

spring 2014

distribution & supply

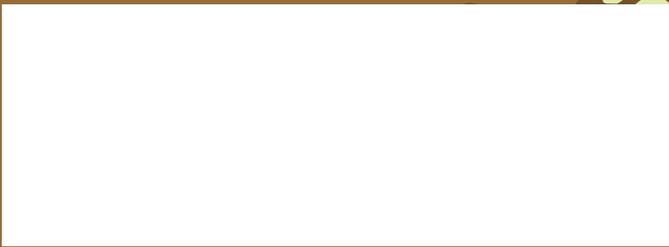
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30%
of reps face
extinction



PLUS! Are our customers better off for having known us?
Price objection?
What price objection?

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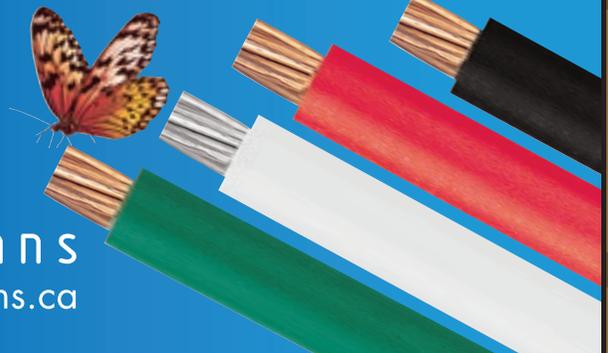


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Distribution & Supply magazine serves electrical distributors across Canada. It provides distribution personnel with the information they need to perform their jobs better and run their businesses more efficiently and profitably.

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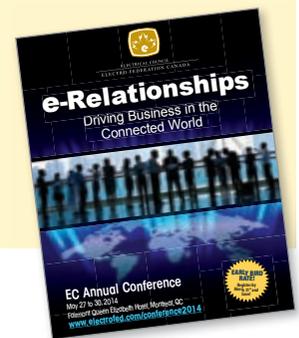
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There are those who stand against the march of progress; who rail against the fruits of human ingenuity.

“Shame on us for not telling that story”

“I’ve been very fortunate in my career to have worked in a wonderful industry,” said Charles A. Cipolla upon receiving Electro-Federation Canada’s 2014 Industry Recognition Award (IRA) at EFC’s annual general meeting last month.

Industry veteran Doug Baldwin presented Charlie with the award, saying “It’s about bloody time the industry recognized you” (I keep calling him Charlie rather than Charles because of Doug... my bad).

And whereas Doug listed Charlie’s numerous years and various positions within the industry, I want to focus on something Charlie said while accepting his award:

It’s phenomenal what the electrical industry does, and if there’s a criticism, it’s that we don’t tell the outside world... This is an amazing industry. It’s miraculous what we can do with electricity, and shame on us for not telling that story and making people more aware...

bat populations, and numerous groups are mobilizing to ensure their townships are formally declared “unwilling hosts”.

Focusing down to the end user level, advances in LEDs continue to push the boundaries of the lighting paradigm, but they also use rare earth elements. CFLs still contain mercury.

Does this mean we cease producing electricity? Do we stop looking for ways to make the production, transmission and distribution, and end use of electricity cleaner, safer and more affordable? Do we discontinue research into viable energy storage? Should we end energy efficiency programs and research? Do we halt efforts to tackle energy poverty on our planet?

Were we to listen to the naysayers, that’s exactly what we would do. We would close down our plants, disconnect our world and go back to living in the Dark Ages. What other choice would we have?



PHOTOS A. CAPKUN

There are those who stand against the march of progress; who rail against the fruits of human ingenuity. And the electrical industry is not immune from disparaging comments. You may argue that it’s really only nuclear generators, and any remaining coal-fired plant operators, that get any flak. Surely the renewables sector is above reproach. Isn’t it?

When you monitor the news at EBMag.com as well as mainstream media, you will see that not even the renewables sector is safe. Hydropower, solar PV and wind farms eat up a lot of land. The latter two still require gas-fired backup to be considered reliable. Solar panels consume a ton of energy to produce and require rare earth elements. Wind turbines chop up

But we’re on a mission. As Charlie so aptly said, “We all feel that we’re just doing a job, but we’re doing much more than a job; we’re improving our society and our way of life.”

When we gather at places like the Electrical Council’s annual conferences, we’re in a room full of like-minded people, and you may say there’s no point in preaching to the converted, but it behooves us to remind each other how amazing this industry truly is, and then go home and propagate that message at every opportunity, everywhere we go. ■



Are our customers better off for having known us?

Jim Baston

If you are serious about excelling as a salesperson in today's competitive environment—or if you are responsible for training and developing salespeople who excel—ask yourself this question: Are our customers better off for having known us?

Be honest. If you answered “No” or “Not sure” to this question, then I encourage you to read on.

As a salesperson or manager of salespeople, you will have come face-to-face with the fact that times are changing, and it is a much more competitive environment out there. In product distribution, power in the seller/customer relationship continues to shift from the salesperson to the customer and, as a result, so has the value proposition.

In the past, knowledge was an important contributor to that value. At one time,

salespeople had the upper hand. They were often the main source of product information. They also knew how to get things done; where to go and who to see so as to ‘package’ an array of products and services to meet specific customer needs. This knowledge and experience was built up over years in the industry, and were important contributors to a salesperson's success.

Today, however, the customer often knows as much or more as the salesperson about his products and services. Information that allows the customer to get information he needs to ‘package’ products and services is often just a keystroke or two away. The information age continues to erode the salespeople's the edge.

These days, the ‘knowledgeable’ salesperson is becoming less relevant. They still

play an important role, but can often be substituted by others or by technology. As a result, the sales terrain has become more competitive, and salespeople and their managers who want to get ahead may find themselves looking for sales training that includes techniques that will give them a competitive edge.

Before moving forward, however, it is wise to consider what contributes to value in today's selling environment. This way, you identify sales training that addresses these criteria directly.

Where is value found?

Value in the sales channel has moved from the salesperson's knowledge *per se* to how the salesperson applies that knowledge. Whereas once the value the salesperson



contributed came from his ability to help customers acquire the products and service they wanted, today that value stems from helping customers get the products and services they didn't realize they need—or didn't know existed.¹

It is a proactive sales approach where the salesperson takes his ideas to the customer. The value arises from his ability and willingness to learn about the customer and his goals and challenges, then find solutions that will help the customers achieve his goals and overcome the challenges. When a salesperson acts this way, his customers recognize they are better off for having known him, and reward him with more business at higher margins.

Hence the question: Are our customers better off for having known us?

I really like this question because it focuses our attention to where it matters most: on how we can help our customers be successful in ways they may not have considered, and our role as salespeople in making that happen. It forces us to think outwardly, going from "How can I sell more of my products to this customer?" to "How can I help this customer be more successful?"

This level of thinking leads us to think about the key drivers to our customer's success. For example:

- How can I profitably deliver products in a manner that takes cost out of the

transaction for my customer?

- What new technologies are available that will help my customer be more productive?
- What service can I fulfil that will improve my customer's effectiveness?
- What can we do that our competitors either cannot or will not do?

Ultimately, this leads us to develop ideas we can bring to our customers' attention that they, themselves, would not have likely thought about.

New challenges for salespeople

However, this change in approach also brings challenges for the salesperson. Just as the nature of the sales terrain has changed so, too, have the factors that are critical to the salesperson's success. Sales processes and techniques remain important, particularly early in a salesperson/customer relationship; as the relationship proceeds, however, sales techniques become less important and it is the perceived character and expertise of the salesperson that becomes paramount.

All the sales techniques in the world will not be enough for a salesperson to excel when they do not have the ability or desire to focus on building a customer relationship based on mutual trust and confidence. Strong relationships, on the other hand, have the ability to counter poor

sales techniques. The person who can build strong bonds with his customers will rely less on technique to be successful than the salesperson without those bonds.

Success in this new environment therefore, depends significantly on the salesperson's ability to build strong bonds with the customer. When those bonds do not exist, the salesperson will struggle. The customer will rarely take action on a recommendation when he does not trust the person making that recommendation, or lack confidence in that person's knowledge.

Selling the salesperson

Simply put, two factors must be present for a customer to listen to the proactive recommendations of a salesperson:

1. They need to trust the salesperson's motives.
2. They need to be confident the salesperson knows what he is talking about.

Personal credibility

Trust in the salesperson is a direct reference to his character—his personal credibility. The customer has to be certain the salesperson's recommendation are being made for the right reasons. They will ask themselves: Is the salesperson suggesting I do this because it will help me, or because it will help *him*?

The goal for salespeople, then, is to build relationships based on personal credibility, but this is not as easy as it seems. We have all met people in sales roles whose motives we questioned, yet I am sure they did not mean to communicate to us they were less trustworthy. What was it about the person that caused us to feel that way?

Personal credibility can be elusive; it is not given, but rather something that is earned over time. To build credibility, the salesperson must exhibit characteristics that contribute to and bolster the trust people place in them, and they must do this consistently and sincerely in both time and situation.

We need to pay close attention to the various interactions we have with our customers, regardless of how insignificant those interactions may seem, to ensure they add to—not detract from—our personal credibility. We are always communicating

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something—even through the shortest of interactions—and, unfortunately, we often dismiss these brief customer connections as insignificant against the backdrop of all the other activities that go on as the sale progresses and, therefore, pay little attention to the messages we may be sending.

Professional credibility

Confidence in the salesperson's knowledge and his recommendations can be termed professional credibility, which speaks to how well the salesperson knows what he is talking about. As a customer, I might ask: Does this salesperson truly understand my business? Professional credibility is distinct from personal credibility as it is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the recommendation, not the motivation behind it.

The challenge with professional credibility is the same as personal credibility in that we communicate clues about our competence in the same way and at the same time we communicate trust in our character. Our customers cannot see inside our heads. They do not know what we know, nor what specific experiences we have had that make us qualified to make recommendations. For example, how do they know the recommendation we just made is the best of all options? We could tell them, of course, but they may not believe us (see Personal Credibility above) or they may be turned off by our delivery, perceiving us as arrogant.

Since our customers cannot 'see' our competence, they evaluate our professional credibility by what they *can* see. They will look at the quality of our written correspondence: does it communicate knowledge and competence? They will observe how we present ourselves: are we dressed appropriately for the situation; does our body language communicate confidence? They will notice how we act: do we act in a respectful manner that communicates empathy?

They will use these observations and more to make judgments about our character and competence. And, when it comes to judging personal and professional credibility, the old adage "Perception is reality" applies. You may be the brightest and most knowledgeable sales representative in the industry, but when the



customer does not perceive you as having the knowledge or experience needed to make recommendations, then it is unlikely they will follow you.

Shopping for sales training

And this brings us back to where we started: the subject of sales training. Interpersonal communication aimed at helping our customers recognize our personal and professional credibility should be an integral component of any training you may be considering. Salespeople must have the ability to communicate their personal and professional credibility, and must recognize how to do so through every customer interaction. It's vital to their success!

A sales training program that does not integrate these important life lessons, nor raises the salesperson's awareness of the importance of these skills, will fall short. Strategy and technique alone will not cut it in today's environment.

But there is more to it than simply adding a training module that teaches salespeople the importance of being polite, keeping commitments or showing empathy. The sales strategies promoted and the sales techniques themselves must be consistent and contribute to the salesperson's credibility—both personal and professional. Avoid sales programs that put technique above character.

This hit home recently when speaking with a fellow consultant. We were commiserating with one another over how difficult it has become to get prospects to return calls. This person told me he had recently read about a "foolproof" technique for getting prospects to answer their voice mail messages, and he was going to give it a try.

The technique involved leaving a message on the prospect's voice mail indicating the message was about someone important to the prospect: it might be the prospect's boss, one of his employees, or a recognized figure in the industry. For example, the message might be: "Hi Joan, this is Jim. I am calling about John Doe. Please call me at...". The technique plays on the prospect's curiosity, getting them to call back.

Using this approach may get a prospect to return your call, but there's one small drawback: it's hardly honest. What do you tell Joan when she calls back and asks why you were calling about John Doe? If you don't have a valid reason, or your reason doesn't ring true, the prospect will know they have been duped. Your credibility is shot before you even leave the starting line. This is not an ideal way to start a business relationship, and it certainly does not contribute to the salesperson's personal credibility.

Think back to my favourite question: Are our customers better off for having known us? To answer with a resounding "Yes", we need to ensure that we define, adopt and train to behaviours that communicate our character and our competence through every interaction, and use that foundation as the basis for exploring and communicating ways we can uniquely help our customers. If the sales training you are considering does not address these fundamentals, I suggest you keep looking. Your customers will be better off when you do. ■

Note

¹ This is not to say this is a new concept, nor that salespeople have not been proactive in the past. In fact, the most successful salespeople typically were, and continue to be, proactive in bringing new ideas to their customers. The point is that proactively bringing new ideas is becoming much more important for the success of both the salesperson and his customer.

Jim Baston is president of BBA Consulting Group Inc. (www.bbaconsulting.ca), a management consulting and training firm dedicated to helping technical product and service firms reap the profits locked in the untapped potential of their business development efforts.



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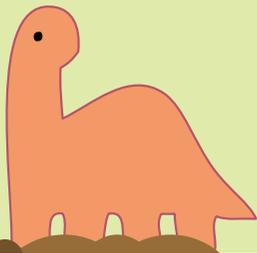
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30%

of independent manufacturer reps facing extinction

Tom O'Connor and TJ O'Connor



An estimated 80% of all electrical manufacturers use independent representatives to sell their products. Historically, commodity manufacturers have promoted their independent reps to have large geographic footprints with warehouses and delivery trucks. Specification manufacturers, on the other hand, have discouraged independent reps to grow their geographic footprint. Additionally, lighting manufacturers have always preferred the best independent lighting agent in a local market over a larger geographical footprint.

The rep of the future

In 2010, we published “The Rep of the Future” research report for NEMRA (U.S.-based National Electrical Manufacturers Representatives Association). We concluded that many reps were fast becoming dinosaurs. We warned them that, to escape extinction, they had to develop the following six survival skills:

1. Develop clear and accurate strategic vision of the future; where they are versus where they need to be.
2. Implement an annual strategic business planning session with key manufacturer partners.
3. Employ channel marketing expertise within their geographic footprint.
4. Deploy the right strategic selling strategies to distributors, contractors/end users and specifying engineers.
5. Execute the right technology strategies to streamline processes, become operationally efficient and improve profitability.
6. Teach people at all levels of an agency to continually think strategically, anticipating market opportunities and threats while managing the daily tasks that fall within their scope of responsibilities.

Sadly, many manufacturer reps have neither adopted nor incorporated these six survival skills. Those that do not will become extinct over the next five years. According to one commodity manufacturer:

If there is a rep agency that offers young salespeople rolling up to a distributor or contractor that can provide more information than the old rep could provide in a month, which rep do you think the manufacturer will support? The role of a rep as a value standpoint has dramatically increased.

30-30: Extinct reps replaced by new entrants

Not long ago, we executed then published the results of a research study entitled “Sea Changes in the Electrical Channel: Technology & Multi-Generational Workforce”. The study was sponsored by the National Electrical Manufacturers Representatives Association (NEMRA) and its affiliate, the NEMRA Manufacturers Group (NMG), and Electrical Wholesaling Magazine.

Research participants estimate 30% of current NEMRA reps will no longer be in business five years from now. Concurrently, the majority of participants believe that, by 2018, 30% of the independent representatives will be newly created firms. These new rep firms will come from talented individuals from manufacturers and distributors who understand the need and opportunity in the electrical distribution channel.



There has been an uptick in independent rep firms being established by employees from manufacturers. The manufacturer's requirements of rep firms are evolving, and former employees have a good grasp of what is expected. Much like electrical distribution, the existing rep firms must evolve and become solutions providers, truly partnered with the manufactures they represent.

These new rep agencies will be more specialized for specific lines and markets. More of them will have lines and sell services in the technical markets, and will not follow the traditional distribution channel.

In addition to lighting reps, commodity reps and spec reps, the channel is on the verge of a new energy solution rep-based model in which the rep firm carries only complementary, cutting-edge energy-efficient solutions for new construction, retrofit and outdoor spaces.

Closer alignment between manufacturer and rep

There will also be a much closer alignment of independent rep agencies and manufacturers with less tolerance of competitive lines. This will be true of both existing players and start-ups.

Manufacturer consolidation with Philips, Eaton/Cooper, ABB/Thomas & Betts and others soon to follow will create sea changes in the existing rep structure. These mega-manufacturers will try to align their packages with fewer distributors. Continued manufacturing consolidation will result in super-regional rep firms, like an 'Eaton/Cutler Hammer/Cooper' rep firm; an 'ABB/T&B' rep firm; possibly a 'Schneider/Square D' rep firm; a 'Hubbell' rep firm; possibly a rep focused on Emerson/Appleton products; and other

platform companies being represented by a super-regional rep firm.

According to one electrical manufacturer, “Most NEMRA rep firms are going to have to get bigger. Love the local rep, but that doesn’t fit the size model of most manufacturers any longer”.

Another strong possibility is that—as the platforms get bigger with consolidation and a common line package—it may be cheaper for these mega-manufacturers to go factory-direct.

In addition to the super-regional reps, there will continue to be smaller specialty reps for specific lines and markets. New rep firms will be founded by manufacturer and distributor employees who understand the need and opportunity and want to go into business on their own. More of these new rep agencies will have lines and sell services in the technical markets and will not follow the traditional distribution channels. Electrical manufacturers will continue to support new independent rep agencies.

According to one electrical manufacturer:

Agents are vital to the industry. They provide the local linkage between the distributor and manufacturer. As the ED channel evolves, so must the agent with a solutions mindset. As manufacturers build out vertical segments, the agents will be required to have in-depth knowledge of those segments. For some agents, this will be a new expectation. The ability to call on an EPC [engineering, procurement & construction] engineer, or an oil & gas customer—with knowledge of their special needs, wants and requirements—will be vital.

Another manufacturer said:

We are on the verge of a new energy-based solutions model for reps. If I were a new rep, I would look to develop a focus on energy-efficient solutions; not a lighting rep or a stock-and-flow rep. It’s a new and different business model for a rep agency. Would need solid inside engineering staff and would only carry cutting-edge, energy-efficient solutions for new construction, retrofit and outdoor space.

One manufacturer says he is seeing more new rep firms being established by employees of manufacturers:

Manufacturers’ requirements of rep firms are evolving, and their former employees have a good grasp of what is expected. Much like electrical distribution, the existing rep firms must evolve and become solution providers truly partnered with the manufacturers they represent.

One independent manufacturer representative also sees more agencies being established in the future. The primary source will come from electrical manufacturers and distributors, he says.

I do believe there will be consolidation in the rep business that will bring opportunity for future growth. Some agencies will get larger with platform manufacturers. And consolidation will also create specialty reps to assist in specialty products for specific markets. There will be many opportunities for specialized reps.

Added another electrical manufacturers’ rep:

We will see new rep agencies and they will be more specialized for

specific lines and markets. They will come from manufacturers and distributors who understand the need for opportunity. More of the new rep agencies will have lines and will sell services in the technical markets, and will not follow the traditional distribution channels.

According to another representative:

We have seen new rep agencies with a focus on the energy market starting up. With so many new manufacturers, especially on the lighting side, there are many opportunities for new rep start-ups. There is inherent risk to reps in this case, depending on how well capitalized those new manufacturers may or may not be, and also on whether the manufacturer’s goal is to ultimately sell to someone else. Many reps have recently had the experience of investing in missionary work required to build a manufacturer’s business, only to lose representation of that manufacturer when it is sold. Even so, even established agencies have taken on the risk of representing new companies in order to help the agency’s product offering keep pace with the rapidly evolving market.

According to one electrical distributor:

We have seen new rep agencies starting up. Existing reps at times cannot take on new lines or have to give up lines due to conflicts. Some ‘legacy’ agencies are becoming complacent, which is creating opportunities for talented and experienced individuals in the market that have the entrepreneurial desire.

How do independent reps drive value in the future?

Every rep needs to challenge their business model to answer the following question: What value do I provide to my electrical manufacturers and distributors that cannot be replicated?

The six critical survival skills noted above and referenced in our 2010 “Rep of the Future” research study will remain in place over the next five years. Reps of the future must also:

1. Document value to both manufacturers and distributors.
2. Provide complementary line card product offering that provides a package to vertical segments.
3. Provide value at an overall lower cost than a direct sales approach.
4. Possess funds and willingness to invest in agency as reps’ role continually changes.
5. Provide true product experts with ability to teach distributor salespeople.
6. Possess deep relationships at the contractor.
7. Offer services that provide solutions for the customer, distributor and manufacturer. Provide design-build capabilities across product lines, project services, take-off services and technical expertise—especially in new technologies.
8. Deliver specification capability at engineers and architect community. ■

Tom O’Connor started Farmington Consulting Group (FCG) for the wholesale distribution channel in 1982. He is a wholesale distribution channel strategy consultant, writer and speaker. TJ O’Connor is FCG’s vice-president, leading its market research practices.



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This year's conference program will be one of the most exciting ones yet. Why? Well, because this year's program sets out to identify our strengths going forward into the digital age.

As an industry, we recognize that our key strength is in our ability to form and maintain close relations with customers; but how can we integrate our relationship model with new, ever-increasing technology? What must we give up – or alter – to adapt to the changing needs of our customer? How can we combine our strengths with the technology age? These and many other questions will be explored during this year's business program.

Continuing the precedence we set last year, we have called on members to share their experience with this topic at the conference. To begin, findings from a **new research study** that the Electrical Council (EC) is conducting will form the basis of this year's program. This research is a significant undertaking and is being led by the EC and a group of industry professionals. This committee will be instrumental in crafting targeted questions for a customer survey, analyzing responses, and working with EC staff to prepare a research report and presentation for the conference.

What's also unique about this project is that the survey will be distributed using Kerrwil's extensive database of end customers, a benefit of the ongoing relationship. All in all, this report will set the tone for the conference and will help guide us towards our ultimate destination: understanding how to adapt our business strategies to meet changing customer needs.

Also leading the charge at the business program is Denise Keating from DATAgility, who will share insight on how industry purchasers are adapting to new Internet "sellers". Denise has presented brief reports at other functions for us and has proven to be insightful on current trends, matched with her understanding of the electrical distribution world.

Other speakers include: author Guy Blissett, who will share details from a report on how distribution is changing in the "connected world". Alan Beaulieu from ITR Economics, who spoke to us back in 2009 and whose talk had been well received, will share his long-range analysis of markets and their ebb and flow. We will also hear from Chris Curtis, Senior Advisor and former CEO, Schneider Electric North America, and Chairman, National Electrical Manufacturers Association, on the outlook for our industry and what factors will help drive growth in the market.

Wrapping up the business program, will be Terry Stuart from Deloitte and a Canadian expert on innovation. Terry will both present and lead a panel of our members, discussing the impact of disruptive technology on the electrical industry. Panelists will share examples of how some products and services have become like "pop-stars" (hot one day, forgotten the next) when compared to traditional business models. Discussions will centre on how the supply chain can handle the six-month obsolescence of new products. What do other industries do to handle this?

This year's program will provide an opportunity for you to learn, react and voice your opinion on our industry's direction. You'll come away from this conference with a sense of how your company can build a progressive e-relationship with your customers.

I look forward to seeing you in Montreal!

John Sencich

Business

Wednesday, May 28

8:00 – 9:00 am



"The State of Distribution"

Alan Beaulieu
 President, ITR Economics™

Alan will discuss the economic headwinds expected for later in 2014 and will explore the megatrends that we will all have to contend with; construction trends for 2014 and 2015; the impact of the USA, China and the EU on Canada; and much more.

Alan Beaulieu leads the company's European office and serves as chief economist for numerous USA and European trade associations. He is co-author of *Make Your Move*, a book on profiting in business cycle changes, and is a contributing editor for *Industry Week* magazine.

9:00 – 9:45 am

Opening Remarks & General Assembly

Tim Horsman, E.B. Horsman & Son – Chair, Electro-Federation Canada
Jim Taggart, President & CEO, Electro-Federation Canada
John Sencich, Thomas & Betts Limited – Chair, Electrical Council
Incoming Chair, Electrical Council (TBA)

10:00 – 11:00 am

Research Panel: Findings from Electrical Council's e-Commerce Research Report

Participation by Industry Panelists

NEW!

This year's conference theme – "e-Relationships" – will centre on how e-Commerce may disrupt or further our industry's relational-selling model. As part of this theme, the Electrical Council and a select group of committee members from our industry are working together to develop a research report that depicts the current state of e-Commerce in our industry and our customers' Internet buying habits. This report will be distributed at this year's conference. Findings from this report will be presented and explored in this panel discussion.



11:00 am – 12:00 pm

"The Future Grid"

Chris Curtis
 Chair, National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA)
 Senior Advisor and former CEO,
 Schneider Electric North America

A "Smart Grid" is the nervous system of any developing society. As we continue to take advantage of technological advancements in information and communication technology, the importance of how we structure and utilize the Grid becomes even more important. As such, we need to think about the Grid as the entire "eco system" from generation to the point of use and we should insure where relevant that the point of use is also a potential source of supply.

To get from "here to there", our industry must shape and drive a measured set of changes in how we think about the grid, regulate its use, maintain and evolve it to insure we advance with no compromise to safety and continually seek ways to be more efficient and less impactful on the environment. This discussion will propose a potential roadmap to consider as our electrical industry must be a catalyst for change.

SS Program

Thursday, May 29

8:00 – 9:00 am



"Facing the Forces of Change: Re-imagining Distribution in a Connected World"

Guy Blissett
Author

This presentation will centre on subjects relation to the theme of Blissett's newest book called "Facing the Forces of Change, Re-imagining Distribution in a Connected World". Guy will explore findings from this in-depth study on wholesale distribution.



9:00 – 10:00 am

"Eyes Wide Open: Thriving in the Shifting Landscape"

Denise Keating
Co-Founder and President, DATAgility

Be up-to-date on current trends and see how B2C successes can be applied to the B2B market space. This session will look at Lowes, Home Depot, Grainger who have successfully transferred their B2C success to their B2B environments. Learn about Amazon's business model, state-of-the-art technology investments, and future goals. Hear the results of an Amazon S.W.O.T analysis conducted by two electrical industry association board directors and learn the considerations you should make when conducting your own. Leave this session with ways in which you can support distribution so they can improve their Websites, build out their e-Commerce strategies, and the secret to driving sales through innovative e-Commerce initiatives. With over 20 years of experience in providing business consulting services, Denise drives DATAgility's operating strategy and leads their global professional consultation and data management services team to deliver robust, customizable, product data content management services to numerous channel partners across multiple supply chains.

10:30 – 11:30 am

"Innovation and Disruption: Are You Prepared?"

Terry Stuart
Chief Innovation Officer, Deloitte

Deloitte.

As Chief Innovation Officer at Deloitte, Terry has helped organizations around the world benchmark their innovation capabilities and design and implement integrated innovation programs that help solve fundamental business problems. Terry truly believes that innovation matters—it will propel Canada's productivity forward and help future generations be more successful. Terry has over 25 years of consulting experience, with a specialty in Financial Services and has assisted large banks in mergers and acquisitions, process optimization, large scale systems integration, legacy replacement and also helped create Deloitte's Ecommerce Practice, DC.Com and led the Canadian Center of Excellence.

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

"Industry Panel on Disruptive Technologies"

Panelists TBA

Terry Stuart will facilitate a group of industry leaders to discuss how disruptive technology affects an industry. The discussion will use lighting as an example and the impact it is having on our industry. Hear from a panel of leaders -- from our industry -- on how technology plays a key role in altering the product, service, payment and inventory landscapes.

For full presentation details and speaker bios, visit <http://www.electrofed.com/conference2014/speakers-presentations>



Corporate Sponsors Supporting Our Industry:



Conference Information

Join your industry colleagues and friends at this year's Electrical Council Conference hosted in one of Canada's most historic metropolitan cities – Montreal!

Conference Headquarters

The Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel
This Fairmont property is one of Canada's largest convention hotels, situated in the heart of Montreal, amongst shops, restaurants and bustling business crowds. The Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel sets the standard for high quality in both service and hospitality. The hotel reigns over an elaborate underground city of boutiques, fine cuisine establishments and a major train station, and is only steps away from the renowned Sainte-Catherine Street. This property exemplifies the perfect blend of business and pleasure.



Hotel Information

The Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel
900 Rene Levesque Blvd. W
Montreal, QC, H3B 4A5
Local Reservations: 514-861-3511
Global Reservations: 1-800-441-1414
www.fairmont.com/QueenElizabeth

Hotel Room Reservations

Delegates are responsible for making their own hotel reservations at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel. When booking a room, please contact the hotel directly at 514-861-3511 or 1-800-441-1414 and mention that you are with the Electro-Federation Canada Group (or Group Code: ELECTRO14), or link to the reservation page at <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/2014elec>.

The cut-off date for room reservations is May 12, 2014, after which date, reservations will be accepted by the hotel on an availability basis.

Room Categories and Rates:

Electro-Federation Canada has reserved a block of rooms within various accommodation categories at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel. Note: Electro-Federation Canada reserves the right to remove/re-assign your room reservation in the conference room block if you cancel your conference registration.

Visit www.electrofed.com/conference2014/venue-location-information for guestroom specifications and room rates.

Hotel Deposit:

A hotel deposit of \$209 will be applied to your conference registration fee. Upon check-out, this hotel deposit will be credited to your guestroom account, valid only during the conference. To take advantage of the preferential room rates and the \$209 credit, it is imperative that you use the reservation code:

Electro-Federation Canada Group or Group Code: ELECTRO14, when making your reservation.

Consider Extending Your Stay

We are pleased to provide you with pre- and post-conference rates with four other Fairmont properties in Quebec:

- Fairmont Chateau Frontenac, Quebec City
- Fairmont Mont Tremblant, Tremblant
- Fairmont Manoir Richelieu, Charlevoix
- Fairmont Chateau Montebello, Montebello

Visit www.electrofed.com/conference2014/venue-location-information/ for rates on extending your stay at one of these Fairmont properties.

Conference Fees

Delegate Early-bird Registration Fee
\$990 + applicable taxes + \$209 hotel deposit. Rate available up to, and including, March 31, 2014

Delegate Registration Fee (after April 1, 2014)

\$1,070 + applicable taxes + \$209 hotel deposit. Rate applies to registrations received on or after April 1, 2014

Delegate fee includes: Business program presentations, opening reception, two continental breakfasts, refreshment breaks, walk-around luncheon, Chair's reception, awards dinner and entertainment, closing banquet luncheon, and invaluable industry networking!

Companion Fee

\$400 + applicable taxes

Companion fee includes: Business program presentations, opening reception, Wednesday continental breakfast, walk-around luncheon, Chair's reception, awards dinner and entertainment, and companion networking.

Conference Kids are Welcome

Children under 19 years of age are offered complimentary registration and are invited to attend conference tours and activities only. Children are not permitted to attend the business program or any of the conference networking events, including the receptions, luncheons, awards evening or golf tournament.

Cancellation Policy

80% refund given if received in writing by April 11, 2014

50% refund given if received in writing by April 30, 2014

There will be no refunds given after April 30, 2014

Substitutions will be accepted up until May 9, 2014

Travel

WestJet is the official carrier for this year's conference. To book your airline ticket(s), contact the WestJet Groups department at 1-888-493-7853 and quote EFC's Promotion Code: CC8168 at the time of booking to receive the special discount.

Please be advised that the discount code is not available for use on WestJet.com at this time. The discount will be applied to the best available Flex Fare at the time of booking, excluding Economy and Plus Fares (seat sales and web fares).

The discount travel period is from May 20, 2014 to June 6, 2014.

Conference Attire

Conference Programs: business casual
Awards Evening: dresses, suits and ties

Tours and Activities: casual-wear and comfortable footwear

CEMRA Evening: casual attire - jeans are suggested

Conference Enquiries?

Please contact Nicole Giardino at 647-258-7484, ngiardino@electrofed.com

Business Interaction and Networking

CEMRA Manufacturers Group Meeting (Open Session)

Monday, May 26, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

The CEMRA Manufacturers Group (CMG) will host an open meeting for all manufacturers that deal with reps. This open session provides a forum at which timely, relevant issues relating to the rep and manufacturer relationship can be discussed. All CEMRA and manufacturer members are invited to attend this session.

Introduction to the Electrical Council

Tuesday, May 27, 4:00 – 5:00 pm

All members are encouraged to attend this information session to meet the Electrical Council staff and executive. Learn about some of the council's new and existing programs, and gain insight on how you can further benefit from membership.

Opening Reception: 'Ooh la la' Tapis Rouge Welcome

Tuesday, May 27, 5:30 – 7:00 pm

The Electrical Council executives welcome all conference delegates and

companions to Montreal in this opening reception. Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with industry colleagues and meet new friends.

Walk-around Luncheon: 'À la Montréal'

Wednesday, May 28, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

The survey says...this walk-around luncheon is one of the most valuable networking opportunities for conference attendees. All conference delegates and companions are invited to this luncheon.

Head Office Meetings

Wednesday, May 28, 1:00 – 5:00 pm

Thursday, May 29, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Distributors and manufacturers have the opportunity to host private meetings during the conference. To register your company for a meeting space, visit www.electrofed.com/conference2014/meetings. Note: It is the responsibility of the manufacturer and distributor to arrange for a convenient meeting time. EFC staff will not schedule or confirm appointments.

Conference Tours and Activities

Note: All tour registrations and payment processing will be operated by VDM Global Inc.

To register for a tour, visit <http://www.electrofed.com/conference2014/tours>



Exciting tours and activities have been planned for you to explore and experience while in Montreal. For full tour descriptions, visit www.electrofed.com/conference2014/tours.

Tour #1: Foodie Walking Tour

Tuesday, May 27

9:00 am – 12:30 pm

\$55.00 plus applicable taxes



This walking tour will allow you to discover the cultural and historic culinary charms of the oldest district of Montreal. Specialty shops and boutiques in the area are housed in old factories and showrooms from the 19th century. As you follow the winding streets of Old Montreal, your professional tour guide will feed your hunger for knowledge on the history of Montreal and its many culinary pleasures. You will learn about the

influence of the Natives on Montreal food habits, and how the World Expo in 1967 brought exotic food to the table. Come discover the flavors and aromas of Old Montreal! Tour cost includes: professional guide and tastings.

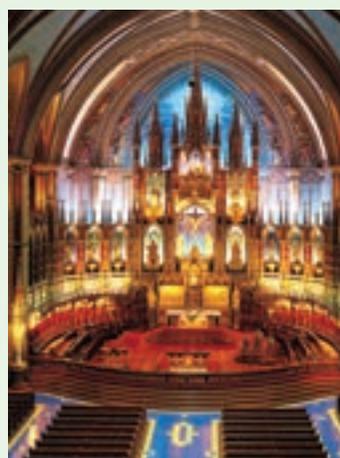
Tour #2: Jet Boating in the Lachine Rapids

Wednesday, May 28

2:00 – 5:00 pm

\$115.00 plus applicable taxes

Jet boating in the Lachine Rapids is a symbol of the spirit, fun and adventure that is characteristic of Montreal. Ride through the wildest stretches of the Lachine Rapids on board a private jet boat. You will enjoy a spectacularly wet and wild adventure through the fast-moving rapids on Canada's foremost river, the St. Lawrence. The powerful engines of your private boat will propel you past Montreal's skyline, St. Helen's Island, Nun's Island, and then... into the white froth of the Lachine Rapids. This is one tour that will surely exhilarate your senses. Tour cost includes: accompanying guide, admission fees, rain coat, boots, life vest, return coach transportation, all taxes and gratuities.



Tour #3: Old Montreal Walking Tour: Notre-Dame Basilica and Pointe-à-Callière Museum

Thursday, May 29

9:00 am – 1:00 pm

\$45.00 plus applicable taxes

A stroll through a maze of narrow lanes and old buildings provide a perfect opportunity to discover the history and charm of Old Montreal, one of North America's most remarkable historical and architectural ensembles. Tour participants will visit



the majestic Notre-Dame Basilica and the Archeology and History museum Pointe-à-Callière, a recognized national historical and archaeological site. You will be led through centuries of history! The tour will end with a subway ride back to the hotel. Tour cost includes: a professional tour guide, admission to the Notre-Dame Basilica, admission to the Pointe-à-Callière Museum, one metro ticket for the return (walk into Old Montreal from the hotel), all taxes.

All tours and activities are accompanied by a professional tour guide. Participants are encouraged to wear suitable casual attire and comfortable footwear as tours run rain or shine.

Electro-Federation Canada reserves the right to cancel tours if the minimum number of participants is not reached.

Substitution/Cancellation Policy:

Full refunds will be granted if cancellations are received in writing to EFC prior to April 30, 2014. Tour cancellations received after April 30th will not be refunded. Substitutions are available up until the tour commences.

To register for a tour, please visit:
www.electrofed.com/conference2014/tours

Register at: www.electrofed.com/conference2014

EC Chair's Awards Banquet

Wednesday, May 28

6:30 pm – Chair's Reception

7:30 pm – 'Cirque Soirée'

Awards Dinner

Join returning Electrical Council Chair, John Sencich and his wife Karen, as they welcome you to this year's awards banquet, which will feature an awards program, dinner and special entertainment. Attire for the evening is semi-formal: dresses for the ladies; and suits and ties for the men.



Après Hospitality Suite

Wednesday, May 28

10:30 pm – 12 midnight

The night's not over yet! Continue networking with industry peers at this hospitality reception, sponsored by the EC Atlantic Region.

Luncheon & Change of Chairmanship

Thursday, May 29, 12:30 – 1:30 pm

An exchange of the gavel will take place at this closing luncheon, officially concluding the 2013/14 Electrical Council (EC) Chair's term – and formally inaugurating the 2014/15 EC

Chair. Learn what the Executive Team has planned for the Electrical Council in the months and year ahead.

Optional Dinner Event by CEMRA:

'Forum Face-off'

Thursday, May 29

6:00 – 11:00 pm

Pre-registration is required. All delegates and companions are welcome to join CEMRA for this fun and unique evening at the Montreal Forum. This year's CEMRA Forum Face-off event will

commence with a reception at centre ice, followed by gourmet food stations in the upscale sports bar where you will have a chance to meet and greet with a well-known hockey celebrity! There will also be dancing for those of you



who want to 'kick up your heels'. Book early, as CEMRA-hosted events sell out fast! Attire for this event is casual: denim and your favourite sports team jersey are suggested.

Conference Agenda

MONDAY, MAY 26 TH	
12:00	
1:00	
2:00	CEMRA Manufacturers Group (CMG) Meeting (open session)
3:00	
4:00	
5:00	Conference Registration Opens
6:00	Golf Registration Opens
7:00	
8:00	
9:00	Dinner Appointments
10:00	
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12:00	

TUESDAY, MAY 27 TH	
7:00	
8:00	
9:00	Tour #1: Foodie Walking Tour
10:00	
11:00	
12:00	
1:00	Golf Tournament 7:00 - 7:30 am Bus transfer from hotel to Golf Saint-Raphaël and continental breakfast for golfers
2:00	8:30 am Shotgun Start
3:00	1:30 pm Golf Awards, followed by return bus transfer to hotel
4:00	
5:00	An Introduction to the Electrical Council (open information session)
6:00	Opening Reception: 'Ooh la la' Tapis Rouge Welcome
7:00	Sponsored by 
7:00	Dinner Appointments

Conference Golf Tournament

Tuesday, May 27, 2014 • 8:30 am Shotgun Start, Golf Saint-Raphaël – L'Île-Bizard, Quebec



Welcome to Golf Saint-Raphaël!
Located in the heart of enchanting L'Île-Bizard, and just minutes from Montreal, Golf Saint-Raphaël offers one of the best golf experiences in Quebec. Golf Saint-Raphaël is 36-hole golf facility with two carefully-crafted championship courses for players of all skill levels.

Come experience how golf was meant to be played at Golf Saint-Raphaël. Visit <http://golfstraphael.net/> for more details.

Prizes
Prizes will be awarded in the following categories for each course:
Low Gross – Individual • Low Gross – Foursome

Format Options
Individual or "Texas" Scramble

Transportation
Shuttle service will be available from the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth hotel lobby.

Tournament Fees
Cost per golfer: \$170 plus applicable taxes
Foursome fee: \$680 plus applicable taxes
Golf Club Rentals at Golf Saint-Raphaël: \$59 plus applicable taxes.

The tournament fee includes: power cart, green fees, continental breakfast and transportation.

Dress Code: Proper golf attire required - collared shirts, tailored pants or shorts (no cut-offs) and appropriate footwear. Jeans and sweat pants are not acceptable. Golf Saint-Raphaël is proud to be a metal spike-free facility. **Register Early and Secure Your Spot!** Register online at: www.electrofed.com/conference2014 (follow the conference registration link to add golf to your registration)

Cancellation/Substitution Policy
All golf cancellations must be received in writing prior to April 30, 2014 for a full refund. No refunds will be granted after this date. All substitutions should be submitted by May 16, 2014.

WEDNESDAY MAY 28 TH	
7:00	
8:00	Continental Breakfast
9:00	"The State of Distribution" Speaker: Alan Beaulieu
10:00	Opening Remarks & General Assembly
11:00	Break
12:00	Research Panel: Findings from Electrical Council's e-Commerce Research Report
1:00	"The Future Grid" Speaker: Chris Curtis
2:00	Walk-around Luncheon: 'À la Montréal'
3:00	Head Office Meetings
4:00	CEMRA Annual Meeting
5:00	CEMRA Cooling Station
6:00	Tour #2: Jet Boating in the Lachine Rapids
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The story of Evan: maker of lists

I think we are all guilty of being a bit self-centred when it comes to branding ourselves and our values.

London, Ont.-based Evan the Distributor (true story, name and location changed) assembled his top execs and challenged them to come up with a really solid sales and marketing pitch for the company; one that would both draw in customers and remind existing ones why they should continue doing business with him. After a full day of brainstorming, his executives came up with this impressive list:

- We have the biggest inventory, represent the best lines and have more warehouse space than our competitors.
- We have over 250 years of combined experience.
- We offer 24-hour emergency service and free delivery.
- Our people go the extra mile. There is nothing we can't get for you.

Before finalizing his pitch, Evan asked a few customers to create a similar list. To his amazement, the customers approached their task from a completely different perspective, listing ways in which Evan could help them:

- lower their risk and increase competitive advantage
- lower their total cost and increase profitability
- make their work lives easier

Moreover, his customers identified the following as “Most important” to them:

- Keep your promises
- Ensure deliveries arrive when promised
- Provide complete and accurate invoices
- Provide accurate and timely quotes

Evan was very surprised to see how vastly these lists differed... or did they?

One way of looking at it is the exec-developed list showcased what the company must do to meet the

customer's needs. For instance, a bigger inventory improves Evan's ability to ensure “deliveries arrive when promised”, while “250 years of combined experience” may give the company the edge it needs to provide “accurate quotes”. Having the “best lines” is Evan's way of lowering the customer's risk.

But there's another way of looking at the disconnect. When customers don't see the relationship between “biggest inventory” and smooth deliveries, they may only see the higher costs associated with this. Also, “250 years of combined experience” may not mean older and wiser employees—it may sound like higher wages. “Carrying the best lines” may imply Evan's prices cannot come down, forcing customers to be uncompetitive.

Being open 24/7 is something Evan does to provide a benefit to customers, but it's still missing from his pitch. Perhaps customers need to be made directly aware of this: “We are open 24/7 to increase *your* competitive advantage”.

The customer list was less bravado and more a work in progress: to make things cheaper and more reliable, to save time through accuracy and high-quality items, and to lower costs by arriving on time. And, truth be told, Evan felt his exec-developed list—with all of its bravado—sounded too much like his competitors' lists!

I heard Evan's story while attending a seminar this past January and, while it centres on a distributor, I think we are all guilty of being a bit self-centred when it comes to branding ourselves and our values. Evan's lists show that sales is more about relationships than it is about transactions; less about product and more about service.

It's true that, in this age of eCommerce, relationship-based selling and all of its benefits take a back seat to the glamour and glitz of digital sales. Nonetheless, Evan's customer list is proof that relationship-based selling continues to play a fundamental role in producing the best products and services for the end customer. ■



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

Price objection?

What price objection?

Dr. Rick Johnson

A major reality during tough economic times is the simple fact that customers ask for lower prices. Salespeople often encourage this mindset themselves simply by listening to the doom and gloom the media promote on a daily basis. Salespeople that don't understand their value proposition resort to old-school training and begin focusing on features and benefits, which has a tendency to commoditize their product line.

Effective sales managers understand this phenomenon and help the sales force recognize that it is especially critical during tough economic times to help customers visualize the difference between price and cost. They direct the sales force to focus

on value. Price must not become the major issue, and it should be the last issue on the table—not the first.

When salespeople understand their value proposition and can communicate that value while providing real solutions, then price does not become the deciding factor. Remember:

- Price is not part of your value proposition.
- The art of selling has nothing to do with price.
- Value trumps price.
- Value is determined by the customer, not you.

Value is defined as the dominant benefit you provide that helps your customer

produce more, benefit from and/or profit from, or satisfy a need. This is a selling approach that focuses on helping the customer solve his problems without regard to making a sale... which means everyone must be part of the sale.

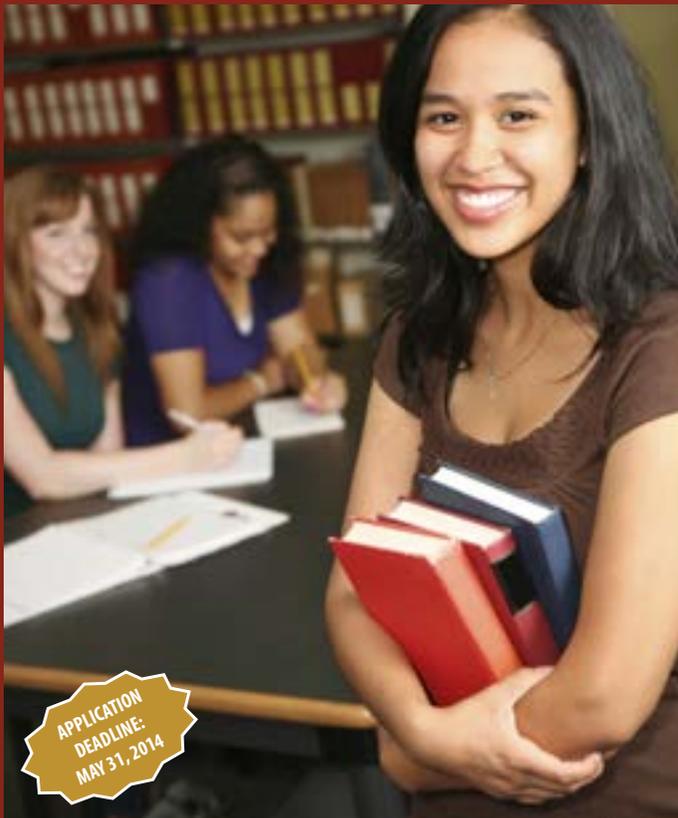
When used properly, the value proposition can:

- Eliminate or reduce competition.
- Make yourself the only choice.

Attitude is everything

If you're frustrated with poor sales numbers from your team, understand that attitude impacts a salesperson's level of expectation for results. When you anticipate negative

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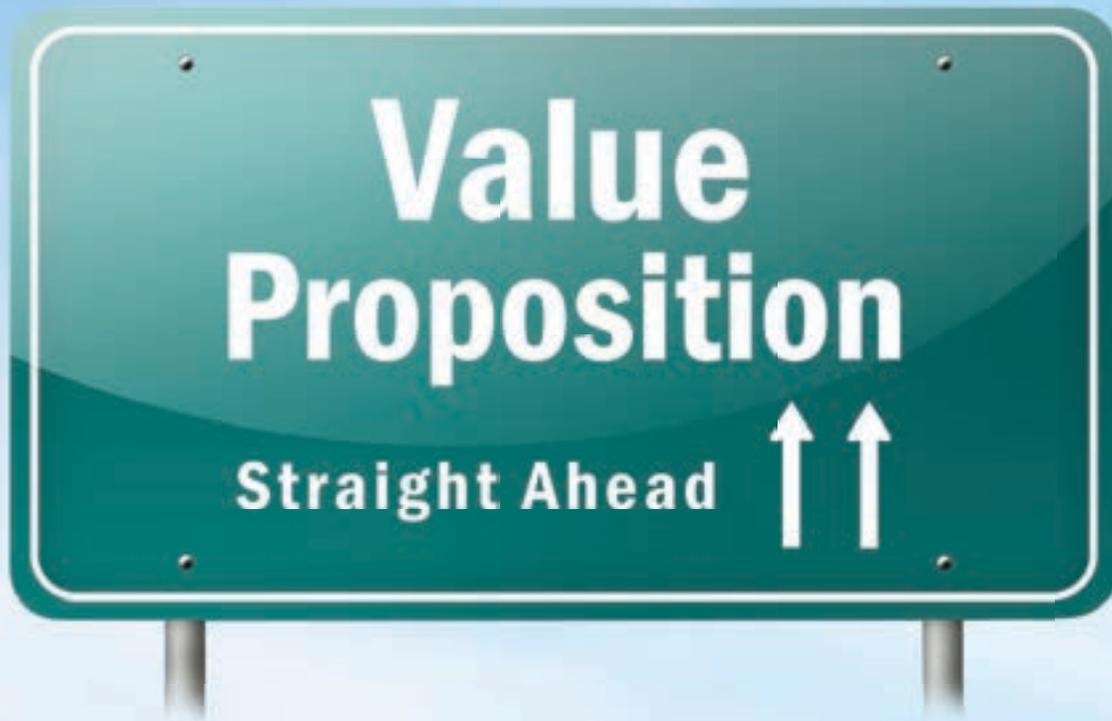
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results from a particular activity, how enthusiastic are you about engaging in that activity? Poor attitudes launch the downward spiral leading to sales decline, unhappy salespeople and unnecessary turnover.

Sales managers often respond to economic turbulence by trying to drive certain behaviours in salespeople: pushing them to do more to make up for current attrition. When the current behaviour (business development activity and sales routine) of the overall team isn't producing the desired results, asking them to do more of what isn't working accelerates the downward spiral.

The quickest way to accelerate decline is to remain excessively concerned with how much can be sold to the customer. The issue is not about any of that, nor is it about what products the customer uses. Instead, it is about *what the customer is buying*. Then—and only then—does 'share of spend' become the objective. The focus must be on your value proposition that solves a customer's problem.

The emerging specialized role for professional salespeople today is not to increase sales, but to systematically and consistently increase the number of customers who choose you to be their #1 supplier.

Effective salespeople minimize price significance by:

- Separating selling from problem solving.
- Using all of their industry experience and knowledge to understand customer needs.
- Presenting alternative solutions; defining the value propositions and letting the customer decide.
- Applying their knowledge and experience to the customers' pain points as if they were their own.

People come to conclusions by making comparisons: if you don't let customers and prospects know why it is in their best interest to do business with you or buy your product, they won't. Market-driven companies spend time and effort consciously influencing the way they are perceived by customers, prospects and other stakeholders.

Some realities of competitive analysis

- Your customers always say you are not competitive; that your prices are too high.
- You know your customers guard the truth, but you're not sure to what extent.
- You must get competitive information to compare prices. Ask for copies of invoices.
- You know your competitor's price list is discounted, but you're not sure how much.
- Your manufacturers swear your prices are the lowest in town.
- You know your manufacturers guard the truth, but you're not sure how much.
- You sometimes worry that when your products sell quickly it is because your prices are too low. When your products do not sell, you worry it is because your prices are too high.
- You know you operate in a maze of confusion.
- You know you're losing profits.

Remember this: price is not a benefit. Selling is not determined by the cost of your product. When you truly 'sell' to your customers and prospects, they will purchase your products/services, no matter what the price. By the time your customer wants to discuss price, they should be determined to purchase no matter what the cost.

So find real benefits (value) to sell to your customers and prospects. Help them to see how great their life could be with your product, and you've got a customer. Point out their current pain, and offer solutions that take that pain away. Discipline yourself toward becoming a total solution provider. ■

Dr. Rick Johnson is the founder of CEO Strategist LLC, an experienced-based firm specializing in leadership development, strategic planning and sales effectiveness focusing on the creation of competitive advantage in wholesale distribution. With over 30 years in the wholesale distribution business, Johnson is a highly sought speaker and trainer. To learn more, visit www.ceostrategist.com.



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Putting powerful reps to work for you

Jean-Sébastien Bercier

A hallmark of CEMRA rep agencies is their ability to attract and retain some of the top entrepreneurial, professional and goal-oriented talent in the electrical industry.

The electrical industry's view of the manufacturers' rep has evolved over the last several decades. Gone are the days of three-martini lunches and golf outings. Today's reps are dedicated to becoming better businesspeople in sales rather than just better salespeople in business; there is a difference, and CEMRA reps are well aware of it.

CEMRA reps stand out above the crowd. With a focus on continuous improvement, they are dedicated to improving the manufacturer-representative sales model and delivering results in today's rapidly changing business environment.

A hallmark of CEMRA rep agencies is their ability to attract and retain some of the top entrepreneurial, professional and goal-oriented talent in the electrical industry. They do this by investing in their talented staff, using resources for educational and professional development, and providing access to leading technology—all of this, coupled with practical expertise to increase productivity and maximize sales.

Through CEMRA's close association with the Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF, www.mreref.org), reps are able to earn designations such as Certified Professional Manufacturers Representative (CPMR) and Certified Sales Professional (CSP), differentiating themselves from their competition.

The three-year CPMR program focuses on topics that include:

- business ethics
- finance
- strategic planning
- principal relationships
- marketing and communications
- negotiations
- growing sales

This designation is both recognized and highly valued by many manufacturers who go to market with reps. Many CPMR graduates say they entered the program

as a salesperson and left as a businessperson!

The CSP course is a three-day program focusing on key elements of the business-to-business sales process, understanding yourself and your customer, and a unique 8-step sales process. This program is available to reps, distributors and manufacturers.

MRERF also offers a two-day workshop for manufacturers looking to build or strengthen their rep network. This workshop is recommended for regional and C-level executives and, through this program, the Manufacturer's Best Practices (MBP) provides insightful ideas and tools for creating the best rep network possible.

Of equal value to each program is the cross-industry networking that helps identify trends in other sectors that may be relevant to the electrical industry. MRERF guarantees reps will find value and ideas for business in its programs, or it will refund the tuition. It's worth the investment, and having access to these programs is just one more benefit of belonging to CEMRA!

Are you a rep or manufacturer attending the Electrical Council annual conference in Montreal? If so, consider meeting with Karen Jefferson, CPMR, CSP from MRERF. She will be presenting at the CEMRA meeting and is available to discuss these programs during the conference. Karen can also be contacted at karen@mreref.org or (303) 463-1801. ■



Jean-Sébastien Bercier is with Desdowd Inc., and the 2013-2015 CEMRA chair. A division of EFC's Electrical Council, the Canadian Electrical Manufacturers Representatives Association is a collective of independent sales reps offering multi-line selling to electrical manufacturers. Visit www.electrofed.com/cecmra.

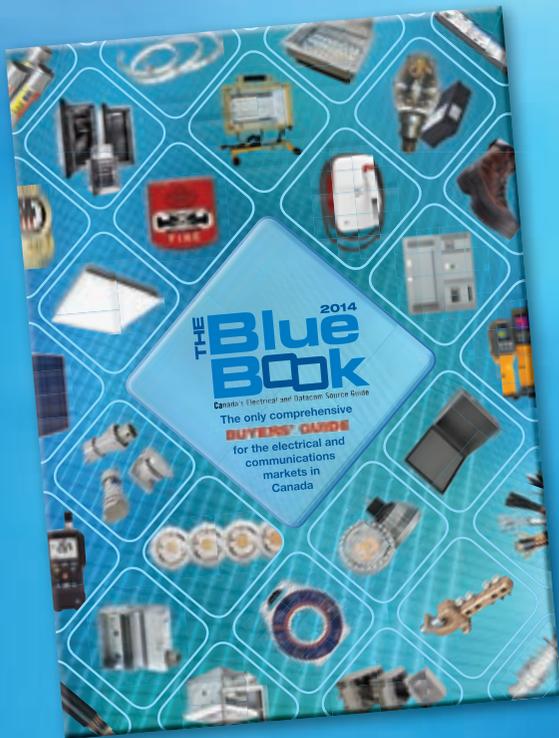
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9 steps to electrifying your media coverage

Jennifer Salo

When done properly with the help of a media relations expert, PR is a powerful tool for generating enthusiasm and hype about your company.

Odds are you are already engaging your customers by promoting your products and services through marketing channels such as a company website, advertising, direct mail, email and, hopefully, some form of social media. All of these are key outlets for creating buzz and building brand recognition, but have you considered Public Relations (PR), specifically in the context of media relations? What is your company doing to gain legitimate publicity?

Whether it's done proactively to get a positive story out, or reactively as response to a crisis, media relations is crucial for building trust with the masses. When done properly with the help of a media relations expert, PR is a powerful tool for generating enthusiasm and hype about your company.

Note that PR is not in any way a substitute for marketing, as the two must be done in parallel. Whereas marketing is a direct-response medium, PR builds awareness of and perception about a person, brand, product or service in an effort to increase the response rate of your marketing efforts.

Here, then, are 9 steps to help you get started on electrifying your media relations journey:

1 | Identify your story: Sometimes you have obvious news to share (e.g. product launch, company merger), but when there is no *hard news*, you may have some *soft news* lurking within your company walls that can help you build buzz about your brand. You may not think so, but stories abound in every company. Ask your co-workers and employees questions that relate to your products/services to get a newsworthy story.

2 | Define your target audience: Once you've honed in on an informative and impactful story, identify the types of people (e.g. contractors, engineers) with whom you'd like to share it. Ensure the story is developed in such a way as to grab their attention and make them want to know more.

3 | Create your media list: Now that you have a story and identified your target audience(s), select key media outlets. Acquaint yourself with the journalist/editor from each one; create a database of these contacts, and add notes about recent trends/news angles they've covered.

4 | Craft your hook(s): Based on your story and target audience, you must create a news hook that is relevant, not only to them, but to the journalist(s) you are pitching. Make the hook airtight and memorable, and ensure it bridges back to the messaging/story you are trying to convey.

5 | Select your spokespeople: Confident and well-spoken, spokespeople must be influencers or experts, and must be able to drive home your company's key messages within the journalist's story while also being able to answer their questions. (I recommend prepping a spokesperson with key messaging and a Q&A media training routine.)

6 | Pitch media: Like a salesperson, you must pitch media with enthusiasm and convince them to pay attention to your story while also addressing their needs—all in a matter of a few minutes! Along with your news story, you should always offer to provide supporting material (e.g. pictures, videos, presentations) along with key interview contacts.

7 | Broker interviews: You've made your pitch, and the journalist is hungry for more. You need to remain at his service and provide everything he needs to complete the story. You also need to facilitate the interviews with your spokespeople in a timely manner so as to meet the journalist's deadline; miss one deadline, and you will lose your news opportunity, and perhaps your media contact and any future coverage possibilities.

Nurture media relationships: It's important that you nurture your media contacts so that you keep yourself on their radar and maintain a long-lasting relationship. To do this, you must stay abreast of the trends and ideas they like to cover, and contact them regularly to chat and share insights.

9 | Share your media coverage: Now that you have a live story for all to read, it's time to ride the web and feed it through your internet channels (e.g. website, social media) for others to read and share. ■



Jennifer Salo is an independent Communications and PR consultant who has experience in electrical and safety, environmental and energy management, aircraft management and charter services, lead generation and many other B2B and B2C industries.



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