald Henze, the retired vice-president and general manager of Wesco Distribution Canada LP: "I dropped out of university after one year—I was bored stiff—and started in the warehouse and ended up running a \$2-billion business."

Now skim over our Feature on Canada's Best Managed electrical companies, and you'll see stories of people—not corporations—who made a living and built a brand with their guts, instinct, trial-and-error and duty. Consider Ideal Supply, which started off as a maker of bread-moulding machines; or Standard Products, which fancied itself a toy import company when it was founded; or E.B. Horsman & Son, which traces

its roots to a young man who left his home in Hamilton, Ont., at the turn of the century seeking opportunity out west.

People in our industry are typically in it for the long haul. They are determined and driven to survive, regardless of any formal training program their current or past employers provide.

"As we get older, we worry less about turf and more about legacy," explained McCarten to me during our chat. "10 years ago, there's no way we could have launched the Young Professionals Network. Nowadays, companies want their young people to grow." And they grow, it seems, by networking with *other people*.

(I hope to still be around when today's YPN members become tomorrow's Industry Recognition Award recipients!)

Ultimately, all the stories I uncovered were *about people*. Maybe they founded or helped run/expand a company in the electrical industry, but that's almost beside the point. When you look around at the faces at the next industry event (likely EFC's annual conference) you see people!

Sure, you see their company names on their badges or their tradeshow booths, but it's the people who endure; they're the ones with stories to tell, and who make our industry what it is. In the words of Shapiro, "This industry is full of terrific people and has a camaraderie that just doesn't exist everywhere". **D&S**

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EFC MEMBERS IN THE NEWS!

Several electrical industry leaders took it on the chin (so to speak) last summer at Electro-Federation Canada's 15th annual Federation Cup Golf Tournament to raise about \$18,000 with the very first Power2Feed Pie Challenge in support of Canadian Feed the Children. *Catch the action at tinyurl.com/o8okdss.*

It was 1968 when Bob Shapiro "reluctantly" entered the electrical distribution business. It turned out to be a lifelong love affair. Congrats to the president of Franklin Empire who recently received EFC's 2016 Industry Recognition Award, presented annually to an individual who has "influenced the Canadian electrical industry". *See the video at tinyurl.com/zkz6jrh.*

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Businesses shine as governments stumble

We all know someone who works in the public service and, for years, we've listened to them question the integrity of private enterprise: "Business cannot be trusted," they will say, or "Business needs government to regulate its activities," or even "Left to its own devices, business will produce substandard products".

But, for some time now, the tables have been turning on that moral high ground, haven't they?

With the release of the "Panama Papers" and controversy around how the British Columbia and Ontario governments collect and use union and corporate funds, the question now becomes: *Who should be watching whom?*

To test a theory, I asked friends and work colleagues who they would most trust to build a Smart City: Google or the Ontario government? (I chose Ontario because that's where I live and work. I don't imagine the answer would differ greatly across Canada.)

Apart from the occasional detailed responses about standards and "cooperation between all parties," the answer I consistently received is, you guessed it, Google. They trust big business more than government.

That's pretty shocking. If you go back to just the 1990s, the answer would have been totally different. Back then, Microsoft was taken to court because of its size in the market; today, its sales are twice what they were, and

1990s

People trusted government more than private business

no one questions their ethics or business practices.

Now take Ontario's ruling Liberal party, which is funded (in part) by unions that work for the province. Collected taxes that are meant to pay for education are being funnelled through teachers' union dues back to the Liberal party so they can get elected to oversee the education portfolio.

In another *Made-in-Ontario* example, 7 out of 10 bidders for a particular wind generation project were awarded contracts. Nothing suspicious, right? Well, it just so happens that those seven companies were also the only ones who contributed to a Liberal fundraising dinner.

As government officials from Iceland and Russia to Africa and the Americas are being put under the microscope for allegedly cheating their own countries, businesses are standing up to bad politics.

As government officials from Iceland and Russia to Africa and the Americas are being put under the microscope for allegedly cheating their own countries, businesses are standing up to bad politics. Consider private enterprises south of the border who are collectively withdrawing their support from American states that spurn the dignity of the LGBTQ community.

Whether they like it or not, businesses will force governments to do the right thing. It's very clear to me who needs to be

regulated. But why are businesses shining as governments stumble?

Overall, governments are performing badly. They spend money they do not have on things the majority of people do not need. Businesses, meantime, strive for profit; they build a reserve and look at ways for turning it into things that matter to customers.

It often takes years and millions of dollars to change the government. Conversely, when consumers don't like something about, say, Facebook, they can mount a campaign that can effect change within hours. We have a much more powerful voice with business than with government.

NOW

People trust business over government

When you want to get something done, you work with private enterprise, not government. Businesses are competitive, efficient, responsive and agile. Governments and their associated bureaucracies have differing priorities, which are subject to politics, short-sighted gain, potential corruption and nepotism. (Interestingly, these were the very things businesses were accused of in the 1990s!)

Business is the engine that provides the economic drivers (the real tax dollars) that make our

country prosper. The government cannot live off of the taxes it collects from civil workers; that would be like trying to drive a car fuelled solely by its exhaust.

Yes, it is a good time to be "in business". Private enterprise is back in the limelight, and it's important to broaden our understanding and scope by including young people in all of our efforts. To that end, Electro-Federation Canada (EFC) launched its Young Professionals Network (YPN) for member employees who are under 40. They receive discounts on EFC events and free training with Dale Carnegie all across the country.

These young professionals are given opportunities to network, learn and collectively engage with our industry. To date, we have established a national social network, as well as regional groups that meet regularly.

I am happy to see our members' enthusiasm for the YPN initiative; we have great turnouts at YPN receptions and training programs, and feedback from attendees tells us they are learning a lot from these encounters.

This is a great time to promote our businesses—our industry—to youth, as we are at the cusp of change, making it as important as ever to participate in the association that represents the business ventures of electrical manufacturers, distributors and manufacturing reps all across Canada. **D&S**

Rick McCarten is vice-president, Electro-Federation Canada. Visit www.electrofed.com.



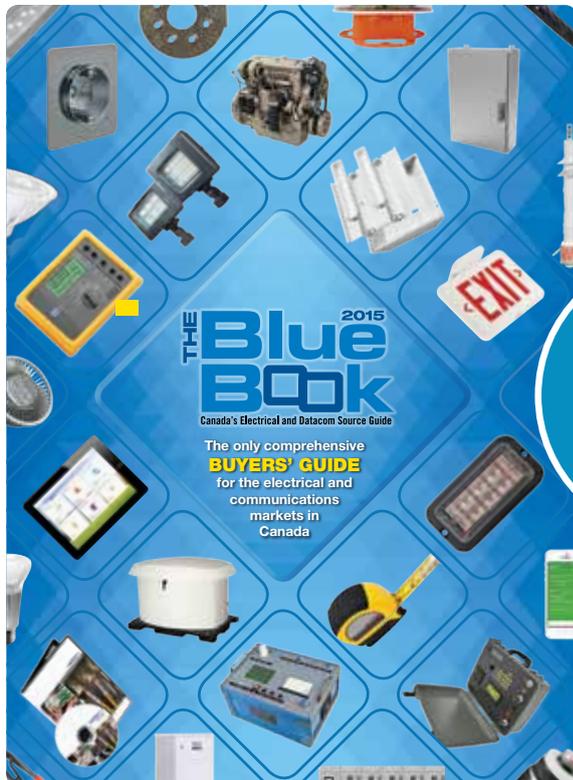
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CEMRA FORUM

SUE ADLER

POS & POT reporting

For a long time, Electro-Federation Canada members—and the electrical industry as a whole, really—have been talking about issues relating to POS (point of sale) and POT (point of transfer) reporting.

Central distribution warehouses often shift product across various reps' territories. In a perfect world, POS information would enable all parties involved to track product movement from the point of origin to its specific geographic destination. Instead, POS generally refers to material transferred from a central distribution point to a different territory i.e. from one rep's territory to another's.

Accurate reporting allows for a wealth of information to be shared among distributors and manufacturers, along with manufacturers' representatives. Detailed information is vital for enabling manufacturers to fairly and properly compensate their reps. Those reps, meantime, depend on accurate information because it impacts their commissions—anywhere from 10% to 40%.



In the past, many distributors only recorded purchases that went into inventory; quite often, inventory is transferred to another branch for its actual sale (POT). When this action goes unreported, inaccuracies occur. This creates the potential for compensating one sales rep for another's work, and has the potential to make forecasting difficult.

Some manufacturers expressed they did not have processes and procedures in place for addressing POS data, while others just didn't see the benefit to providing it. Some reps and distributors have acknowledged the potential for reps to favour distributors who do provide POS reporting.

Adding to this complexity is the industry consolidation that has taken place over the past few years, creating larger distributors. Issues faced by reporting for commodity products such as wire, pipe and conduit have also contributed to the complexity of the POS issue.

In 2005, NAED created a taskforce to examine some of the issues of POS. An industry white paper resulted in recommendations for collecting POS and POT information.

More recently, NEMRA commissioned a report "The

80% of industry suppliers go to market through independent sales reps, and these manufacturers represent in excess of an estimated 60% of industry sales.

EFC's CEMRA Manufacturers Group (CMG) has also been working on the POS issue; it has worked with targeted EFC distributor contacts to provide information on current reporting practices, and the potential to provide more detailed or new information on previously unreported commodities (based on recommendations from the committee's review process and the creation of best practices).

Despite the creation of a best practice, some barriers may remain to implementation, but we have to start somewhere, and progress is being made. CEMRA's Manufacturers Group will present its findings at EFC's annual conference in Halifax.

CEMRA members are, by association, also members of NEMRA, and have access to NEMRA resources, including the above-mentioned POS report. If you're interested in reading the report, please contact a CEMRA member. **D&S**

OVER
80%
of industry suppliers go to market through independent sales reps

State of POS in 2014" to gain greater industry insight into the importance of POS throughout the channel; to understand and uncover POS issues, and to suggest a path forward. According to NEMRA's research, over

Sue Adler is manager, Member Services, with Electro-Federation Canada, and manages all initiatives for the Canadian Electrical Manufacturers Representatives Association (CEMRA). She can be reached at sadler@electrofed.com.

Attending EFC's annual conference in Halifax?

- The CEMRA Manufacturers Group is hosting an open meeting **May 30, 1 pm to 3 pm**, for all manufacturers that deal with reps. All CEMRA and manufacturer members are invited to attend this open session, where relevant relationships issues can be discussed.

- All conference delegates are invited to attend CEMRA's optional dinner event "Welcome to Canada" June 2, from 6 pm to 11 pm, at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. This optional dinner event (which may have sold out by the time you read this) starts with a reception through the museum followed by a "Lobsterfest" dinner. Afterward, enjoy the entertainment provided by local band Merimac. Attire is casual, with a red-and-white theme.

10% TO 40%

The impact POS information can have on a rep's commission

You can learn more about **NEMRA's POS/POT** proposed reporting format at **EBMag.com**. Direct link tinyurl.com/z9bhdpx.



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THE MILLENNIAL WAY: MEANING & BALANCE

Young'uns in the electrical industry & what they're after / **RENÉE FRANCOEUR**

Millennials. That word has been exhausted, while the generation it represents—those born between roughly 1980 and 2000—has been both prodded and picked-on and awkwardly (dare I say, *agonizingly*?) defended. I'm a Millennial, too, but I'm not here to do either.

Instead, D&S sought to explore what this highly scrutinized demographic is after when it comes to careers and, subsequently, what our industry can do to enhance its workplace practices to further align with these newer and younger employees streaming in.

Land of milk & honey

For 2015, Statistics Canada reported roughly 33.9% of the workforce is made up of Generation X (~1965-1985) and



36.8%

of Canadian workforce made up of Millennials (2015)

Baby Boomers at 31% (~1946-1964). The Millennials (a.k.a. Gen-Y) comprise about 36.8% of the workforce, and their numbers are growing.

An EFC report last year found 86% of its members are expecting to hire sales positions over the next three years; support service roles are also among members' desired future positions, and many of these will likely be filled by Millennials.

This shift is already underway at Sonepar Canada, says Shoyne Morrison, the 27 year-old communications coordinator who was hired just over seven months ago. She says about seven other Millennials have joined her office in the past year, too.

For Morrison, like many, she stumbled upon the electrical industry after completing post-graduate studies in Journalism.

"I was a recent grad, and [Sonepar] was a company who was willing to give me a chance, so why not go into a field where there's opportunity and someone is willing to invest in you?" Morrison says.

If not the most important thing, opportunity is definitely near the top of things Millennials look for in the workplace, according to David Coletto, the 34 year-old CEO of Abacus Data and who leads the company's Canadian Millennial Research Practice.

Coletto explains most Millennials were raised to believe "that anything is possible, so we have high expectations and we look for opportunities to make a contribution and have an impact at work".

Jarrold Stewart, the 30 year-old national sales manager at Liteline, is

"They should always be at the centre of what we do" / **BY ANTHONY CAPKUN**

As you read Renée's article above, you'll note that among her revelations about Millennials is many of them want "exciting and challenging work, and they want to be able to share new technologies that can make that happen".

Besides EFC's annual scholarship program—which exists to raise overall awareness of our industry and the career opportunities it presents—some players take it a step further and work directly with academic institutions to implement specialized training, education and development opportunities in the electrical, energy and industrial sectors.

Back in February, Siemens Can-



ada's relationship with Seneca College culminated in the opening of Ontario's first Mechatronics Simulation & Demonstration Centre (MSDC).

Mechatronics is the combination of

◀ Mechatronics is the "future of our manufacturing industry in Ontario," said Reza Moridi (far left), Ontario's minister for Training, Colleges & Universities, during the grand opening of Ontario's first Mechatronics Simulation & Demonstration Centre at Seneca College. Joining him are Robert Hardt, president & CEO, Siemens Canada (middle) and David Agnew, president, Seneca College (far right).

planning to continue chasing opportunity at his company.

“For me, I want room to move up, and I truly feel like I want to contribute something,” he says. “I don’t want to just have a seat at the table; I want a voice at the table. I want to know that I’m able to be a part of the product development team and redefine how the electrical industry sees lighting.”

Dishing out the feedback

Not far away from opportunity on the workplace wish list is recognition.

“This is the generation that got a trophy for coming in last,” Coletto explains. “We were really the first generation to be coddled; always given feedback and recognized for our efforts, even when those efforts weren’t the best.”

In the vocational sphere, this means younger employees have a higher need for understanding how they’re doing, but they also have a harder time swallowing negative criticism—even when it’s constructive, says Coletto.

“Make them feel part of the team, and that they’re being listened to,” Coletto says, adding more recognition in the workplace is a way to keep Gen-Y motivated and focused.

For Dave Branscombe, the 35 year-old vice-president of purchasing & marketing at Independent Electric Supply, better incorporating Millen-



EFC's Young Professionals Network (Ontario) gathers for the first time at the Bier Markt in Mississauga, January 2016. PHOTO COURTESY SHOYNEAR MORRISON

18%

of Millennials considering working for an electrical manufacturer or distributor (EFC/yconic survey)

nials into the workplace demands more mentorship.

“That isn’t to say there needs to be more teaching,” he notes. “Mentorship, the way I see it, isn’t about showing someone all the answers [...] the older generations don’t have time to be doing this, anyway, but they can guide [Millennials] to find it out themselves, and that’s how younger employees grow.”

Mentors also need to ask the right questions of Millennials, Branscombe says, to get them thinking outside the

box when it comes to understanding and problem-solving.

“For me, I’m a Millennial working with a lot of the Baby Boomers,” Morrison adds. “They’re definitely key in terms of letting me know how to be the best I can be at my job and in the field.”

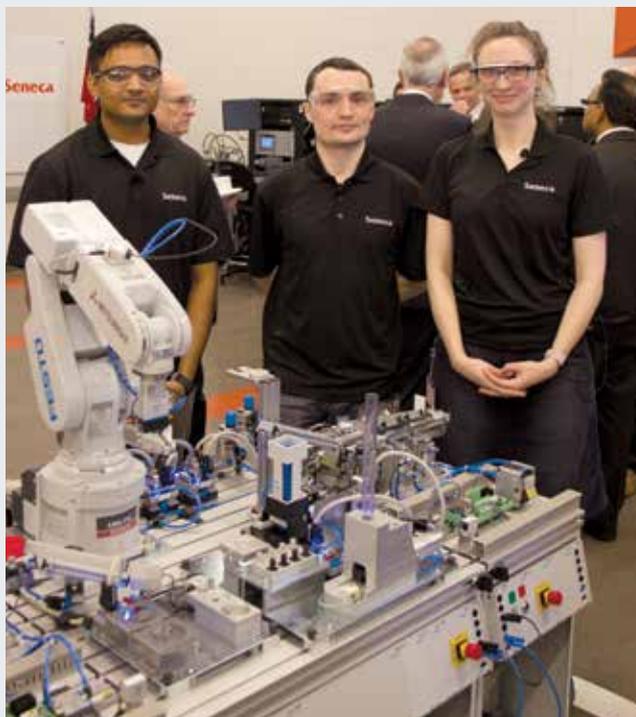
Meaning and challenge

If LEDs and advanced lighting systems hadn’t happened, Martin Leguerrier, 34, isn’t sure where his career would have gone.

mechanical, electrical and computer technologies—as well as control and systems theory—into a single system used in production and manufacturing, explains Siemens. And, according to Reza Moridi, Ontario’s Minister of Training, Colleges & Universities, mechatronics is the “future of our manufacturing industry in Ontario”.

Seneca transformed an existing lab facility to serve as the training ground for students to pursue the Siemens Mechatronics Systems certification program. Designed to be integrated into the existing curriculum, Mechatronics certification courses will be offered to Seneca students in two levels, as of this semester. Each level is based on a job profile: a description of the tasks that the certified individual should be able to perform.

“I think what we’re doing here together in collaboration is to put vision



into reality, and make it meaningful for society, but also—and this is very important for us—for the students,” said Robert Hardt, Siemens Canada’s president & CEO at the grand opening. “They should always be at the centre of what we do because they represent the future; the future of our economy, but also the future of our society.” **D&S**

▶ Check out our video from the Seneca grand opening on our YouTube channel, direct link youtu.be/4YdSu2aplZU.

◀ Ankur Sureshbhai Patel, Ivan Makarov and Aggie Stopka (left to right) are among the first Seneca College students to have the chance to *play* with the latest equipment in the new Mechatronics Simulation & Demonstration Centre.



Lori Bagazzoli, Nicole Griffo, Alex Scott and Joanna Kwant share stories at an EFC Young Professionals Network (Ontario) night.



Swati Patel, Renée Francoeur, Aisha Hurst and Nicole Giardino share some laughs over appetizers at an EFC Young Professionals Network event earlier this year.

The self-proclaimed ‘gadget guy’ studied telecommunications and always had a passion for electronics, but it wasn’t until he started working for a lighting company that he says he really felt he was onto something.

Now the national sales manager for Magic Lite and one of the youngest guys in the company, Leguerrier says lighting turned out to be an exciting field.

“Today, in 2016, the main type of lighting installed worldwide is still the incandescent lamp, so that’s a big indication that, hey, there’s a future in lighting and this type of business,” he says. “It’s trending, and I like that. LEDs have so much going on, [from] colour-changing options to how [lighting] speaks to the human subconscious; it’s important for improving people’s lives and, really, it’s just a fascinating business.”

Millennials want meaning and purpose, said Jason Prevost, vice-president of marketing at Standard Products, and national chair of EFC’s Young Professionals Network (YPN), in a speech he presented recently at the EFC AGM.

“They want their work and lives to matter, and we’ve all always wanted this,” said Prevost, but the school and work systems we’ve built over the years discourage anyone from speaking up about it.

This is a cornerstone to attracting and retaining talent these days, Coletto echoes.

“Find a way of making it not ‘just a job,’” Coletto says. “Employers now have the added challenge of making the work mean something.”

“I don’t want to just have a seat at the table; I want a voice at the table.”

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Most important requirement for a Millennial’s career (EFC/yconic survey)

For Stewart, meaning in his career comes from the sense of accomplishment after creating something new.

“I want to be able to create totally new fixtures that overhaul the industry. I want to be able to sell in a different way that makes sense and leaves a mark,” he says. “I really want to feel like I’m contributing to something more, beyond getting a pay cheque, beyond selling a light bulb.”

Work/life balance

Over 60% of Millennials surveyed in a 2015 EFC industry research report dubbed “work/life balance” as the most important element when thinking about a career (edging out “interesting, challenging work”, “ability to make positive impact” and “health benefits”). Furthermore, one quarter of the respondents believe the electrical industry offers this.

“To be honest, work/life balance is so important for me,” Morrison says. “That’s because I’m at a point in my life where I’m focusing very much on professional growth and developing my career but, at the same time, I do want to accomplish personal goals, such as getting married or having children, and I want to be able to do both to the best of my abilities.”

Data is telling us Millennials are achieving significant life milestones much later in life, Coletto says, such as becoming financially independent, buying a house or starting a family.

“The 25 year-old that walks in for a job interview is likely in a very different stage than the employer was at that same age,” he says. “There’s a real perception that we’re lazy or

selfish, and part of that comes from a lack of maturity that comes with not having responsibility beyond yourself. So I think it’s something that employers just have to recognize... If you don’t have a partner or kids, [then] the urgency to keep your job isn’t as strong.”

Branscombe has two young children and says work/life balance is crucial for being able to participate in rearing them. He says he owes his sense of work/life balance to his father, who pulled 6 am to midnight hours, six days a week.

“He was never home, but it was a different time, and that’s what you needed to do in those days,” he says. “He instilled that family is the reason you’re working, so I don’t think it’s because I’m a Millennial that I want more time with my kids; I think it’s because my dad worked so hard and he knows he missed part of my childhood... He tells me to take as much time as I can to enjoy my kids... and still do a good job a work.”

Flexibility

For Coletto, work/life balance is the wrong terminology.

“What we’re after is actually an integrated work and life,” he says. “This is a new notion, and it taps into the idea that, when I’m not at the office, it doesn’t mean I’m not working, or that while I’m commuting on public transit that I can’t be productive.”

Adapting to Millennials means being more open to telecommuting, and changing up notions of “where they work, when they work”.

“We’re looking for workplaces



Jarrod Stewart with Liteline and Francis Audet with Bel Products are both members of the EFC Young Professionals Network (Ontario) committee.

where, if I have to go to the doctor's office in the afternoon, it's not going to be a big deal when I come and ask for the afternoon off. And many will work in the evening to make it up," Coletto says.

The electrical industry itself is pretty flexible, Stewart affirms.

"[Companies] are always looking to improve; there are hires and changes all the time, so there is opportunity for a change of pace in our industry, if that's what people want. You can switch roles. You can move up," he says.

His company allows him to explore new product development on top of sales, a flexibility and freedom in the workplace he relishes.

"Not all companies allow you to do this, so if you don't want that freedom, there are 'corporate' places you can find an office job with more clearly defined objectives. There are also a whole bunch of smaller, independent companies where you can have as much responsibility as you want."

In other words, it's an industry that works for all kinds of personalities.

Technology divide

From eCommerce and automatic tweeting to QR codes and robotics, technological innovations have really kicked up a storm since the World Wide Web entered people's homes en masse in the early 2000s.

"The shift that is happening now is a shift that hasn't happened before," said Prevost, explaining Millennials have the skill set for using the technologies that baffle the other gener-

"This is the generation that got a trophy for coming in last. We were really the first generation to be coddled; always given feedback and recognized for our efforts, even when those efforts weren't the best."

ations. "So there's learning from the bottom-up, as well as top-down."

Prevost went on to say we aren't experiencing a generation gap with Millennials in the workplace, but rather an "integration gap".

Employers can and should take advantage of this generation's technological inclinations, Leguerrier says.

"Being a Millennial, I think you almost have the advantage of being able to adapt faster as the industry continues to evolve and keep up with the rest of the world," he says. "We grew up with big changes happening [internet, cell phones] and I think this means we are more capable of change, and with change comes success; it's hard, but it's the key to excelling."

Many Millennials want exciting and challenging work, and they want to be able to share new technologies that can make that happen, Coletto explains.

"Just because you have 20 years of experience doesn't mean you're going to do the job better than me," Coletto says of the typical Millennial frame of mind. "The traditional viewpoint is that experience matters. Finding a way to balance those two mindsets—one's not right, one's not wrong—is important."

With new technology comes new ways of communicating, and Millennials are largely already on top of this, such as managing a plethora of social media tools. This is a type of knowledge that can be shared with older employees, Morrison notes.

"As an industry, I think we could do a better job of using social media," she says. "It's free, it's a great tool for marketing... I want to see more of this happening, especially as more distributors start dabbling in eCommerce."

Social media also plays a role in making business more personal, and personalization—according to Prevost—is the "future of everything".

Community & culture

Corporate social responsibility continues to grow in importance, and with good reason: Prevost touched on how Millennials assess 'community' and the culture of a workplace when looking to invest long-term in a career.

"Community is everything in the world of high-performing people and organizations," he said. "We all want

to feel like we're a part of something bigger. It's inherent in our nature."

That's why groups like EFC's YPN (with over 200 members signed up in the first six months) are so important. In fact, Leguerrier had been waiting for something like it.

"It's exactly what needed to happen so like-minded individuals can come together, and the younger generation can start networking in its own way across multiple fields," Leguerrier says. "I'd like to see even more inter-connecting between young employees in our industry; doing things together beyond electrical, too."

This could take the shape of charity fundraisers, curling leagues, SPCA volunteering and beyond. Your standard, annual industry golf tournaments are taking a back seat.

Complete transparency is also the new norm when it comes to work culture, Prevost said.

"Industries, companies and young professionals who rise to the occasion will be the ones who have the most transparency in this new age. And it starts with the internal culture," he said. "Industries and companies who bring and nourish culture will reflect that into the world and attract the top talent. Talent wants to know what they're signing up for beforehand. Sincerity and transparency creates trust and respect."

Just another generation

Technology aside, the Millennials I spoke with don't see themselves as a wildly different generation group. They have dreams and priorities similar to those that came before them, which cannot be grouped into simple categories.

"I don't think you can just ask 'What do Millennials want?'. I think you have to ask 'What do people want?'," Stewart muses.

Branscombe agrees that there isn't anything spectacularly different about Millennials.

"There's a quote: 'The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority. They show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise,'" he says. "That was said by Socrates in 500 BC, and you could say it still applies today." **D&S**

THESE COMPANIES MAKE THE “WHOLE INDUSTRY SHINE”

Kudos to Canada’s Best Managed *electrical* companies

BY ANTHONY CAPKUN

“**B**est Managed companies embrace innovation, seize opportunities and inspire talent. They really set the bar high,” said Peter Brown, partner, Deloitte and co-leader, Canada’s Best Managed Companies program.

Since its establishment in 1993, the awards program has been recognizing excellence in Canadian-owned/-managed companies with revenues over \$10 million.

When we receive news of the latest companies to join the ranks of Best Managed, or those that have been requalified or joined the eminent Platinum Club, we always scour the list for players in our own electrical industry... and we are not disappointed.

An independent panel of judges reviews the applications and evaluates how companies address various business challenges, including new

technologies, globalization, brand management, leadership, leveraging and developing core competencies, designing information systems, and hiring the right talent to facilitate growth.

Every year, organizers say hundreds of entrepreneurial companies compete for this designation in a rigorous and independent process that evaluates the calibre of their management abilities and practices.

The Best Managed designation signifies companies that are focused on their core vision, create stakeholder value and excel in the global economy.

We reached out to all of the electrical industry players who made the grade, hoping to learn a little more about what it is they are doing right, and why the distinction of being a Best Managed company matters to them and, truly, should matter to us all.

What do the award categories mean?

The Best Managed awards are granted on five levels:

1. **Best Managed:** One of the new winners selected each year.
2. **Requalified member.** Repeat winners retain the Best Managed designation for two additional years, subject to annual operational and financial review.
3. **Gold Standard winner.** After three consecutive years of maintaining their Best Managed status, these winners have demonstrated their commitment to the program and successfully reapplied for the designation.
4. **Gold Requalified member.** Gold Standard winners may requalify for two additional years, subject to annual operational and financial review.
5. **Platinum Club member.** Winners that maintain Best Managed status for a minimum of six consecutive years.

Visit www.bestmanagedcompanies.ca.

IDEAL SUPPLY CO. LTD. PLATINUM CLUB

“We are very proud of being recognized as one of Canada’s Best Managed Companies—for 9 years!” says Tim MacDonald, president & CEO, enthusiastically. “It has helped us attract new employees, new customers and new suppliers, and has been great for morale within our company.”

Founded by Franklin Zurbrigg and George McDonald (no relation to current owners), the company began in 1926 as the Ideal Manufacturing Co., a maker of bread-moulding machines. Over the years, the company changed with the times; it assembled and distributed console radios, later

branching into hardware, automotive parts, paint, appliances—even toys... all sold from its headquarters in the former Grand Central Hotel in downtown Listowel, Ont.

“Each year, when we fill out the application, we need to show that we are continually improving, innovating and living up to the high standard of the Best Managed Companies program. It has definitely made Ideal Supply a better company,” Tim concludes.

Today, Ideal Supply is a third-generation, family-run business boasting 30 branch locations in southwestern Ontario, 450 employees and a 75,000-sf head office distribution centre in its hometown of Listowel. It is a member of Electro-Federation

9

Number of years Ideal Supply has been recognized as a Best Managed company

Canada and Affiliated Distributors.

“For many years we have been very disciplined about setting annual goals for each branch, sales territory and department, and making detailed plans to achieve those goals,” says Tim.

Tim explains the company created an online KPI (key performance indicator) management system that comes up on Ideal associate’s desktops every morning, showing them their KPIs as Green, Yellow or Red.

“It gives our people a real-time indication of how they are doing, and shows managers where they need to spend their time. Our company’s performance has improved steadily since implementing that system,” Tim explains.

B.A. ROBINSON CO. LTD. PLATINUM MEMBER

“We are very proud to be recognized as a Platinum Member [...] for the 12th consecutive year. Our success as a company is testament to the quality of our teams and dedication to customer success, at all locations,” says 5th generation Robinson, Shea, executive vice-president & general manager.

Not bad for a company that traces its roots to a form of lighting from 1850; Thomas Robinson started off as a chandler (candlemaker) in Montreal around that time. His son, William Wadby Robinson, moved to Winnipeg, establishing a lighting agency business in 1919. B.A. Robinson says this venture is recognized as the first to supply prewired lighting fixtures in Western Canada.

The distributorship B.A. Robinson Co. Ltd. was founded in 1936 by Burt A. Robinson (3rd generation) to supply lighting products to the residential and commercial construction market. For 37 years, Burt continued to grow the business, then was joined by his two sons (4th generation) in the early 1970s.

In 1973, Burt’s two sons—Ross and Bruce—acquired the company, which continued to supply electrical products, then later plumbing and heating products.

“We’re very fortunate to work alongside the most helpful and talented people in our industry,” says Shea. B.A. Robinson Co. Ltd. is a member of Electro-Federation Canada.

STANDARD PRODUCTS INC. PLATINUM CLUB

“To me, it’s the pride of knowing we have built a first-class organization that is able to evolve and provide value whatever the circumstances,” says president & CEO David Nathaniel of Standard making the Best Managed Platinum Club. “It represents what we’re all about: a successful and dynamic business that is fully vested in working toward being best-in-class in everything we do.”

In 1961, Haskel Nathaniel founded Standard Products Inc. as a toy import company. In the mid-1970s, he sold a variety of products from his home, the bulk of which he kept in a public



Left to right: Matt Robinson, VP, Sales; Ross Robinson, president & CEO; Shea Robinson, executive VP & GM. PHOTO COURTESY B.A. ROBINSON.

1936

The year B.A. Robinson Co. Ltd. was founded



David Nathaniel, president & CEO.

PHOTO COURTESY STANDARD PRODUCTS.

warehouse. The items included batteries, cutlery, safety gloves and playing cards. Among the bric-a-brac was just one electrical product: insulating tape.

When he joined the company in 1982, David Nathaniel eliminated all product lines except for the electrical tape. A year later, the company entered the light bulb business. By 2000, it began the transition to becoming a full-fledged manufacturer of complete lighting solutions by assuming control of the design, performance and quality of its products.

“Most businesses are challenged today. Standard is no exception, given the disruption to our traditional lamp and ballast business by the technological shift to LED,” David notes. The company realized there were going to be significant changes, so “we thought hard about what the future was going to look like, and what we needed to do to be successful.”

Part of that included strategies for bringing value to its distributors and the supply chain but, says David, “perhaps the biggest reason for our success is the work we have done internally to

strengthen our organization”.

“This includes leadership development, talent management, collaboration across the company, training and dynamic communication. We also hired a director of continuous improvement to strengthen our processes, and launched a Value Generation initiative that looks at ways to maintain or improve on what we do,” David adds.

What’s great about the Best Managed distinction, says David, is “it reaffirms that we are a winning organization, which is very important because everyone—including existing and prospective customers, employees and vendors—want to align with a winner.”

DECA CABLES PLATINUM CLUB

“It takes commitment from all members of our team to accomplish this level of success,” said GM Darrell Edgett of last year’s recognition. “It is extremely gratifying to have our hard work validated by Platinum Club membership, and I would like to extend our sincere thanks to our customers, vendors and all of our staff for their continued support and effort.”

Established in 1986, Deca Cables is a manufacturer of wire and cable products for a variety of industries, including oil & gas, transit, utility, renewable energy, security and OEM. It manufactures its products in Trenton, Ont., and has sales representation and support in Edmonton, Toronto and Montreal.

“We are extremely honoured by this recognition, and will remain committed to manufacturing the highest-quality wire and cable solutions,” added Edgett.



Left to right: Carmen Stewart, CMO and EVP Sales; Elaine Gerrie, co-president & CEO; Ken Gerrie, founder and chair; Heather Gerrie Kwant, co-president & CEO; Richard Solonenko, CFO/EVP Operations. PHOTO COURTESY GERRIE ELECTRIC WHOLESALE LTD.

GERRIE ELECTRIC WHOLESALE LTD.
REQUALIFIED

“Our high-performing and caring culture is what sets us apart from our competition and as an employer,” beams Elaine Gerrie, co-president & CEO.

“Our team of employees passionately help customers be more successful, and we believe they truly feel that entrepreneurial spirit and that the company is their own,” adds Heather Gerrie Kwant, co-president & CEO.

The distributor traces its roots to September 1957, when Ken Gerrie opened a storefront electrical supply counter on Florence Drive in Oakville, Ont., population approaching 10,000.

“I was selling anything from pole line for farm wiring and standard house wiring material to sump pumps and water heaters,” Ken reminisces. “During the festive holiday season, we’d sell small appliances. Light bulbs were a big item to help our December sales. In fact, we sold whatever we could buy.”

The company now sports divisions for electrical, process, automation, lighting, project services, supply chain and IP network, and is located in about 20 cities and towns across southern Ontario.

“Being named as one of Canada’s Best Managed Companies is a recognition that has a tremendous reputation across our country,” notes Elaine, who explains the qualification process ensures key focus areas of

the business have been thoroughly studied and analyzed, “as [judges] are looking for market leaders and those companies who stand out in innovation, in leadership, in employee engagement, financial stability, to name a few areas.”

With annual sales in excess of \$150 million, family-owned Gerrie is involved in numerous markets, such as industrial, OEM, contractor, institutional, commercial, IP network, utility and retail. It is a member of Electro-Federation Canada and Affiliated Distributors.

“We are so very proud of our entire team at Gerrie, as they are the reason we were selected as meeting the criteria and for the culture that is throughout the organization,” adds Elaine.

SEPTEMBER
1957

Ken Gerrie opens storefront electrical supply counter on Florence Drive

\$750,000

Stelpro to automate baseboard manufacturing

STELPRO DESIGN INC.
REQUALIFIED

When preparing its very first awards submission, director of marketing, Richard Paquet, explains the company president took a little convincing to get on board. “[Yves Chabot] is not what you would call an *awards-chaser*.”

But after realizing what a good exercise the submission process presented, Richard says, “Yves went in, full steam ahead.” He asked all the directors to think about everything Stelpro did very well (and even the not-so-well things). Every director had to contribute to the proposal. “And that was a real eye-opener for a few people,” Richard says.

Today’s Stelpro traces its roots back to 1981 when businessman John Chabot founded Chalair Électrik inc. and, with the help of his brother Mike, sold heating products. Chalair acquired Stelpro Heating Inc. (an Ontario-based competitor) in 1994, giving the company a national presence.

Earlier this year, the Electro-Federation Canada member announced an investment of \$750,000 to automate baseboard manufacturing at its Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville facility. “Our plant is operating at full capacity; we are manufacturing over 800,000 units annually in St-Bruno, and improving productivity is not just an option, it’s a must,” said Francois Séguin, VP of operations.

To expand its brand’s market penetration, Stelpro stepped up its



“We’ve had people send us their CVs because they saw us as one of Canada’s Best Managed. That was another surprise—a really nice surprise—that we didn’t really see coming. We get better (and more) candidates because of that.”

advertising in the last few years.

“We’ve always [advertised] to the trade, but our consumer spend was almost non-existent,” notes Paquet. “So, in the last three years, we’ve had a campaign aimed at consumers to get the Stelpro name better known. We’ve also done surveys after each campaign to measure that effect, and we have some really good results.”

Continuous investment and improvement are just part of Stelpro’s strength; Richard also points to “hiring people in strategic positions, whether it be in R&D, marketing, sales...”. And speaking of hiring, Richard says the company has caught the attention of job-seekers based solely on being recognized as a Best Managed company.

“We’ve had people send us their CVs because they saw us as one of Canada’s Best Managed. That was another surprise—a really nice surprise—that we didn’t really see coming. We get better (and more) candidates because of that.”

E.B. HORSMAN & SON PLATINUM CLUB

“Achieving Platinum Club member status with Canada’s Best Managed was in part due to our 2015 strategic initiatives, which inspired our team in ways that only a nimble, independently owned business with strong balance sheet, trust in its team and a willingness to fail happily can,” says Tim Horsman, CEO and president.

It traces its roots back to George Dennis Horsman, who left his home in Hamilton, Ont., at the turn of the century and headed west. Not long after, his father Edward B. met him in Moosomin, Sask., so they could buy a hardware store, and the company E.B. Horsman & Son was formed. Several years later, George Dennis married and moved to Vancouver and, in 1907, E.B. Horsman & Son Retail Hardware Merchants appeared at 819 Granville Street.

In 1923, George Dennis decided to open a small Electrical Supply division to accommodate the electrical products sweeping North America. Today, E.B. Horsman & Son is among the largest independently owned full-line electrical distributors in Western Canada.



The corporate team of E.B. Horsman & Son. Front row seated, left to right: Todd Taverner and Javi Richmond. Back row, left to right: Roy Bragg, Julie Kristoff, Tim Horsman, Renee Lytle and Tyson Carvell. PHOTO COURTESY E.B. HORSMAN & SON

“Through our collaborative strategic planning process, we were able to execute our most-important initiatives, which included exceeding market growth, expansion into Alberta, preparing a talent management program for our growing employee base, and growing our social responsibility in all markets,” adds Tim.

“For 116 years we’ve been guided by our core values of teamwork and collaboration, reliability, integrity, initiative and continuous improvement. These values have enabled us to be patient and focus on the long-term during economic churn while keeping us relevant to our best employees, best customers and best supplier partners,” Tim says.

Today, the company is still 100% independently owned and operated by a fifth generation Horsman, Tim. The company is a member of Electro-Federation Canada and Affiliated Distributors.

FINDING YOUR OWN GOOD REASON

Two things become very apparent based on my conversations with these Best Managed companies. First, that badge of honour is more than just a logo on your website; it advertises your company as being innovative

and progressive; a company with whom you would want to do business. A company where you’d like to work.

Second, even if you don’t win any distinction, just *the process* of preparing a submission proves invaluable, as it forces you to look at your company through the eyes of an awards judge. Do you like what you see? What could you be doing better? What should you be doing better?

And there’s an additional benefit to taking your first steps toward participating in the Best Managed program; in fact, it was summarized so well by Richard Paquet, I want him to have the last word...

“We were iffy about it at first, but we jumped in, and we’re really happy with the results. We encourage other companies in the electrical industry to do the same because it makes the whole industry shine. It’s good for everybody.” **D&S**

819
GRANVILLE

Location of E.B.
Horsman & Son Retail
Hardware Merchants
in 1907

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Looking for that special something to reach new customers? Reach our 100% CASL-compliant subscriber list with one of our **CUSTOM EBLASTS** and go directly to your prospective customer’s Inbox.

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KEEP IT SOCIAL & DIGITAL, AND KEEP ON MARKETING

Best practices gleaned from EFC 2015 Marketing Award winners / **BY RENÉE FRANCOEUR**

It's a good sign when a company president himself flies in to accept an award from a fairly new marketing awards program.

That's what happened last year at Electro-Federation Canada's 2nd Annual Marketing Awards presentation in Toronto when Gescan (a division of Sonepar Canada) took home the plaque for a distributor in the eCommerce award category.

"There's a pride aspect to winning an award like this," says Tom Mason, chair of EFC's Marketing & Communications Committee and director of communications at Sonepar Canada. "When the president himself comes in to accept it, that just about says it all right there."

EFC's Marketing Awards is still fresh-faced, but organizers anticipate it will keep growing as it feeds a need within the Canadian electrical industry to showcase and share its ever-evolving best practices for marketing. In fact, it seems to be the only mechanism in the country doing that job.

"We realized we needed a vehicle to showcase the talent of marketing that was within Canada, and the depth of what different companies do in a typical year," Mason says, noting the committee was blown away by some marketing endeavours going on under the radar when they first started.

While the annual awards program—which kicked off in 2014—may not be as grand as some others out there, Mason says the event stands out by focusing on key areas, many of them non-traditional, like the "Click & Order" eCommerce category (new for 2015).

eCommerce buzz

In our instant-access global village, eCommerce is practically a no-brainer when it comes to new best marketing practices.

**June 30
2016**

Deadline for EFC Marketing Awards this year

Convectair, a Quebec-based provider of electric heaters, launched its eCommerce platform in mid-2015 and scored EFC's "Click & Order" eCommerce Award (for a manufacturer under \$50 million) that same year.

"It's a way for us to get to new clients while respecting and enhancing the purchasing experience for the ones we already have," says Etienne Bolze, communications coordinator. "This awards program is great to be a part of... It really motivates people to try new things and brings the competition up."

The way Convectair elevates its eCommerce strategy to a new level is the addition of a reference page at the end of the purchase. Here, the company refers customers to some of its "elite installers".

"Sometimes, to break new ground, you have to go get new ground," Bolze says. He adds that this platform now creates a multi-faceted distribution channel while still respecting the traditional channel—important for an industry with so many years under its belt.

"You have to be aware of your surroundings and stay up-to-date for your customers," he says. "You have to offer your customers more choices. With eCommerce, it's not about 1+1=2, but 1+1=3."

Convectair sends out a short survey after a client makes an online order, with about 95% of respondents indicating they had a "great" experience.

While the pool of users who have taken up Convectair's eCommerce remains relatively small, Bolze says the important thing is to be ahead of the curve.

"I personally do most of my shopping online. More and more—especially those coming into the workforce now—want to have a 24/7 purchasing option."

**Nov. 2
2016**

Winners will be announced at EFC's Future Forum

**"CLICK & ORDER"
eCommerce**

The newest category

The company is also always updating its website as part of its marketing strategy, Bolze notes, changing photos and text, and adding functionalities to boost its search engine optimization (SEO).

Gescan, who also won in this category, rolled out its eCommerce site in November 2014, offering exclusive products only available online, as well as all in-stock inventory across all product categories, according to Mason.

"They take a digital integrated approach to promotion... The majority of the website is now push-and-play. The newest angle is the eCommerce," Mason says. "They understand that, sure, it's nice to see a flyer online with great prices, but customers want to buy it right then, too. The customers are different now; they expect more. This is the beginning of a wholesaler acting like a retailer, and Gescan is on top of that."

The company also features live online chatting with representatives and a product recommendation engine, Mason adds, all on a website that is also accessible on a cell or tablet.

Dimplex also won in this category for a manufacturer over \$50 million. The company developed its Dealer/Distributor Network (DDN) in 2011, adding it to its customer service department in 2013.

Integrated approach

"An integrated campaign means going beyond a flyer sitting on the counter or a display being given to a distributor," Mason says. "It's five to eight different aspects you're dealing with: a promotion at your branch, a social component, a web component, maybe an eCommerce component. It has to be multi-faceted."

Schneider Electric took home the award for Integrated Marketing last year, largely for its 2014 "The Power of



ABB Canada's Susan Gromak accepts the Event & Tradeshow award. Presented by John MacPherson, publisher, Electrical Business Magazine.



Lumen's Alain Bergeron and Johanne Rousel (left & centre) accept an Event & Tradeshow award from EBMag's John MacPherson.



Convectair's Étienne Bolze (left) accepts the "Click & Order" eCommerce award.



Thomas & Betts (member of ABB Group) wins the 2015 Sustainability award. Accepting are T&B's John Sencich and Carole Poirier (left & centre).

Two: Loadcentre Campaign", which advocated for QO and Homeline loadcentres. It also strived to provide product knowledge to distributors and electrical contractors, reinforce the brand and dialogue with contractors online. From eNewsletters, online and in-person training to digital and print advertising, tradeshow, distributor events, and contests across multiple platforms, Schneider calls this campaign a success.

For the company, marketing best practices means ensuring the brand, corporate culture and identity are expressed, and that consumer attitudes toward Schneider products, competitor positioning, new market trends and technological advancements are understood by the marketing teams, explains Oliver Cousseau, vice-president of marketing for Schneider Electric Canada.

"Integrated marketing stresses the importance of a consistent, seamless, multi-dimensional brand experience

40

Entries in 2015

2014

Year EFC Marketing Awards began

for the consumer," he says. "It combines traditional and digital communications approaches into a mutually supportive and thematically unified tactic, which moves the customer toward a sale and maintains loyalty."

More recently, the company has begun the practice of creating customer "journey maps" across its solution and product portfolios. "These maps help us better understand our customers and allow us to deliver an experience that is not only what we want to provide, but addresses what our customers want to receive," Cousseau explains. "We map our customers' experiences across all touch points with us—from initial contact through purchasing, after-sales support and, hopefully, renewal or repurchase."

Paying it back (and forward)

One of Stelpro's biggest employee events is the "Grande Viree des Sentiers"—a 5-km run through Mont St-Bruno on the south shore of

Montreal to raise funds for Ste-Justine Hospital. The run's goal is to "bring everyone together for a feel-good purpose," says Richard Paquet, director of marketing.

All those sneakers hitting the road also earned Stelpro the Corporate Social Responsibility Award.

"Internally, we try to get everyone involved, and 100 joined up in the past... Some have never jogged before at all," Paquet says. "I doubt it would have the same success if it didn't combine health with physical activity."

Stelpro donates \$250 to the local hospital for every employee that signs up, meaning last year's contribution amounted to \$25,000.

The run, which started in 2008, has handed out \$130,000 to Ste-Justine in total and enhanced the Stelpro experience internally, according to Paquet, who notes it's inspired smaller groups to get together and train. One man has even discovered he has a passion for running, and now trains all year.

PHOTOS: A. CAPKUN



Stelpro nets a Corporate Social Responsibility award. Accepting is Connie Chabot (centre) and Michèle de Répigny (left). Award presented by EFC's John Jefkins.

Nothing beats the feeling of giving back and working to improve others' situations, Paquet adds, which is why the company also sponsors soccer teams, figure skaters, hockey rinks, etc. "You're proud to see the company logo on jerseys and around the community [...] Health, youth and supporting what's local—those are our main pillars for corporate responsibility."

Wesco also won this award in the Distributor category. The company says it donated more than \$27,000 to combat child hunger and \$68,000 for various other charities across Canada.

This particular category is near and dear to EFC's vice-president of marketing, John Jefkins, who first suggested it to the committee.

"A lot of young people will work at companies and take less money if the company is supporting campaigns that focus on being green or energy efficient," he says. "Or things like working with Habitat for Humanity. That's becoming more important."

An event to remember

Shows and events are tingling with some of the best marketing opportunities—if done right. And ABB sure did it right with its Energy & Automation Forum-Canada 2014, for which it scooped up the Event & Tradeshow Award (sponsored by Electrical Business Magazine) for a Manufacturer over \$50 million.

"With this event, we decided to take a bold leap forward into the area of thought leadership," says Carolina Gallo, director of communications with ABB Canada.

The forum gathered decision makers such as CEOs from the utility and

industrial sectors to discuss issues surrounding Canadian energy.

"At the time, this was a first-of-its-kind event," Gallo says. "Initially, we were skeptical of bringing together both the power and oil & gas industries, but now it's being copied all over the place, and our customers came back asking when we're doing it again. They tell us we brought a unique perspective to the roundtable recipe."

There was coast-to-coast networking among stakeholders from the Americas and global industry experts. One day also featured a community focus with a public education program for high schools and colleges.

"We had Hayley Wickenheiser there as well, facing off against an ABB hockey robot," Gallo says. "The mascots from the Calgary Flames were working the controls. It was hilarious... She won."

According to Gallo, an integrated approach is what really makes an event worthy of a gold star, such as taking web marketing and tying it into social media. "We have good content, too, white papers, etc... And we are industry technology pioneers, so that credibility is everything."

The company is looking at doing a similar event in 2017 with a theme tied to boosting productivity through ABB's "Internet of Things, Services and People".

Over in Quebec, meantime, Sonepar Canada's Lumen blew the top off its biennial tradeshow Salon Lumen, which earned it a tradeshow award, too.

"This is a massive event; thousands of visitors," Mason says. "They have labs, classes, lectures on products... and it's all hands-on."

100

Employees in Stelpro's last hospital run

OVER 4500

Visitors to Salon Lumen 2014

Salon Lumen attracts electricians, contractors, suppliers and vendors from commercial, industrial, municipal and institutional markets, he notes.

Wesco also placed in this award category for its Second Annual Selling Show.

To marketing 2016 & beyond

Other EFC 2015 Marketing Awards include Merchandising and Display, which went to Osram Sylvania (for an interactive product demonstration kiosk) and RAB Design Lighting. Thomas & Betts Canada took home the Sustainability Award thanks to its formal ongoing Sustainable Development program targeting its operations' environmental footprint. (More on them in an upcoming edition of Electrical Business Magazine.)

But EFC's Marketing Awards aren't just about applauding those who win.

"Those in third and fourth place, the Honourable Mentions, still might have taught us something that we didn't know was going on. It's really about finding the best and most innovative [practices]," Mason says.

Jefkins anticipates the program will continue to grow. It had 25 entries in its first year, 40 in 2015 and, this year, the target is 60.

He says it also serves as a way to build up the industry outside of its own walls, as well as within.

"And, for people in school [...] this program is a perfect commercial to say here are some cool things happening in our fields; here's how we're ahead of the game and why you should get involved or continue to be involved," Jefkins notes.

As for the future of marketing best practices, Jefkins predicts more companies will increase their digital presence and capabilities, tap into the internet of things, create more user-generated content, and up the customization and personalization of each experience.

"There are a lot of new people coming into the industry, interested in new technology," says Jefkins. "We'll keep watching and keep promoting what they're doing." **D&S**



Visit our YouTube channel to watch the video "Great teams lead to EFC 2015 Marketing Award wins" at youtu.be/Y9Wts_AMs1Y.

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GO TO MARKET

EARL ROBERTSON

Navigating social media (what we old guys need to know!)

I started my business career before computers, cell phones or email. When I remind my university students of this, they naturally stare back at me with that incredulous expression... *Was there ever a time like that?*

From imperial to metric, the gas shortage crisis, interest rate fluctuations, foreign exchange rates, etc., my age group (the boomers) has been through its fair share of economic, market and technological turmoil.

And then came *social media*. For many of us, the entire social media explosion has been rather confusing. Facebook or LinkedIn? Text or call? What's a *tweet*, and does anyone really care what I had for breakfast?

Google tells us there are now more smartphones in the world than toothbrushes! It also tells us the old marketing model of:

See ad • Visit store • Buy product

has evolved to:

See ad • Consult phone
• Research product

which is then followed by:

Purchase from phone
(maybe visit store)

This sea change requires us to adopt a strategic approach toward our use of social media for marketing our solutions. Here are a few ideas to get you on track...

Facebook

This is a great tool for sharing photos of your last vacation with friends and family. Remember: whatever you put into the social domain stays in the social domain. Be extra careful with your personal information and what you want

the world to know about you.

Twitter

Twitter can be a good promotional tool, but it requires work. You need to constantly provide interesting articles/insights to your Followers; balance that effort against your return.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the leading social media tool for businesses and professionals. When creating a LinkedIn profile for your business, remember these tips:

- **Use a professional photo.** It is the first thing prospects use to evaluate you.
- **Ensure you have as many testimonials/references** on your page as possible. They will positively influence your visitors as they evaluate you.
- **List your products/services.** Search tools focus on key words, so the more you populate the description of your company, the more likely you are to be found.
- **Join industry groups.** Prospective clients want to know you are an expert in your industry. Being a member of professional industry groups sends the message you are current and engaged.
- **Be vigilant.** Do not accept all invitations to connect! Some marketing prospectors want to connect with you simply to access your Contacts. Plus, prospective clients want your list of Contacts to reflect their own demographics (e.g. other business owners).

Email

Before LinkedIn, Twitter and the like, we've been "social"

through email. We know prospective customers turn to the internet to evaluate prospective suppliers, but when your email Signature ends simply with, "Regards, Earl", you haven't made it easy for them to find you online and evaluate you. You want to make it easy for them, or else they may not even bother looking you up.

So besides a Signature that has just the basics (e.g. name, title, company), also include your website URL, LinkedIn profile, Twitter account, etc.

Your website

Gosh, you'd better have one! It's a foundational component of your social media strategy. These days, it's vital that your website is "mobile-adjusted", which means the site can be viewed and navigated—and enabled for making purchases—from a phone or tablet. If your site is not mobile-adjusted, Google will push you down to the bottom of its Search results. Not a good place to be.

Speaking of search results, what is search engine optimization (SEO), anyway? Here's an example: let's say a prospect searches online for "Commercial Electrical Distributor Toronto". Now, who will show

up first in the Search results? To ensure you are on Page 1 and not 10, you need to have more Hits than other companies. How do you get more hits?

The entire social media explosion has been rather confusing. Facebook or LinkedIn? Text or call? What's a tweet?

Let's say you have 3 branches, and each one gets 1000 search engine Hits/month. Those branches will actually show up lower on the list of Search results than a company with 1500 Hits/month. However, were you to *optimize* those Hits under a single banner (e.g. each branch has its own link to a

consolidated page), you would end up with 3000 Hits/month and move up the Search results. That's SEO.

And then what?

Naturally, none of these efforts will be of any value when your initial prospect contact isn't handled well, or the level of your product/service is below expectation. In fact, there's one very simple formula for growing your business, and it's been in use for hundreds and hundreds of years:

Exceed your client's expectations and ensure they know you care about them and their needs

Take comfort in the fact that this model is just as valid today for business success. **D&S**

Earl Robertson is a group leader with the CEO Global Network, and president and founder of Quota International—a sales training company with operations all over the world. Earl has served as a business advisor to the Concordia University Faculty of Commerce, and is a lead judge at the annual International MBA Case Study Competition. He is a Certified Sales Professional (CSP) with distinction, and a guest lecturer on sales operations in various academic institutions.



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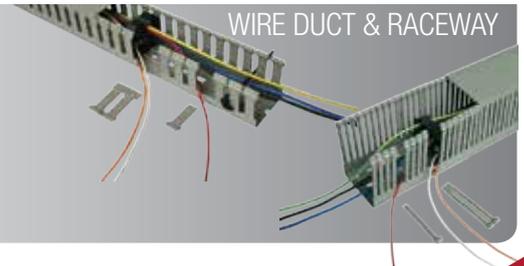
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