

IMARK NOW

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Digital Marketing
Assessment Survey

Helping Customers Embrace
Wireless Technology

What Do Electrical
Contractors Want and Need

The Drive for Data: A
Manufacturer's Perspective



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A TIME TO LEAD AND EXECUTE



Bob Smith
PRESIDENT/CEO

In a rapidly changing world, all IMARK members, large, small and everything-in-between, have a stake in the success of all IMARK members.

As the electrical distribution channel maintains its status as the channel of choice for electrical construction professionals, we all notice that the world is not standing still.

Here are some highlights from a report on Internet trends and technology developed by the renowned venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caulfield and Byers:

- 315 million smart phones were shipped (worldwide) in Q4, 2013. Smart phones as a percentage of mobile phones are in the 30 percent range.
- Demand for tablet devices is growing at a faster rate (52 percent in 2013) than PCs ever did.
- On a global basis, 78 percent of global users have a TV, 77 percent have a mobile phone, 22 percent have a smart phone, and 11 percent have a desktop PC.
- In North America, 19 percent of Web page views were accessed by mobile devices in May 2014, compared with 11 percent in May 2013.

To view the full report, visit www.kpcb.com and click on the "Internet Trends 2014."

There is no question that in the years to come, people will gather information and make commercial decisions in different ways than they do now. Drastic changes lie ahead.

IMARK recently conducted a comprehensive survey of its member marketing and communications practices. Please read the summary of results on page 34.

Clearly, many IMARK members are working to embrace a changing marketing and communication environment in an increasingly mobile world.

For instance, of the 260 member executives that completed the survey:

- 76 offer a Web-based digital catalog with search function.
- 73 have a website that accepts purchase orders.
- 59 have a website which allows customers to check inventory.
- 88 include links to product training on their website.
- 66 utilize search engine optimization (SEO) techniques to make it easier for searchers to find them on the Web when they are seeking electrical supplies.
- 26 have developed one or more 'apps' for customers using "smart" devices.
- At least 120 members use or have used social media tools.



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VICE PRESIDENT,
MARKETING



Jerry Knight
VICE PRESIDENT,
SUPPLIER RELATIONS



Matt Roos
EXECUTIVE
VICE PRESIDENT

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Under the right light, customers
do not see a new dress...

...they see the perfect
first impression



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Other survey respondents expressed concern about the changing business environment and feel the need to respond, but they're not sure how to proceed.

So, how can we leverage the collective strength and knowledge of IMARK member companies to help us maintain our leadership position as we keep up with the changing times? As part of the survey, we received hundreds of suggestions from IMARK member executives. Among the most common were:

- Build a road map for members that want to enhance their digital marketing and communications capabilities.
- Build a network of service providers that can support our members. Help us understand the capabilities of the service providers we already have.
- Develop a marketing/e-commerce task force charged with assembling solutions for interested members.
- Help us to get "clean" or "scrubbed" product data files from suppliers (most frequently mentioned by respondents, by far).
- Reward members that share best practices.
- Reward members that improve and enhance the capabilities of their websites.
- We would like IMARK suppliers to develop and implement Internet Minimum Advertised Pricing (IMAP). See related article on page 24.

IMARK is currently working on a program that will incorporate several of these suggestions. We'll be announcing our initiatives this fall.

Stay tuned for the details.



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It isn't easy to retrain your brain, but new research suggests that developing good sales habits is key to selling success.

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DATA COLLECTION: A MANUFACTURER'S PERSPECTIVE

Manufacturers share insights and best practices for how distributors can work with them to cultivate and collect data that is timely, accurate and reliable.

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In this article, contractors suggest ways that IMARK distributors can better meet their needs and service the industry as a whole.

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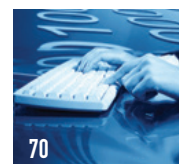
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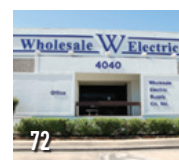
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HELPING CUSTOMERS EMBRACE WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY

Don't be left behind, now's the time to "cut the cord" and jump on the wireless bandwagon.

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IMARK NOW

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"WHO'S YOUR CONTACT AT AmazonSupply?"



Scott Lawhead
IMARK CHAIRMAN
OF THE BOARD

As you read the various articles throughout this edition of *IMARK NOW* (or any other industry publication for that matter), it may be difficult to find one that does not reference, at least in some small capacity, Amazon.com or their more-recently launched spin-off, AmazonSupply, an e-commerce site targeting the wholesale and distribution market. One thing is clear, Jeff Bezos' company is making waves in most industries with their seemingly unmatched command of Web-based selling.

Today's electrical distribution industry is feeling the results of Amazon's push in the marketplace as well. This is one of the reasons why we are focused on determining how our industry operates their companies today, but also how we may operate in the future. Perhaps, understandably, we have become defensive of our position with manufacturer partners, our local brick and mortar investments, our pricing models and various other historical reasons that justify our current leadership position.

Perhaps an alternative way to approach this somewhat new competitive threat is to not focus on defending our existence, but rather, to find, develop and foster our own competitive strengths. Take the offensive position rather than a goal-line defensive stand. We should leverage and develop our strengths, differentiators that AmazonSupply simply can't offer. One of those strengths (and there are many others) is clearly PEOPLE. We say it all the time, our PEOPLE make our company and they secure our customers.

I would like to ask you a few questions:

1. When was the last time our manufacturer partners went to dinner with an Amazon employee or sales leader? We don't even know if they pass the 'beer test' (see my last column in *IMARK NOW* for more on this).
2. When was the last time that an AmazonSupply employee assisted a customer with on-site inventory management or a wire delivery requiring pulling heads and colored feeders?
3. Who is the customer's contact at Amazon that a customer can call when they really need help? More notably, after hours or during emergencies?

By no means am I downplaying the impact that Amazon (and other Web-based providers) may have on our companies, but rather, I want to focus on what we can do better than any online competitor, and that is our SERVICE.

Fortunately, for distributors like The Hite Company, offering these much needed (and seemingly more important) service offerings are only an option if we have trained, skilled and service-oriented PEOPLE. For this reason, our organization is focused on attracting and developing service-oriented employees that can relate to customers of various generations. We are aggressively recruiting these potential employees from trade schools, universities and perhaps out of the trade.

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We have an enormous talent pool in our organization and recognize their countless years of dedication to our company. We are thankful for their experience, expertise and contributions. We will now work to complement this experience with new associates that have the ability to communicate with customers of all generations, regardless of their purchasing preferences.

IMARK recognizes the need to understand the preferences of our customers and has developed a FUTURES GROUP and a Contractor Executive Advisory Council (see related stories on pages 55 and 60 in this issue). We will continuously monitor the buying habits of our customers to make sure that we, as the preferred choice for electrical products, remain relevant and up-to-date. What services and online presence do we need to provide, and how are we going to hire, train and develop the associates that can service this "new purchasing model?" This edition of *IMARK NOW* has several articles that discuss what our customers feel electrical distributors can do better.

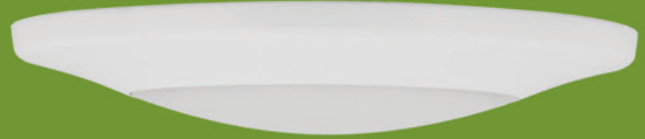
I don't need to remind you, but what our customers want is the same stuff we have been hearing for a long, long time. You know, follow up on quotes, reply to information requests in a timely manner, provide updated delivery times, etc...the usual stuff, right? In most cases, to answer these questions, you need PEOPLE. These PEOPLE driven tasks can't be replaced with any online tool.

I sure wish I had the crystal ball to know where Amazon-Supply, and other online competitors, will eventually fit in our industry. Unfortunately, that is something that is extremely difficult to predict. Maybe it is time we spend more time developing our competitive service advantage and less time defending our "turf." Both the IMARK staff and the member leadership of IMARK, will continue to provide us with the necessary information to take an offensive service stand, we just have to come up with the winning plays and allow our greatest asset, our PEOPLE, to do their thing and score.

PROGRESS
LIGHTING

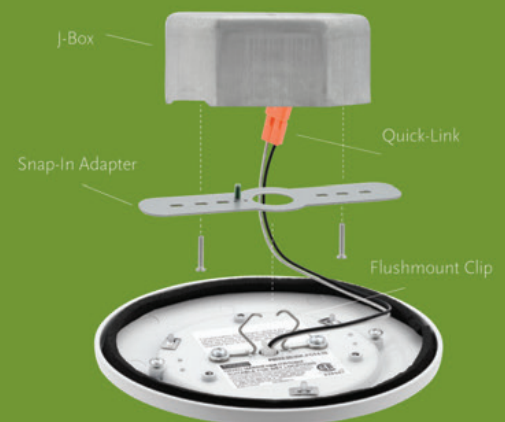


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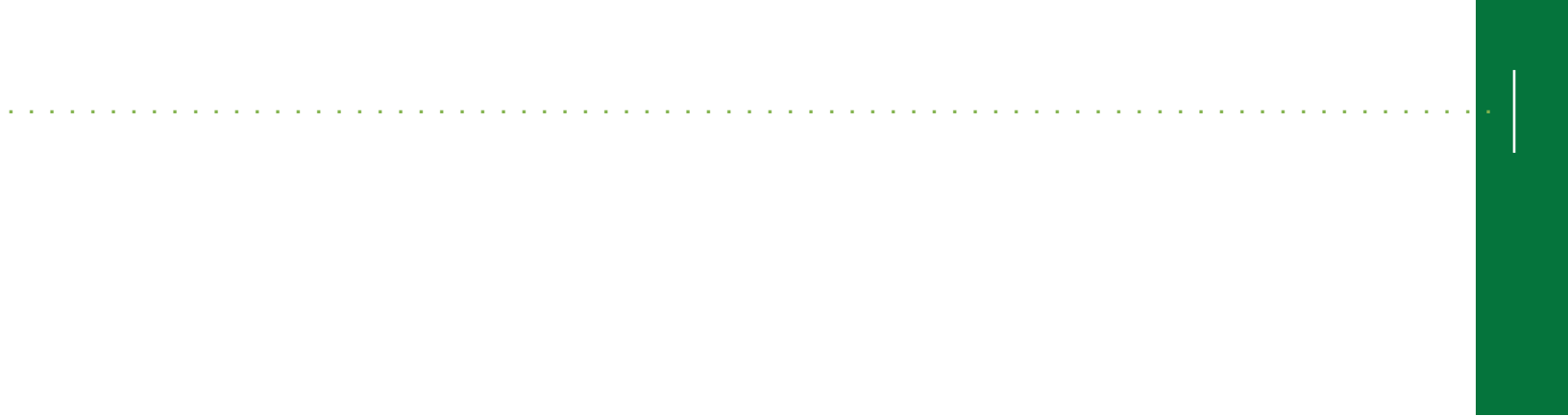


HUBBELL
Lighting

HELPING CUSTOMERS EMBRACE WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY

Innovations in wireless technology are changing the way our industry delivers product solutions to our customers. Don't be left behind, now's the time to jump on the wireless bandwagon.





A man far wiser than I once said, “He who hesitates is lost.” Flip it around to today and aim it at our industry, and he could very well be talking about the explosive growth in wireless technology. Those electrical distributors and electrical contractors who hesitate in embracing the surge in wireless advancements may very well be doomed to lose attainable and profitable business.

Whenever I discuss wireless technology innovations with my contractor customers, a “wall” frequently goes up based on the contractor’s premise that electricians make money by pulling wires—not by installing technology that lets homeowners control their lighting preferences at the touch of a button on their phone or tablet. The thought process is, “no wires, no income.” But that argument does not hold moving forward, and here’s why.

Wires aren’t going away simply because wireless technology is growing in popularity. Yes, it is convenient for a homeowner to dim a ceiling light with a wireless remote. But that ceiling light needs a power source, and the power source needs wires, and wires need an electrician to install them.

Just over a decade ago, companies manufacturing low-voltage and building controls, security and alarm systems, CCTV, thermostats and other similar devices or systems were forced to begin the wireless transition, essentially eliminating the need to wire any devices. What did they do? They adapted and adjusted. Now many of the products they regularly use are wireless. Their companies have thrived.

Our industry has seen a “race to the socket” in the lighting field with all sorts of energy-efficient lighting products being installed. Ironically, the adoption and introduction to the market of new technologies such as long-lasting LED lamps and fixtures on the electrical maintenance market does not seem to distress the average electrical tradesman to the same degree as the mention of wireless technologies. Why is that?

Let’s examine the process. A typical sales technique when an electrical contractor is selling an energy-efficient lighting job is to express the savings that the customer will enjoy in lifetime maintenance costs. This is money taken directly out of the industry without a thought, simply because it is best for the end-user, and also because many contractors do not factor in long-term maintenance fees as part of their profit margin for a single job.

So why then is there so much concern about using and installing wireless technologies if they are the best solution for the end-user?

Because of competition, that’s why.

True, there are no wires, but there are other players out there that the end-user can utilize for wireless controls, and many of these industries have been dealing with and installing wireless devices and technologies for the past 10 years, putting them way ahead of the curve. In many instances, these competitors share the electrical distributor’s customer base. They are the

➤ *continued on page 14*

security company with the burglar alarm panel, the HVAC contractor that maintains the thermostats or building control systems, or even the phone or cable companies that provide their services to the facility. Because of wireless technologies, all of these competitors are in a position to offer your customer a service that was traditionally dominated by our industry—controlling the light switches.

For instance, no hotel owner wants to shut down a room for two or three days and lose money on that room so a system can be wired. Customers will frequently pay a premium for wireless alternatives that do not interrupt their business flow. In the residential market, homeowners will frequently consider new technologies and pay a premium if these options are presented at the time they are performing upgrades.

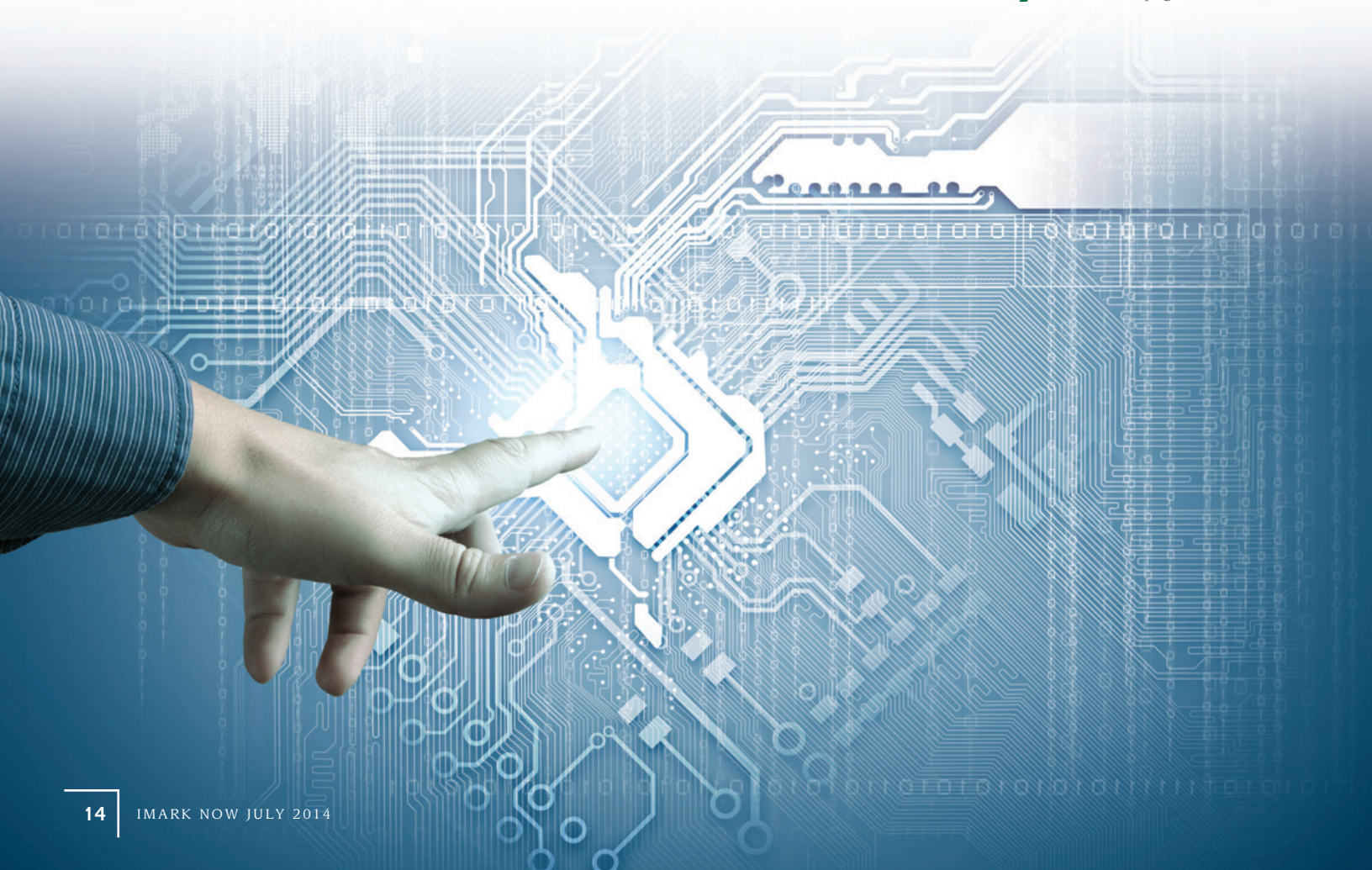
Another advantage? Wireless switches may allow contractors to finish a job quicker and more profitably, as well as introduce your customer to a technology they may want to expand on, creating more work. Contractors may also make more profits on “wireless” materials. What’s better,

a 20 percent markup on a traditional \$2 switch, or 20 percent markup on a \$20 wireless switch? Let me remind you, this is still a switch that controls a light fixture or device that an electrician needs to power via a wire.

In historic buildings and centuries-old churches, I have seen contractors propose wireless technologies for fire alarm systems and lighting control as the best option for the customer. This allows them to maintain the integrity and aesthetics of the structure and minimize damage and down time. The hidden gem in this scenario for the electrical contractor is that he is able to avoid liability issues by not having their employees working with ladders, drills and tools near priceless pieces of furniture, fixtures and artwork. In many cases the wireless devices were installed in a few minutes. The contractor increased their profits over a hard wired system by a considerable amount, finished it ahead of schedule and gained a long-term customer.

Another argument I hear in opposition to embracing wireless is the perception that the wireless signal can be interfered with, as if the strength level were on par with,

➤ *continued on page 17*





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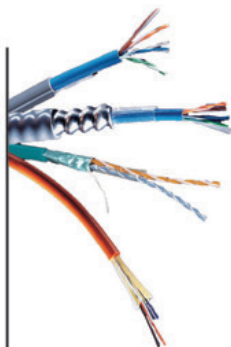
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say, the baby monitors in your house. Truth be told, the advancements in the wireless signal have been tremendous. In many cases wireless systems utilize FHSS (Frequency Hopping Spread Spectrum) technology, the same signaling frequency used by NASA and the military. As one wireless company executive described it, "This isn't your basic RF application, 'garage door opener' signaling. It's the same four-frequency technology used by the military when a drone thousands of feet in the air is communicating to a transmitter buried in a bunker two miles underground."

This being said, there are many applications where a clearly defined point-to-point piece of wire is the best approach for the customer, but if you are convinced wireless is not a proven option, you are wrong.

To summarize, this is not an argument about whether wireless is better than traditional hard-wired solutions. Clearly, there are obvious and plentiful applications for each. But, as more and more wireless applications

become available, more tech-savvy clients will want to start using their smartphone to turn off the outdoor patio lights, turn on the heat at their office while they're 30 miles away, or perform other "wireless" operations.

As decision makers in the industry, we need to at least understand what is going on, what product and technologies are available and why the end-user may be clamoring for them. Building wire is not going away but, as technology marches on, there will be even more applications for wireless technology and more customer demand.

My suggestion? Encourage your customers to embrace the wireless world, not ignore it. Help your customers understand how they can leverage wireless technologies to build their bottom line while also increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

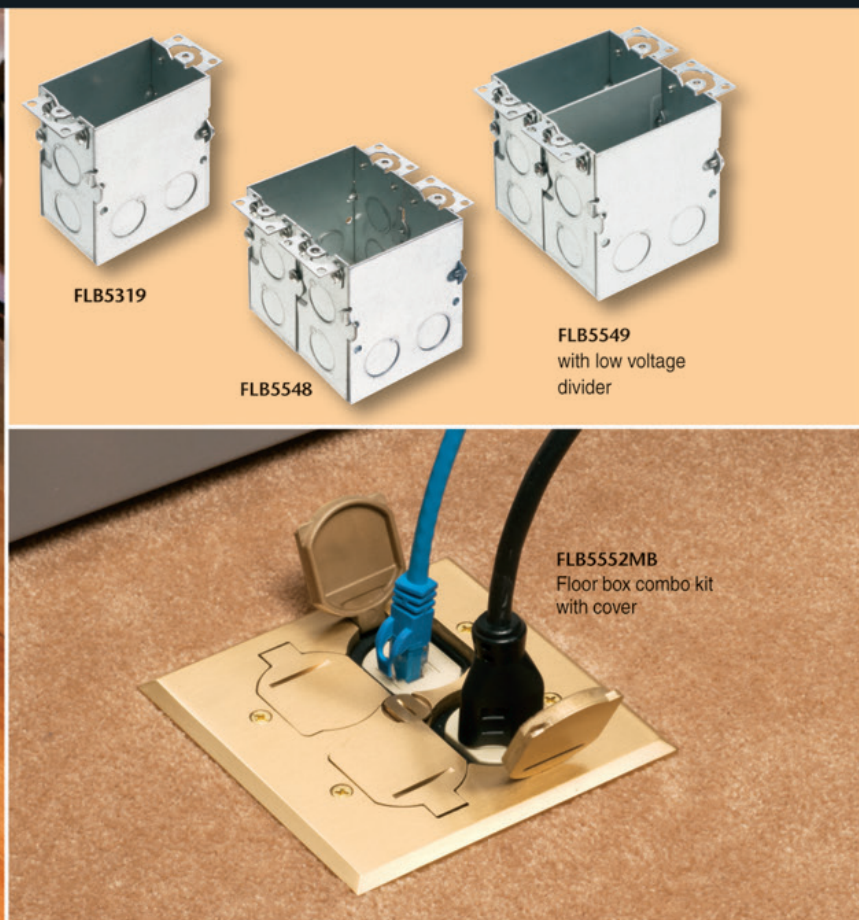
William F. 'Bill' Donahue is President of Crown Supply Co., Inc, an award-winning IMARK member distributor of electrical and fire alarm products, with locations in Providence, RI and Milford, MA. For more information visit www.crownsupply.com.



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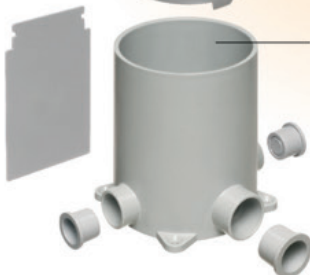
ASSEMBLY DETAILS



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FLBC4500LR
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FLBC4500
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(w/o mud cover)

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Trapdoor
cover



FLBT6615LR
Leveling Ring



FLBC4500



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CREATURES OF HABIT....

Developing Habits that Lead to Selling Success.



In recent years, there has been a groundswell of medical and scientific discoveries shedding new light on many aspects of the brain—how it works, how it develops and how certain parts of the brain specialize in specific functions such as facial recognition, memory and solving mathematical problems.

One of the recent discoveries that has had a profound impact on how all of us work, especially how sales people work, is a revelation about habits.

“Habits,” are often thought of as the brain’s “autopilot.” Habits take the controls when you have done an activity often enough that your conscious executive brain is no longer needed to conduct the activity successfully. In effect, our subconscious brain actually controls our actions based on learned patterns that are simply repeated to achieve predicted results.

Habits are constantly being formed. Some have theorized that the evolutionary role of habits is to free the executive part of the brain to prioritize and focus only on issues of survival such as danger, food and reproduction. Scientists now tell us that over 90 percent of the actions we take throughout the day are habitual.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

- Aristotle

We think we know ourselves—how we think and why we do what we do. Most of us think we make smart, informed, conscious decisions about how to act all day, every day. We believe that we are in control of our actions. But really, experts say that less than 10 percent of what you do each day is really a “conscious” choice. What you do most often is just repeat a habitual behavior, such as what time to wake-up, what to eat and drink, etc.

Like the tip of an iceberg, the conscious mind is visible and awesome, but it’s the subconscious habitual mind that does most of the work. Essentially, what you can see is largely determined by things that you cannot see.

Revelations about the difficulties of changing ingrained habits is what we call a “blinding glimpse of the obvious” to anyone who has struggled with making change. Haven’t you wondered why you can’t seem to actually implement the changes that you commit to? Whether it is self-improvement ideas from a seminar, trying to quit smoking, or keeping up a resolution to lose weight and exercise more, making

changes seems like an almost insurmountable challenge.

Well, duh! It’s a habit!

Habits cannot be changed by willpower alone. Most of us try to lose weight, stop smoking, exercise more, stop this, start that. After a while, we just give up and go through life avoiding changes. Most often we spend more time hiding from the truth and making excuses to ourselves and others than making changes to improve our lot.

Improving the Habits of Your Sales Force

The right habits are what makes a sales person successful. And the most successful sales people are the ones who make the habit changes necessary to constantly refine their activities. The most successful sales people make the job look easy because to them, it actually IS easy. They just have the right habits.

Without a doubt, many sales people have habits that hold them back from a higher level of success.

Some bad habits of sales people are:

- They don’t start early enough.
- They stop work too early each day.
- They do not spend enough time with key customers and suppliers.

➤ *continued on page 22*

- They do not leverage their time with productivity tools.
- They do not ask enough questions or the right ones.
- They do not listen well.
- They do not follow-through.

Removing Bad Habits and Starting Good Habits

By understanding how habits are formed and acting on that knowledge, new habits can be developed to “crowd-out” or overpower the less desirable ones.

Not all habits are equal. Some habits, those we call “keystone habits,” are more important than others—because mastery of them is foundational to successfully modifying behaviors.

Health-related habits are that way for most people. Often, when a person changes eating habits to have a more healthy diet or quits smoking for example, the benefits of this lifestyle change provides confidence that most often leads to more healthy habits like exercise.

Habits have three components: “the cue,” “the routine” and “the reward.”

The “cue” is the stimulant that starts the habit. For example, when you get into your car to drive to work. The “routine” is what you do to respond to the trigger. For instance, the route you take, speed you drive, and so on, are executed mostly without interruption by habit, by your subconscious mind.

Your “reward” is arriving at work, just like you wanted. The habit is reinforced, to be repeated again tomorrow morning.

Developing a new habit requires four things:

1. Become aware of the new habits that you seek to develop. Researchers call this “conscious incompetence.” In other words, you become aware of your lack of competence in some area.
2. Be motivated to develop the new habits. Motivation must come from within you. Nobody else can propel your career. If you don’t care to make the change, it won’t happen. So, if your habitual tardiness bothers your boss, your co-workers, your customers, and your spouse, yet it does not really bother you, you won’t be successful at changing the habit. The motivation has to come from within. Motivation will become easier as you have some initial successes.
3. Group support, by way of feedback and accountability, enables us to power through difficulties as old habits give way to new ones. Dieters and recovering addicts know this element as well. A support group with fast feedback is critical. Joining a group and publically announcing your intent to develop the new habit has a powerful emotional and psychological impact that cements your resolve to change.

4. Lastly, a prolonged period of practicing this new habit is required. Depending on the complexity of the change, researchers agree that it takes between 21 and 120 days of practicing a new habit before the conscious incompetence phase gives rise to the newly formed habit, and you become unconsciously competent, performing it without “thinking” about the new habit.

Our sales teams should serve as “habit-breaking” support groups. Groups should choose no more than one “keystone habit” to develop per quarter, because the best new habits are just plain difficult to cultivate.

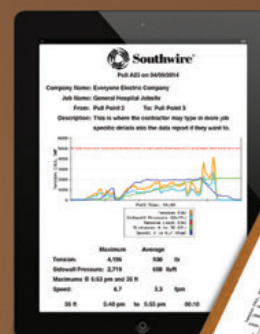
Which “keystone habits” should your salesforce be encouraged to change or develop to inspire improved performance and greater results? Only you will know for sure. However, one thing is for certain. By examining your sales team’s habits and deciding where change is warranted, you’ll be on your way to accomplishing the goals your company desires.

Mike Rockwood is the executive vice president and general manager of Associated of Los Angeles (a subsidiary of Steven Engineering). Lou Pontarelli is the company’s vice president of sales. They have developed a 12-part Sales Program called ‘A-WAY-to SELL’. You have just read one of the chapters. *IMARK NOW* would like to thank Lou and Mike for sharing their expertise with our readers. If you have questions about the ‘A-WAY-to SELL’ Program, please contact Mike at mrockwood@associatedla.com or Lou Pontarelli at lpontarelli@associatedla.com.

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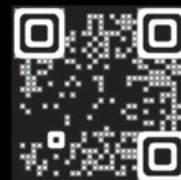
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IMAP:

"PAVING THE WAY" TO INTERNET PRICING PARITY



Kristy Mutino,
Feiss/Monte Carlo



Ed McIntosh,
Broan-NuTone



Dave Brown,
Milwaukee Electric Tool



Laurie Gross,
Gross Electric

When it comes to fairness in online pricing, you don't need a road map to see that IMAP works.

To say the Internet has changed the way consumers price-shop might be the biggest understatement of all-time.

Years ago, to get the best pricing, consumers poured through catalogs, made endless phone calls or traveled from store to store, gathering quotes and prices.

But these days, a simple Web search gets the consumer everything they need, price-wise. This, predictably, has led to online, and offline, price wars on all types of product.

But thanks to a 2008 United States Supreme Court ruling, manufacturers can now work with their wholesalers, distributors and retailers in an effort to make online pricing the last thing anyone has to worry about. It's called IMAP—Internet Minimum Advertised Price—and it's changed the landscape of doing business online.

"The reasoning behind it is that it gives everyone a fair playing field when it comes to online pricing," said Christy Mutino, the director of e-commerce and national accounts for Feiss/Monte Carlo, a home and lighting solutions company based in Rye, New York.

So what is IMAP, exactly? IMAP sets a minimum **advertised** online price that a product can be sold for. That doesn't mean it's the lowest price in which a product can be sold for, but it's the lowest 'advertised' price. The actual sale price is the decision of the individual wholesaler or retailer.

"By lowering the price of an item even by a penny, that puts someone in a higher area of Google search," says Mutino. "And if someone, for instance, has the absolute lowest price for lighting, it will show up high in the rankings, especially for people searching with terms like 'low price.'"

This is a not-so-good thing for a variety of reasons, but the biggest is, quite literally, the biggest: Online retail giants such as Amazon and other companies have no problem advertising and selling items below cost, i.e., "loss-leaders" in order to gain customers and increase volume sales. Without IMAP's safeguards in place, the trickle-down effect becomes a vicious cycle that hurts smaller companies and puts these companies at a distinct disadvantage. It goes like this: Large retailers advertise a low price, consumers flock to the large retailer, smaller retailers struggle and start sliding away, large retailers start dictating terms to the manufacturer.

"It quickly becomes a tail-wagging-the-dog situation," said Ed McIntosh, the northeast regional sales manager for Broan-NuTone. "Manufacturers lose control of pricing in the

market. The market boils down to a bidding war, and the downside of a bidding war process is that the margins for the manufacturer—and the distributors—are whittled down to next to nothing or taken away completely."

Over the years, Dave Brown, who is vice president of channel marketing for Milwaukee Electric Tool, has seen the pricing benefit of IMAP play out for everyone involved.

"We immediately saw the benefits as did our distribution," he said. "Our online partners have been able to flourish while watching their sales margins increase as well."

Without question, pricing is a major factor in why IMAP is a boom to manufacturers. But there's also another benefit that's less tangible but no less real: Brand integrity.

"You see it in fashion brands and in the beauty industry," said Mutino. "You can't bend on Louis Vuitton, on Ralph Lauren. They have the brand integrity, you know they're a high end product."

While it's become abundantly clear that IMAP helps out the manufacturer, the pricing setup also helps out those on the wholesale and retail side, especially for local distributors.

"We take it seriously," said McIntosh. "A lot of the long term relationships we've had and have with electrical distributors made us what we are today. That arm of the business is our storefront, and we want to remember our roots and be loyal. IMAP certainly helps there."

Laurie Gross, the president of Gross Electric, a full-line electrical distributor and showroom house based out of Toledo, Ohio, certainly echoes those sentiments.

"Contractors are consumers," said Gross. "If you give a guy a price for 50 commercial fixtures and then he goes online and looks it up, he'll see the same price out there. You're going to look good."

Gross also sees the value in IMAP as a customer service tool. "It takes pricing out of the matrix," she said. "We

» *continued on page 26*

compete with people all over the country on pricing, and there's going to be different pricing in different markets. With IMAP, it takes that away. Other companies can't be price leaders. If there's an IMAP price out there, it's going to be the lowest price a consumer is going to see."

But to be clear: It's not necessarily the price the product will be sold at.

"If a customer calls us or any distributor, we can quote whatever we want," Gross said. "And if our quote is lower and they go online to compare, they'll see everyone is at X price while we're at Y price for them. The benefits play out in real life."

But as with all things in "real life," there are hurdles to overcome when it comes to IMAP, with the biggest being cheats.

"The weekends come, and that's when it happens," said Mutino. "Friday night, people drop their prices on their websites, thinking no one's watching."

Well, someone is watching. Nowadays sophisticated software programs crawl the Web, looking for vendors who are trying to slip around IMAP policies.

"Feiss/Monte Carlo goes to extreme measures to keep our customers IMAP compliant," said Mutino. "We had a manual process for many years. That is, we reviewed



individual websites and search engines, sent violation letters. If our accounts did not bring their sites and aggregate sites to compliance, we placed orders on hold. If the customer is a constant violator, the account is closed. Three years ago we installed an Internet account management program called MySamm. We found over the last few years our 'map breaks' have improved by 97 percent. Monitoring and controlling IMAP pricing is easier since the installation of MySamm."

Gross, for one, is grateful for the diligence. "It's a lot of work on their part," she said. "But there's a lot of

people out there who figure they'll sell at a lower price and get more business and who cares about everyone else. That goes on. And when we see someone violating IMAP, we send along that information. I've seen companies lose lines as a result."

Bottom line? IMAP works. For just about everyone down the line, from the biggest manufacturers to the smallest retailers—IMAP helps to level the playing field in online sales and distribution and gives companies of all sizes a fighting chance against mass market retailers who are looking to edge out the competition with loss leader online pricing strategies.



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FEATURE

By Susan Bloom



The Drive for Data: A Manufacturer's Perspective

Manufacturers share their insights and best suggestions for how distributors can work with them to cultivate data that is timely, accurate and reliable.

According to 2011-2013 surveys released by The National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED) and Electro-Federation Canada (EFC) members, distributors consistently identify the receipt of reliable, timely and accurate product and pricing data as their most critical priority. The April 2014 issue of *IMARK NOW* responded to these results with a feature on NAED's DataFirst Program, a data quality score-carding effort designed to enable distributors to clearly communicate their specific data requirements and establish a reporting process which evaluates a manufacturer's ability to fulfill them.

Based on the findings of these reports and the launch of the NAED DataFirst Program, there's no doubt that the drive for better data remains one of the most pressing issues that the industry as a whole has to contend with. But logistically, there are still miles to go before uniform, data-collection processes are in place. In the following article, *IMARK NOW* delves deeper into the crux of this issue, seeking out insights from the perspective of those on the front lines of data collation and collection—the manufacturers.

THE NEED FOR HIGH QUALITY DATA

With Web-based sales environments growing in popularity and accounting for an increasingly larger

portion of an electrical distributor's business each year, the demand for high-quality data from vendor partners is continually on the rise.

"There's been a steady demand for Leviton product data from distributors as there continues to be a big push towards the creation of online e-stores," confirms Mark Richards, director of e-commerce for the Melville, New York-based manufacturer, Leviton.

Kathy Wendorf, senior marketing project manager for Juno Lighting Group by Schneider Electric in Des Plaines, Illinois, concurs. "Demand and expectations continue to increase. Having directional and decision-making data and tracking information available all the time is becoming the norm these days," she says.

The same holds true for Pat Quinn, chief information officer at the Conyers, Georgia-based Acuity Brands. "Demand is growing, especially in terms of the number of data elements per product, as more distributors enhance their digital marketplaces."

THE DIFFICULTIES OF ATTRIBUTED DATA

At the same time, however, the difficulties of providing reliable and high quality data to distributors in specially-designated formats are well known to manufacturers.

➤ *continued on page 31*

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While a large part of the data requested through IDW satisfies the requests, Richards says a formatting “disconnect” between the way data is required and how it’s ultimately presented remains a great challenge.

“Understandably, distributors want the manufacturer to customize data to fit whatever format is required for their business system, but this customization process can be time and labor intensive on our side,” he says.

This is a “pain point” that Scott Bausch, the east regional vice president of sales for Legrand North America’s Electrical Wiring Systems division in Syracuse, New York knows all too well. “Because the distribution channel has broad attributes and SKU requirements, the amount of resources for a manufacturer can be significant. There’s a sense on the part of manufacturers that the data being requested isn’t relevant to certain product sets, or that SKUs are being

requested which no longer exist,” Bausch says.

“We have a full-time team dedicated to developing and implementing tools and processes for entering and maintaining the product information necessary to market and sell our products,” says Quinn. “We have another team focused on delivering that information to our partners.” Quinn notes that at any given time his company has 10-12 associates engaged in these activities. “The biggest challenge is getting our engineering and technical resources to enter and maintain all of the necessary information in our database, as this can be tedious and time consuming, plus it must be kept current,” he says.

The bottom line for manufacturers? Some requests require culled resources from IT, marketing, packaging, product management and other varied company functions, which can take excessive

time and resources to coordinate and validate. “Requesting manufacturer’s data isn’t a ‘one-off’ event, it requires a commitment from manufacturers,” Wendorf confirms.

HOPE ON THE HORIZON

With product attribute fields like size, dimension, images, material content, spec sheets, applications, installation instructions, country of manufacture and RoHS status being among those most popularly demanded, manufacturers report that they’re making headway in supporting their distributor partners’ requests for data.

“The industry is doing a good job of giving manufacturers a solid foundation when it comes to the data fields required by distributors,” Richards contends. Specifically, the IDW-driven ‘SAID’ data structure (Specification Sheets, Attributes, Images, Documents), which allows a manufacturer to provide its

» continued on page 32

customers with the essentials to successfully market their products online.

"It has proven to be very important because as a manufacturer, it becomes a lot easier to satisfy your customer when you have a specific goal laid out for you. In the past, we sometimes got pulled in many directions, but the IDW allows us to focus on putting our data in a single place where we can further concentrate on its quality and completeness very efficiently," says Richards.

Richards says that since the SAID elements were instituted there's been a definite spike in requests to organize the data in a way that can be translated into a Web search hierarchy. "This way the distributor can adapt directly into their online store fronts."

Formation of IDEA's Innovation Advisory Council, or IAC, is also helping to address some 14 data 'gaps' that IDEA, distributor and manufacturer representatives identified to be of highest priority.

According to Wendorf, "The work of IAC is extremely beneficial, as it gives both distributors and manufacturers the opportunity to understand and decide how to implement standards once approved," she says.

Quinn agrees, noting that the IDW's efforts "provide a very efficient and effective way for distributors to get manufacturers' product data into their marketing and sales systems."

"The IAC committee's work is very important for the industry," Bausch concurs. "It should define the challenges and key paths for moving to a better IDW solution in many areas, but most importantly in the area of servicing data demand for online distribution volume."

MOVING FORWARD: TIPS FOR IMARK MEMBERS

Richards suggests that to effectively gather the most robust data from their key suppliers, distributors should continue to collect data from the IDW, but should work closely with their IDW contacts to ensure that the systems which manufacturers are being asked to comply with are consistent with their business system requirements.

"Doing this will allow for a more seamless integration of manufacturer data into distributor systems," he says. "In addition, they should continue to make their requirements clear and concise to further ensure that manufacturers hit the mark."

Bausch agrees, confirming that distributors will achieve the greatest success by being more focused with their requests and limiting the requested attributes to specific needs. "Also, they should bucket products more appropriately to build correct attribute data around them," he says.

For Wendorf, it's all about keeping it simple. "Don't overbuild or think you need everything all at once," she advises distributors. "Think about the quickest way to narrow down a data result for each industry segment, because in today's B2B environment, most people aren't shopping or killing time—they have a project in mind and know what they want. Think about what documents are the most important to them (e.g., spec sheets, instructions, etc.) and keep this information in a summary view.

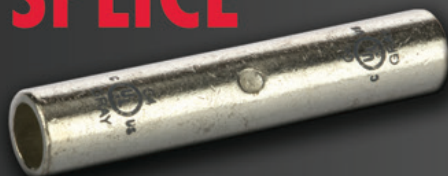
She explains the 'three click' system simply isn't realistic anymore. "Use the supplied attributes as filter functions to narrow a product search. While this could take 4-5 clicks, it ultimately involves less time, offers users exactly what they're looking for, and delivers a better experience overall."

Susan Bloom is a 20-year veteran of the lighting and electrical products industry. Reach her at susan.bloom.chester@gmail.com.

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SURVEY SAYS:

IMARK Group Conducts Digital Marketing Assessment Survey

The impact of the digital age on the marketing efforts of our industry has yet to be widely studied, however, its importance can't be understated. In this survey, IMARK members report on the impact of digital marketing campaigns, both new and emerging, on their businesses.

Much has been written and said about the threat posed to electrical distributors by online companies such as AmazonSupply, Google, eBay and others. IMARK Group, under the auspices of the IMARK Marketing Committee, intends to develop a formal resource network with the goal of supporting IMARK members that intend to enhance their ability to market and sell in an increasingly digital age.

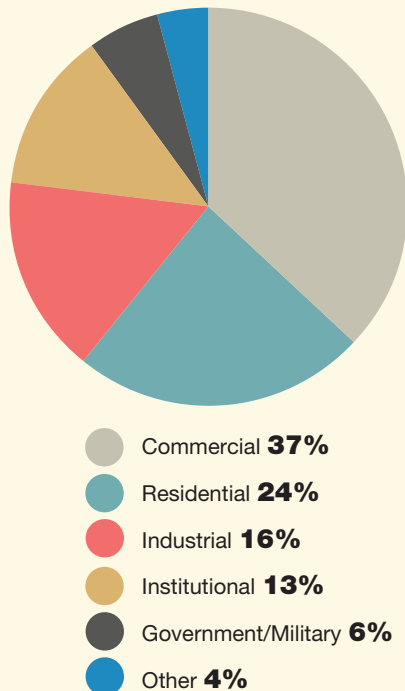
Earlier this year, IMARK Group conducted a digital marketing assessment survey of IMARK members. We were encouraged by the high response rate of return—over 260 member companies responded to the survey. Currently, the results are being carefully reviewed and studied by IMARK staff and the membership of the IMARK Marketing Committee.

In the coming months, based on these survey results, IMARK's goal is to use this information to develop and offer competitive strategies, innovative programs, resources and solutions for its members when it comes to digital marketing.

Highlights of the survey results are as follows:

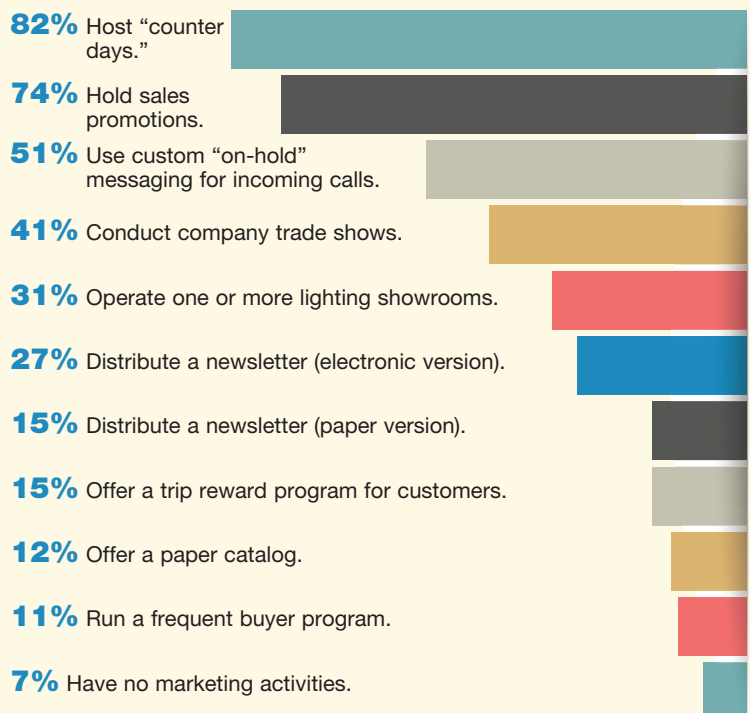
ULTIMATE USE OF PRODUCT SOLD

Composite customer mix of IMARK member survey respondents say the "ultimate use" of product sold:



CURRENT MARKETING TACTICS

Marketing and sales development activities conducted by respondents:



➤ continued on page 37

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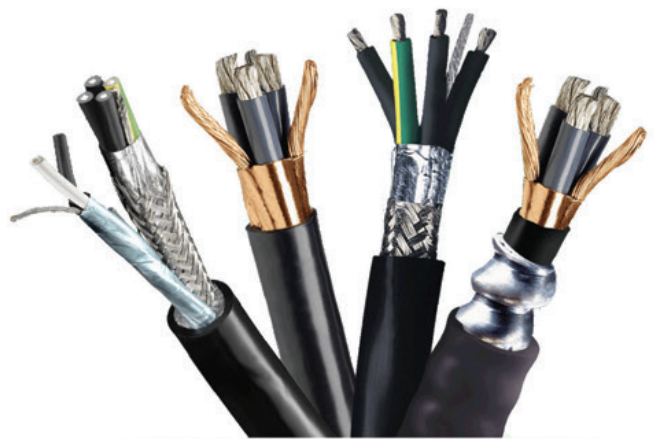


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AccuLite™ H1 Series LED Highbays

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Juno® 2" LED Round & Square Downlights and Adjustables

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AccuLite™

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AccuLite™ PG Series LED Parking Garage Luminaires

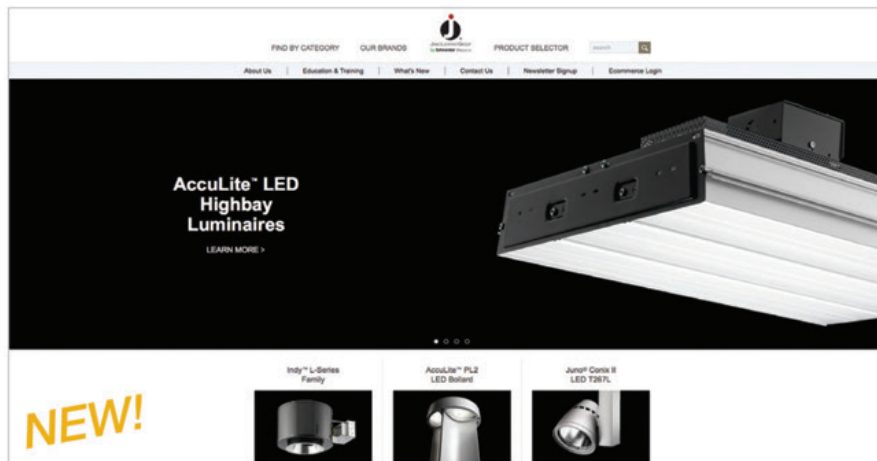
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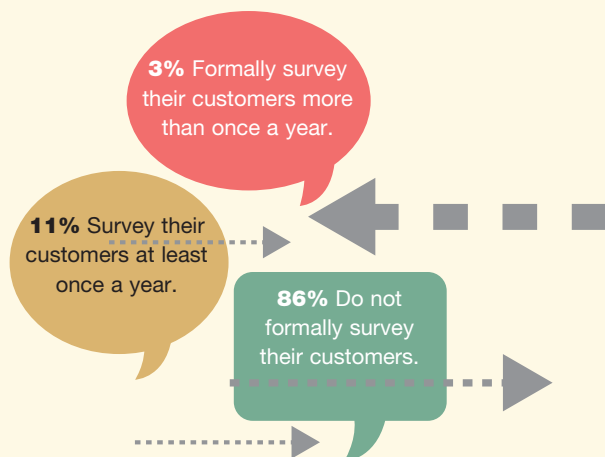
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CONDUCTING CUSTOMER SURVEYS



WEBSITES

- 92%** Have a company website. The features included on respondent's websites are as follows:
- 89%** Feature the company's supplier line card.
 - 87%** Include a list of all branch locations.
 - 64%** Include a roster of key company contacts.
 - 49%** Have information on new products from suppliers.
 - 37%** Have company sales promotions.
 - 37%** Include links to product training.
 - 32%** Offer a digital catalog with search capability.
 - 30%** Provide industry news to their customers.
 - 30%** Allow customers to place orders on the website.
 - 25%** Allow customers to check distributor inventory.
 - 24%** Provide customized passwords to customers so they can log on to review their accounts.
 - 6%** Contain a blog.
 - 5%** Allow customers to view delivery schedules for ordered product.
 - 4%** Promote their frequent buyer program.
 - 3%** Offer customer forums.
 - 3%** Offer on-line chat (help desk) serviced by member company personnel.



Desktop



Notebook

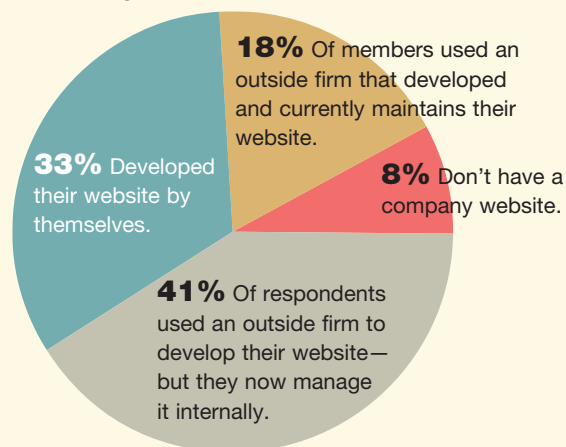


Tablet

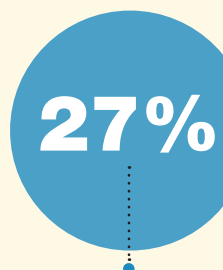


Smartphone

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

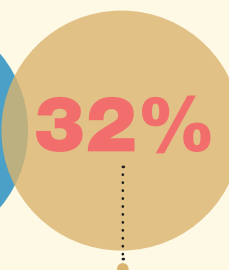


SEO USAGE



Utilize search engine optimization (SEO) techniques to ensure that their company is displayed prominently to customers searching for electrical supplies.

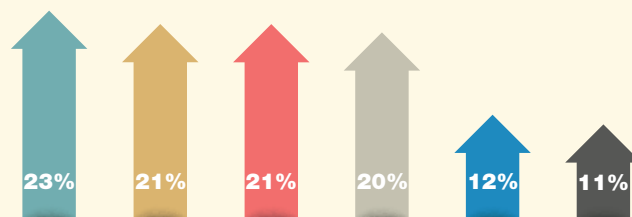
DATA TRACKING



Use services (such as Google Analytics) to track visitors to the company website.

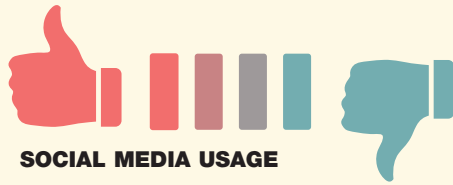
CUSTOM "APPS"

10% Have developed (or offer) one or more 'apps' for use by customers using mobile devices. Functions of apps are as follows:



- 23%** Offer a catalog via the app they developed.
- 21%** Allow customers to place orders.
- 21%** Allow customers to check distributor inventory.
- 20%** Allow customers to check order status.
- 12%** Have developed an app that features contractor productivity tools.
- 11%** Feature product application information.

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SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

60% Use or are using one or more of the most recognized social media tools.

40% Do not use any social media tools.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Of those that use some type of social media:

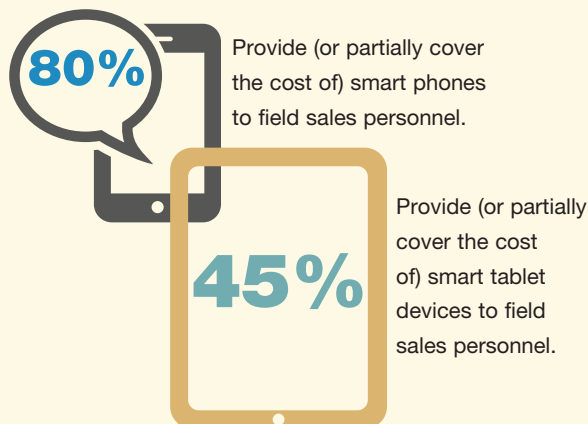
- 47%** Have a Facebook page
- 36%** Have a LinkedIn profile
- 26%** Use Twitter
- 19%** Use YouTube
- 7%** Use Google+
- 6%** Use Pinterest
- 6%** Use a form of social media not listed in the survey

SOCIAL MEDIA TACTICS:

IMARK members report using social media tools to communicate the following:

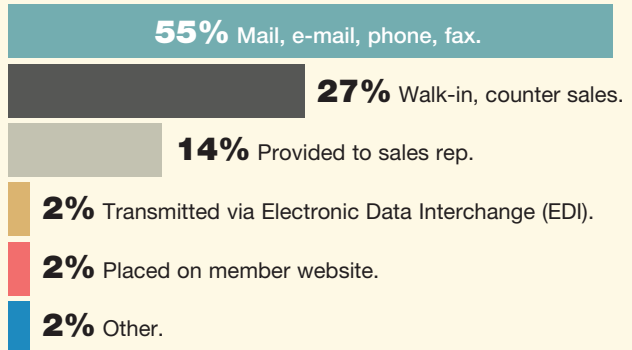
- 53%** Introduce new products.
- 53%** Announce company news and events.
- 37%** Launch sales promotions.
- 22%** Employee recruitment purposes.
- 8%** To share NEC code information and product application tips.
- 29%** Other reasons not listed in the survey.

SMART DEVICE USAGE



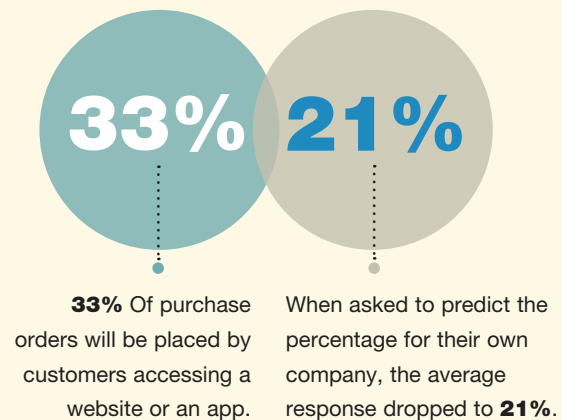
PURCHASE ORDER DELIVERY

Current method of purchase order receipt reported:



PREDICTIONS OF ORDER DELIVERY METHODS IN 2017.

On average, member respondents believe that for the electrical distribution industry:



MEMBER THREAT ASSESSMENT

Survey respondents were asked to select the statement provided that best characterized their company's assessment of the threat posed to their company by firms such as AmazonSupply, Google, eBay and others:

- 43%** We are **very concerned** and are **currently implementing** tools to prepare our company to satisfy customers who prefer to conduct business electronically.
- 27%** We are very concerned and are **considering ways** to prepare our company to serve customers who will prefer to conduct business electronically.
- 26%** We are mildly concerned, but we are **not planning any major changes** to the ways we market and sell.
- 4%** We are **not concerned**. It is what it is.

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STOPPING “DISRUPTION” IN ITS TRACKS

Dealing with disruptive forces in distribution is a challenge every business owner faces, but with careful planning, you can prepare for whatever lies ahead.



A couple of weeks ago *Forbes* ran an article that got me thinking. The title was, “How Would You Put You Out of Business?” Call me Pollyanna, overtly positive or what you like, but I believe distributors have grown immune to pontifications directed to the death of distribution. In the past few years we’ve heard tales of woe. Internet-driven disintermediation was a buzz word a few years ago, however, it seems like we’ve survived. What’s more, we didn’t die off during the Y2K era. And, I suspect the AmazonSupply-story will come and go, but electrical distributors will still be standing tall.

As a group, it seems like we’re pretty darn hard to put out of business next year or the year after that. I still think the question begs consideration, but instead of hyped-up doom and gloom, let’s put our own little spin on things. I want to ask three basic questions:

- 1) Are we aware of some of the changes around us?
- 2) Have we thought about how they could impact us?
- 3) What might we do to keep some of this from sneaking up on us?

To answer these questions, let’s take a look at some of the “disruptive” trends in our industry.

TECHNOLOGY IS DISRUPTIVE AND SNEAKY, TOO

Bill Gates said something that continues to rumble around in my mind. “We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten. Don’t let yourself be lulled into inaction.”

Analytics is another disruptive force rattling around inside the whole technology story. How might data-collection disrupt our normal way of doing business? Case in point, the last recession caught quite a few distributors by surprise. Everyone knew business was shifting, but most didn’t understand the depth or duration of the recession. Because they lacked the analytics needed to predict the drop, many continued to “hold the line” on making cutbacks until months had passed. On the other side of the recession, a good many distributors missed the opportunity to take advantage of the upswing.

The moral of this story? In the future, distributors with the best analytics will prosper because predicting the future with analytics will allow for better, faster and more successful business decisions. The economy will continue to have economic storms, seasonal upticks and cyclical drops, but the more data a business has to prepare for the future, the better off they’ll be.

MORE DISRUPTIONS

Technology, analytics and process meld together to create a disruptive shift in the way pricing is established. Pricing has been on the minds of electrical wholesalers since the sunny days of my youth. The very first NAED branch manager training session I attended in 1991 devoted a half day to Matrix Pricing. The concept is simple—everyone thinks they understand it. But most miss out on a major point.

The typical medium-sized electrical distributor has (conservatively) 2,000 customers and 20,000 SKU’s. In order to understand the real “matrix,” the distributor would need to monitor (2,000 x 20,000) or 40 million pricing permutations. The sheer weight of these numbers puts pricing automation outside the reach of even the smartest guy armed with the most tricked-out spreadsheet.

Technological breakthroughs employed by distributors using David Bauders’ Strategic Pricing Associates (SPA)

➤ continued on page 43

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model include automated downloading of data from the distributor’s business system, and a scientific statistical analysis of the purchase history of every customer in the distributor’s customer list. It also includes a process for bringing people into the equation through metrics and training.

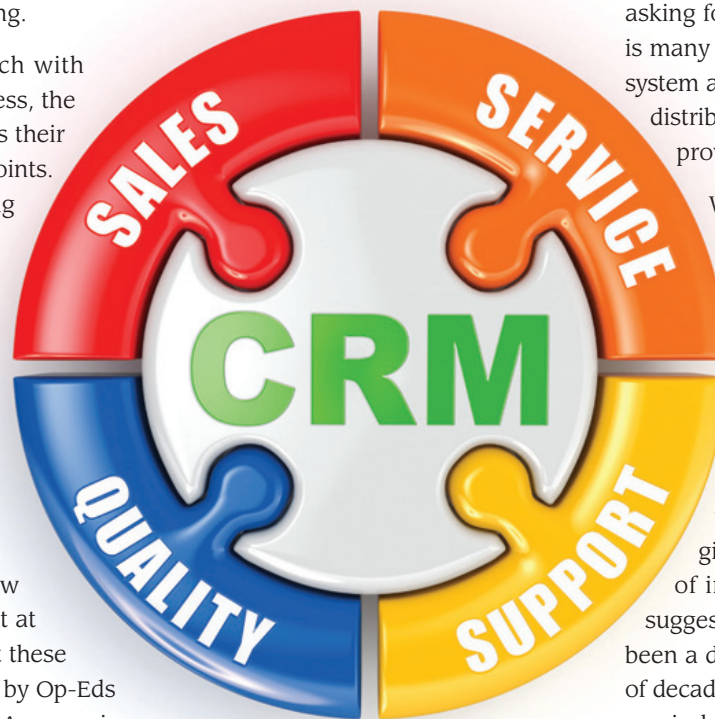
Based on my own research with clients using the SPA process, the typical distributor increases their gross margin by two full points. In the electrical wholesaling industry, this is like a 75 percent increase in profitability. After speaking with over 40 of SPA’s 350-plus clients, I have yet to hear of a major customer complaint on pricing.

THE EVOLVING COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE IS DISRUPTIVE

We can always expect new competitors. Period. As I sit at my keyboard pounding out these thoughts, I am bombarded by Op-Eds on AmazonSupply. Maybe Amazon is the proverbial big bad wolf, but I think the greater threat comes from more traditional distributors.

Across most areas of distribution, we hear plans to expand into new technologies. Electrical distributors, power transmission distributors and fluid power guys are pushing their way into the automation space. Safety products have become a battleground for not only safety distributors, but for nearly everyone calling on industrial, institutional or construction businesses.

IMARK members are getting into the act as well. Over 30 IMARK members are now part of the IMARK /EDGE alliance and are selling electronics, data communications, low voltage and security equipment.



At this very moment, there is a very good chance there are people plotting ways to steal your customers away—or you may be planning to do that to others. And, my experience dictates that today and tomorrow’s winners will not attack on the basis of lowest price, but rather on the attainment of better customer data, better solution capabilities, advanced warehousing and more aggressive customer communication methods.

Industrial Distribution’s 67th Annual Distributor Survey indicates that 56 percent of distributors polled have a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) package in place, with another 23 percent planning for the addition of a system in the near future. Without asking for a show of hands, my guess is many of you have purchased a CRM system as well. At the same time, many distributors still have sellers who are providing half-hearted data.

What I believe the poll didn’t represent is the vast number of distributors who have invested without ever harvesting the benefit. This disruptive force will arrive when somebody starts using their CRM system the way Amazon uses its customer information. Let me give you an example. The idea of inside salespeople making suggestions for “add-on” sales has been a discussion for the past couple of decades. Largely, the scorecard for our industry on proactive add-ons is not good. An interactive CRM system and training might be the big disruptive tool for inside sales.

Our supply-partners will be monitoring the situation. These manufacturers are attracted to distributors capable of harvesting (and sharing) customer data. Whether we like it or not, some of our new competition will come via suppliers signing up new distributors in our territory. Updates on technological prowess as a part of the distributor’s package of values to vendors and

➤ continued on page 44

supply-partners is now mandatory. This is a disruptive shift for many that is not going to go away anytime soon.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS ARE A DISRUPTIVE FORCE

Never has our industry faced such a dramatic demographic shift. And we're being hit on two fronts.

While making the rounds on the speaking circuit, I have heard at least a dozen talks on the generation gap in the work place. Most of these presentations deal with the nuances of managing Millennial-age workers. They make some great points, but I believe they miss the main point.

"Gen X," "Gen Y" and "Millennial Generation" workers are working their way into important jobs in our customer base—perhaps some Millennials are reading this right now. This generation operates under a new set of rules. To illustrate, last week I interviewed a 32-year old facilities manager who manages a \$1.5 million budget. Here's a couple of points to ponder. He doesn't like golf. As a matter of fact, he indicated that most of his contemporaries are turned off by what he calls, "...the country club-yacht club scene." Outings that

include craft beer and music are more to his liking.

The trappings of success sought after by members of my generation—the Baby Boomer generation—don't apply to Millennials. And, their communication style is different. Referring back to my young facilities manager friend, at the end of our interview, I asked for the best way to reach him in case of follow-up questions. His response? "Just shoot me a text, they're quicker for me to follow." It turns out he favors suppliers who allow for incoming text messages. Again, this is a disruptive force at work for those of us unfamiliar with the changes in technology.

How many distributors have a mechanism for incoming text messages? The technology is there, and it's pretty inexpensive. So why isn't everyone jumping on this bandwagon? Maybe it's inertia.

Now for the other side of the demographic disruption: Succession. Next time you attend a distributor association meeting look around. As my

daughter would say, "Lots of old people in attendance." Many of us who've had long distribution careers can see the end of the road sign just around the curve. Shifting the leadership of our companies will be tougher than most imagine.

If you have daughters or sons working in your business, life is good. Your succession planning is simplified, but there are still lots of issues to work out. Regardless of your parenting skills and no matter how open to new leadership you are, transitioning the next generation (or other new leadership) into the business isn't easy, and occasionally it requires we seek out outside coaching in preparation for what's to come.

A PARTING THOUGHT ON DISRUPTIVE FORCES

I sincerely hope most of us put the right kind of thought into capitalizing on these predicted disruptive changes—and the time to do it is now, before they become an issue that we have to contend with or see our businesses flounder. The better armed we are for what lies ahead, the better positioned our businesses will be to grow and prosper well into the future.





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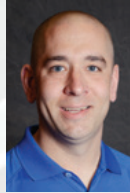


ALL IN A DAY'S WORK:

A Day in the Life of a Regional Manager



Kofi Dabo-Apraku
– Klein Tools



Adam Biggs
– Omni Cable



Robert Dicker
– IPEX USA LLC



Dan Richardson
– NSi Industries

Our Expert Panel:



From overseeing clear communications, developing strategies and meeting sales targets, to leading their team's personal and professional growth trajectories, regional sales managers are critical conduits in the sales process between a company and its end-users. In the following story, *IMARK NOW* captures the thoughts and insights of several of the industry's most prominent regional managers as they share an inside look at the rewards and challenges of their complex role and responsibilities.

IMARK NOW: Tell us about yourself.

Adam Biggs, Omni Cable: I recently assumed the sales manager position for our O'Fallon, MO location, but have been in the industry for 16 years, and with Omni Cable for a little over nine years, after having spent seven years prior to that with two electrical distributors in the St. Louis area.

Kofi Dabo-Apraku, Klein Tools: I've been in my current role for one year and in the industry for five years, where I previously worked in Ohio as a district sales manager and before that as a customer service associate for Klein Tools.

Dan Richardson, NSi Industries: I've been in the industry for 24 years and with NSi for 17 years as northeast region manager for the last seven, and as eastern region manager for the previous 10.

Robert Dicker, IPEX USA LLC: I've been in the industry for 40 years and in my current role since 1995. I began my career in 1974 with SCEPTER Manufacturing Company Ltd. as a factory salesman covering Ontario, Canada. In 1980 I became involved in NEMA, CSA and UL Inc. and participated in sub-committees of various standards for non-metallic raceways, then became an OEM and regional sales manager for IPEX Inc. in 1984.

IMARK NOW: What personal attributes are most important for a successful regional sales manager?

Biggs: Among the most important attributes are the ability and willingness to look at the big picture when tackling everyday situations with the sales team as well as the ability to lead the sales team in the right direction without giving direct orders or directives. Someone once told me, "Don't be the bus driver, be the guardrail," and that's something I've kept with me and use daily in my sales manager role.

➤ *continued on page 49*



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Dabo-Apraku: Communication, leadership and integrity are the most important personal attributes for a successful manager at any level. By listening to concerns or challenges and following up with clear communication of solutions and expectations, you can effectively address areas for improvement and collaborate with your team to develop a plan for growth.

Richardson: One of the most critical attributes is the ability to clearly understand and embrace your company's business model and how they go to market. We're the direct face of and eyes, ears and voice for the manufacturer in an up-front, close and personal manner in the market. We're also our company's advocates to our distributor partners, and have the same responsibility for our IMARK partners back to our company.

Dicker: Key attributes include integrity, trust, honesty and credibility. You also have to understand customer needs, do as you say you will, meet and try to exceed customer expectations, and follow through on your promises.

IMARK NOW: What are the most important responsibilities of a regional sales manager for an electrical manufacturer?

Biggs: My most important responsibility is to make sure that everyone on the team is on the same page regarding where the company is going and how we're going to get there together. Sales budgets and all of the other numbers we see every day don't mean anything if we're all not working together towards the same goals.

Dabo-Apraku: I believe the primary responsibility of a regional sales manager is to serve and lead the team in delivering the highest level of service and support to distributor partners. These efforts must be in line with the company's overall strategy and objectives. Long term, the best regional managers are able to cultivate team members, bolster individual weaknesses, and enhance strengths.

Richardson: It's critical for a regional sales manager in our industry to earn respect and gain trust, which creates close personal relationships. At the end of the day, this is still a personal business and people/IMARK

distributors prefer to support RSMs and companies they respect, trust and have a personal affiliation with.

Dicker: Getting a disproportionate amount of our representative's time spent with IMARK distributors is paramount to our joint success. We also need to continuously communicate our company's strategy to our sales team for continued long-term growth and profitability.

IMARK NOW: What do you find most challenging and rewarding about your job?

Biggs: I enjoy being able to work one-on-one with the account managers on a daily basis and to both teach and learn from them. The most challenging thing about the job is constantly changing and adapting our strategies to market conditions, whether it be the price of copper, weather, pressure from competition or many other factors. My biggest frustration is trying to convince distributors to get us involved early and provide us with all the details when there's a piece of business being bid.

Dabo-Apraku: It can be challenging to walk the tight-rope of serving the interests of my team and company while managing the expectations and needs of our distributor partners. It's therefore most rewarding when all of these converge and we can confidently say we delivered our best effort and it paid off. When this happens, relationships that began as business partnerships develop into real friendships based on mutual respect and trust. The biggest frustrations come from any short-sighted or short-term approach to business from the various parties that make up this industry.

Richardson: The most challenging element can be recognizing that each IMARK distributor has their own distinct personality and this must be taken into account in order to communicate effectively. The most rewarding aspect is meeting and overcoming communications issues such that you earn respect, build trust and develop a personal bond.

Dicker: Convincing end-users to embrace our systems and understand the labor savings they offer can be challenging. The reward, of course, is when the customer

› continued on page 50

utilizes our systems and the product does everything we've told them it will. Among the most frustrating elements of the job is continuous price pressure in the market and customers who focus on the price of material and don't look at the added value in our product, which far outweighs any marginal savings they may get from price shopping.

IMARK NOW: How is technology changing the way we sell?

Biggs: I believe current technology has dramatically improved both internal and external communications. We're able to quickly respond to customer requests via e-mail or text when not in the office, and through particular apps, we're also able to see real-time sales figures and other customer stats that we can use during sales calls.

Dabo-Apraku: Technology has had a significant impact on our sales process. The use of tablets and smart phones as well as the adoption of CRM software by our company have radically improved access to information on-the-go and greatly reduced the hours spent on follow-up meetings with distributor partners. Technology has helped free up space, increase productivity, and given us access to real-time data that allows us to optimize our offerings in response to distributor needs. Embracing technology can also be a huge means of attracting, retaining, and developing new talent.

Richardson: The technological/IT revolution of the last 15 years has dramatically altered the sales landscape. Through the use of smart phones, tablets, iPads and even stodgy old laptops, communications and informational transfers are now conducted at virtually the speed of light. Every facet of the selling process has accelerated accordingly.

Dicker: Technology has improved communication time between manufacturers, distributors and customers. We recognize that technology allows us to better manage our overall business and makes it easier for end-users to do business with us.

IMARK NOW: What are the best ways that an IMARK distributor sales rep can engage you and your sales team?

Biggs: It helps to look at us as a partner rather than just a vendor and to get us involved at the beginning of the sales cycle, because then we're able to lend our expertise on the front end of the opportunity and help bring value to the distributor in their customer's eyes.

Dabo-Apraku: The greatest opportunity for engagement and success with our sales team presents itself when a distributor sales rep takes a comprehensive look at the industry and the best interests of their company and the end-users they serve. Our products speak to end-user demands for quality and service and offer the distributor an opportunity to increase profitability on a low-investment, high-margin and high-volume product. The distributor that facilitates this exchange through joint sales calls and proactive initiatives will prove to be the most valuable. Regional managers and IMARK distributor sales reps can strengthen their relationship and promote mutual growth by sharing sales targets and co-developing annual strategies that take into account seasonal and quarterly changes in the industry.

Richardson: We encourage IMARK distributor sales reps to contact us via phone, e-mail or text and to engage us in joint calls, product training, counter events, contractor outings, meetings, etc., because all of it is elemental to the Gainshare Program that we fully embrace. RSMS should be viewed as allies, not adversaries or critics, and we'll all enjoy greater levels of success if we work together as a team rather than acting independently.

Dicker: Communication between sales reps, our manufacturers' reps and ourselves is crucial to allowing all of us to get closer, identify opportunities, become better partners and bring product and labor-saving solutions to our joint customers. Collaborating on joint sales calls and training can be especially valuable, particularly because it helps focus on the customer's total needs and provide solutions that could make our customers more profitable.

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IMARK MEMBER SERVICE PROVIDER REFERENCE GUIDE

IMARK member service providers have a proven track record in providing excellent and cost effective services to IMARK members in the following areas:

- Financial Services
- Logistics Management, Transportation and Warehousing Support
- Management Tools
- Office Supplies and Uniforms
- Sales and Marketing Support
- Technology and E-Commerce Solutions

IMARK member companies earn rebates and/or discounts when they purchase services from the companies listed below.

Complete information on IMARK Member Service Providers (MSP) can be found in the "Member Service Directory" section of the IMARK website at www.imarkgroup.com.

Please contact Ken Nagel (knagel@imarkgroup.com) at 301-281-8109 if you have any questions about the IMARK MSP program.

MSP REFERENCE GUIDE

MSP	SERVICES	CONTACT INFO	WEBSITE/EMAIL
Financial Services			
AIP Solutions	Commercial Collections	Jerry Smith 866.460.7898	www.aipsolutions.com jsmith@aipsolutions.com
Alerus Retirement Services	401(k) Retirement Plans	Keith Schermitzler 1.866.427.2731	www.alerusretirementsolutions.com kschermitzler@alerusmail.com
Billtrust	Complete Billing Services	Mitchell Rose 1.888.580.2455 ext. 122	www.billtrust.com mrose@billtrust.com
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Skylands Transaction Management	Credit Card Transaction Processing and Consulting	Tom Tague 1.866.828.5575	www.skylandstm.com ttague@skylandstm.com
United Tranz Actions	Check Processing Programs and Services	Jeanine Goodstein 1.800.858.5256 ext. 208	www.nctinc.com jgoodstein@nctinc.net
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Tag Logistics	Optimization of Delivery, Transfer and Freight Systems	Mike Loonie 413.478.9125	www.taglogistics.com mloonie@taglogistics.com

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Creative Marketing Alliance (CMA)	Advertising, Marketing, PR, Event Planning and Sales Incentive Programs	Jeff Barnhart 609.297.2235	www.GoToCMA.com jbarnhart@cmasolutions.com
ElectricSmarts	Website Content Development	Pam Friis (Members) 1.877.400.5991 Bill Floyd (Suppliers) 508.540.9501	www.electricsmarts.com pfriis@electricsmarts.com bfloyd@electricsmarts.com
Goldner Associates	Promotional Products	Andy Straus 615.250.8241	www.goldnerassociates.com astraus@goldnerassociates.com
On Hold Media Group	Real-Time On-Hold Message Delivery Systems	Brian Hoffman 1.866.758.1300	www.onholdwizard.com brian@onholdwizard.com
SMP	Sales and Marketing Software for the Distribution Industry	Joe Raventos 949.258.0410	www.goSMP.com sales@goSMP.com
Veolia	Lamp, Ballast, and Electronics Recycling	Mark Braniff 804.556.2850	www.veolia.com mark.braniff@veoliaes.com
Waste Management Lamp Tracker	Lamp, Ballast, and Electronics Recycling	Elizabeth Grochowski 610.709.2901	www.wmlamptracker.com egrochow@wm.com
Wolfe Promotional Services	Incentive Program Ideas and Products	David Wolfe 1.888.452.4WPS	www.wolfepromo.com get-it@wolfepromo.com

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Harland Technology Services	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair of Computer Hardware	Marla Miller 402-697-3269	www.harlandtechnologyservices.com marla.miller@harlandts.com
IDEA	E-Commerce Processes and Systems	Mike Wentz 215.385.6999	www.idea-esolutions.com mwentz@idea-esolutions.com
Kore Technologies	Enterprise Integration, Data Warehousing, Integrated E-Commerce Solutions	Keith Lambert 858.300.2608	www.koretech.com keithl@koretech.com
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Ximple Solutions, LLC	Affordable ERP Solutions	Carlos Aguado 301.949.4400	www.ximplellc.com caguado@ximplellc.com
XTuple	Open Source ERP Solutions	Stacey Pandeloglou 757.435.1733	www.xtuple.com/imark Stacey@xtuple.com

THE FUTURE IS NOW

In February 2014, IMARK Group hosted a “Futures Group,” a group of Millennial-aged member executives who shared thoughts, insights and perspectives on how their generation-aged workers will change the electrical distribution industry as we know it.

We tend to think of the future as unknowable, yet clues to the shape of things to come can often be glimpsed by examining the trends of the present day, especially when it comes to the future workplace.

Some of the forces at play are already well known to IMARK members. For years we’ve been contending with ever-changing generational demographics of our workplace, as well as the snowballing significance of shifts and advancements in digital technologies that impact almost every aspect of our businesses.

We may not know the future, but from a technological standpoint, we can surely see a glimpse of what’s to come.

With this in mind, IMARK has assembled a new forward-thinking committee called “The IMARK Futures Group.” Members of the Futures Group, all Millennials in their mid-20s to early 30s, are a cross-section of articulate, educated, industry-committed professionals who are looking towards the bold future of electrical distribution.

Why A Futures Group Is Needed

The stalwart electrical distribution leadership of the Greatest Generation, born before 1945 and now

well into their late 70s, is passing the torch to younger executives. Even if “60 is the new 50,” Baby Boomers in their mid-50s to late-60s are, or soon will be, transitioning into well-deserved retirements or consulting careers.

The fact that a similar demographic drift is also taking place among electrical contractor customers is further evidence of the need to react, adapt and re-invent as the “new guard” inevitably moves into leadership.

Hence, The Futures Group Was Born

In forming the Futures Group, IMARK turned to the younger members of the industry’s workforce to harvest their insights on the digital evolution in distribution and glean their perspectives on their place in the workplace.

Millennials are the nation’s first true digital natives. From infancy, they have grown up in a wired world. To them, the landscape of life always included computers, the Internet and e-mail. As social media and mobile communications have evolved, it was a natural extension of the world as they knew it, not the sea of change those of us born in earlier generations had to navigate.

“In forming this group, IMARK is bringing together some of the younger people in our industry to get our input on a variety of different topics from digital marketing and social networking, to how we perceive the workplace,” says Cassie Belcher, marketing communications manager at Western Extralite Company, a 17-branch supply house headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri.

“The Futures Group is made up of younger talent who are working in and committed to this industry to explore the perspectives of the generations who are coming up,” observes Matthew Eberhart, product and promotions coordinator at The Hite Company, Altoona, Pennsylvania, which has just under two dozen regional branch locations.

Millennials Report: E-Commerce Is Essential

If there is one aspect of the future this cadre of young people agrees on, it is that electrical distribution will continue to become increasingly digital. With competitors such as AmazonSupply and Google pinching the margins of electrical commodity products through online ordering, the urgency of the situation is compounded.

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Cassie Belcher,
Western Extralite
Company



Matthew Elerhart,
The Hite Company



Josh Costanza,
Summit Electric Supply



Lindsay Knox,
Granite City Electric
Supply



Michael Doris,
Mars Electric Company

BUSINESS





According to recent research by the National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED), 40 percent of electrical distributors have a website storefront capability—and nearly 50 percent of those companies have reported that they are planning to make e-commerce available to customers in the future.

All of the members of the IMARK Futures Group interviewed for this article work for distributors who have an online e-commerce presence.

Perhaps none of them knows the lay of the (digital) land better than Futures Group member Josh Costanza, user experience designer for the Web team at Summit Electric Supply, a 25-branch electrical distributor headquartered in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

If you don't have a user experience designer at your shop, take note. You may need one in the future.

"I focus on how our customers interface with our website, mobile applications and social media," Costanza explains. "Part of my role is making it easier for people to interact with our company and

order products online through the tools we build for our customers. I not only design the look and feel of our online sales tools, but also the patterns and paths for how users interact with the Summit website offerings."

"The essential elements for a distributor's Web-based storefront are pricing and real-time inventory, or as real-time as possible," observes Lindsay Knox, marketing communications specialist at Granite City Electric Supply, a 28-branch supply house headquartered in Quincy, Massachusetts.

"At the end of the day, it's how much and when can I get it? But there's a third element," says Knox. "Ease of navigation should be the guiding principle in structuring a Web store. The website should have a powerful search function and be easy to use—from our customers' standpoint, not that of the Web developers."

"Having the best searchability and having great content—catalogues, online pricing and ordering is key," notes Western Extralite's Belcher. "We work very hard to ensure that

we have customized the information provided for each customer, that's when it has the highest value for them."

Michael Doris works in sales and is a third-generation family member at Mars Electric Company, an 11-branch electrical wholesaler headquartered in Willoughby, Ohio. Doris, who recently turned 30 years old, explains, "We have the ability for our customers to set up an account to purchase materials online. They can also track their account balance and open orders. We see our customers using it not so much for ordering, but for checking their accounts and pricing."

Millennials Report: Content Rules

There's another and more daunting factor members of the IMARK Futures Group uniformly agree on. Despite the efforts of IDEA, the industry-owned data warehouse, and other manufacturer product data aggregators, manufacturer product attributes remain a big disconnect, both exacerbated by and hindering distributors' push for greater online sales capabilities.

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Multi-Speed



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"One of the big issues is quality content from the manufacturers," says Eberhart. "We need good pictures, good attributes and good spec sheets. That's not an easy task right now."

Knox is even more adamant. "There is a serious nomenclature issue with manufacturer product data," she explains. "The product data manufacturers provide is ill-suited and generally ineffective for e-commerce. Distributors need high-resolution product images and SEO-friendly product descriptions. Manufacturers need to start tailoring their product data to e-commerce and they need to start now."

"It can be very challenging for customers to figure out the exact item or parts number they're looking for," says Doris. "It's often easier for them to just pick up the phone. I think that's an issue a lot of distributors are facing."

Millennials Report: Now's The Time To Mobilize

Toss in the rise of mobile smart phones and tablet computers to the way business is increasingly done these days, and you have a future that has laptop manufacturers scrambling on the precipice of obsolescence. Several of the distributors employing Futures Group members have mobile customer apps and all report having optimized their websites for mobile viewing.

While Futures Group members acknowledge that the value brick and mortar distributors have in providing solutions via phone or face-to-face interactions in sales calls, or at the counter, will always differentiate them from online suppliers like Google and Amazon, mobile is definitely switching things up.

"Counter traffic isn't what it used to be," says Eberhart. "Contractors aren't coming in as often. You have to follow the customer somehow. There's really no better way to be on the device they are using all day, every day."

"We're getting ready to launch our mobile app for Apple and Android devices," says Belcher. "One of the app's coolest features is that a customer can scan a product barcode and it will take the customer directly to that item within the app."

"The Web is evolving every day," says Costanza at Summit Electric Supply. "I'm constantly looking at the kinds of devices that are visiting our site. I evaluate each user experience and note where there is need for improvement,

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then compare that to the metrics of mobile devices and computers to support searching and buying behaviors. I find that the electrical industry has a lot of catching up to do in the Web and mobile arenas."

As the electrical contractor market "gets younger," how do Futures Group members assess the importance of social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn?

"It can take years to build a following in social media, so it's important to establish a social networking presence now in preparation for coming generations of contractor apprentices and journeymen," Knox states. "Our current customer base may not be heavy social media users, but it will be. It's better to be waiting on the band wagon before the transition hits, rather than scrambling to jump on after the wagon is full."

"Social media makes it easier for customers to receive information without inbox clutter," notes Costanza. "It also gives Summit Electric Supply a presence where our audience is actively participating, so we use it to share news, events and promotions."

Cassie Belcher concurs. "Social media isn't that useful as a selling tool. We use it to share our expertise and to post about promotions and events. It's a great way to position Western Extralite as industry experts here to help our customers."

"This may be unusual coming from a marketer in his 20s, but I don't think social media is absolutely essential," says Eberhart, "but having a back-and-forth conversation with customers gives you mindshare. With mindshare comes customer loyalty and with customer loyalty

comes price flexibility which everyone strives for. To me, the real value of social media is the ability to monitor what contractors and end-users are talking about in various online forums. There's some very valuable information out there if you approach social media that way."

Millennials Report: The Future Is Now

As a whole, the IMARK Futures Group is excited about embracing the challenges of electrical distribution. "Every day is a battle, but it's a lot of fun, especially working in a smaller business," says Doris. "I came to this position after working for a large insurance company of 30,000 people, to a company of just over 100 employees. At Mars, we have the ability to just take care of customers and do the right thing for them without having to make a phone call to get someone's approval."

"One of my favorite things is the people I've met and the amazing work ethic they have," says Eberhart. "Distributor or manufacturer, everyone works hard and they work fast. This is an industry where knowledge goes a long way whether it's about lighting retrofits, voice and data or meters. It's a challenge as a younger person to acquire that knowledge quickly, but you keep at it because that's what your customers are looking for."

"A great deal of value is placed on being a veteran in this industry and for good reason," Knox observes. "But there needs to be a shift in the industry's mindset when it comes to younger employees. Nothing is more frustrating than to see young talent slip through a company's fingers because the long-term ROI wasn't considered. The electrical industry needs to invest in young people with the same ferocity that it does with the veterans."

THE FUTURES GROUP

Dan Finlay,
Colonial Electric Supply Company,
King of Prussia, PA

Jeff Martin,
Commonwealth United Electric Supply,
Alexandria, VA

Chad Sherrill,
Dickman Supply Inc.,
Sidney, OH

Lindsay Knox,
Granite City Elec. Supply,
Quincy, MA

Matthew Eberhart,
The Hite Company,
Altoona, PA

Michael Doris,
Mars Electric Co.,
Willoughby, OH

Josh Costanza,
Summit Electric Supply,
Albuquerque, NM

Eric Slemmer,
United Electric Supply Co., Inc.,
Langhorne, PA

Paris Connolly,
USES-Standard Electric,
Wilmington, MA

Cassie Belcher,
Western Extralite Company,
Kansas City, MO



A word cloud visualization centered around the theme of service quality. The most prominent words, displayed in large red capital letters, are "BEST" and "SERVICE". Surrounding these central terms are numerous other words in black capital letters of varying sizes, representing related concepts. These include "guarantee", "warranty", "trust", "support", "quality", "choice", "first", "best", "customer", "business", "commitment", "security", "market", "buyer", "seller", "promise", "assurance", "satisfaction", "service", "choice", "quality", "first", "best", "customer", "business", "commitment", "security", "market", "buyer", "seller", "promise", "assurance", "satisfaction", "service". The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the central "BEST SERVICE" text.

The IEC is a national trade association for merit shop electrical and systems contractors. Based in Alexandria, VA, the IEC has almost 3,000 member companies in 56 chapters throughout the United States.

While the overall mood and business outlook was upbeat and positive, the executives listed some key challenges they are up against. Amongst the most pressing “pain points” that were discussed:

- **A shortage of qualified electricians.**
- **Poor communication with distributors on back orders.**
- **Distributor salespeople who fail to bring knowledge, solutions and pertinent new product information.**

In follow-up interviews, several IEC members discussed 2014 business conditions, challenges they face, and how best-in-class IMARK distributors can become valuable partners in meeting and overcoming those challenges.

“Even though 2013 was a great year for us, 2014 is going to be even better,” said Edward Chaves, senior project manager for RALCO Electric & Generator in Westport, Massachusetts, which serves the greater New England region from Rhode Island to Maine. “People are finally starting to open their wallets as they see stabilization in the economy.”

Chaves says that while many opportunities for business growth are out there, one of the biggest issues his company faces when it comes to the future, is the industry’s severe and ongoing labor crisis—a result of an industry-wide labor shortage that has long been brewing.

“We just had to turn down a half-million dollar project because we didn’t have enough qualified help,” Chaves said.

Issues contributing to the shortage of electricians include retiring workers, a lack of high school emphasis on vocational courses, and more competition from union shops.

Andy Bass, vice president of operations for R.K. Bass Electric in Harker Heights, Texas, said business conditions have improved in 2014 in central Texas, where his company works primarily in government, educational, medical and commercial office buildings.

Bass said his company addresses the industry’s labor shortage by actively searching for new talent and working to retain valuable employees. “The IEC’s

apprenticeship program is a good way to attract new workers into the industry,” he said.

Unfortunately, he admits that the labor shortage also influences his company’s approach to bidding on projects.

“Knowing that there is a labor shortage, we are systematic and conscientious in the work that we bid on so that we know we can utilize our workforce the best way possible,” Bass said.

“My pain point with procurement would be not meeting the announced lead time,” Bass said. “We thrive on delivering an exceptional product to our customers, and our electrical supplier partners are a major part of that. We commit to reasonable schedules and we expect the supplier and manufacturer to do that as well.”

Dean Kredit, president of K2 Electric in Arizona, said economic conditions remain challenging and unpredictable in the metropolitan Phoenix area, where he serves commercial and industrial customers with a team of 40-50 electricians.

“People are finally starting to open their wallets as they see stabilization in the economy.”

- Edward Chaves, RALCO Electric & Generator.

“The housing market started to pick up with a little bubble in 2013, but then it dropped back down,” Kredit said. “That drives consumer confidence. There is work out there, but it’s extremely competitive. If you want the work you have to take it extremely low.”

When asked about key “pain points” associated with procurement of materials needed for a project, the contractors emphasized the critical importance of meeting construction schedules.

Failure to provide prompt notification of any back-orders is a perennial problem, Kredit said. “When we send an order to the supply house, I ask them to notify us of any back-orders. At first they do, but as time goes on, we don’t get notified. Our efficiency drops. It’s been an ongoing battle since I’ve been in the trade.”

As part of their survey, the contractors listed a number of key attributes of best-in-class electrical distributors.

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These attributes include:

- **Hiring knowledgeable sales people who make weekly visits, bring labor-saving ideas to the table, follow-up on issues, and provide new product introduction and training.**
- **Sharing resources such as marketing, advertising, training, technology, credit and collection collaboration.**
- **Electronically updating pricing on a regular basis for all commodities.**
- **Adhering to committed delivery times.**
- **Great follow-up, making good on every promise.**

"We have a few guys who are doing virtual warehousing. That's absolutely a huge advantage for us," Kredit said. "We write an order from the office, and then our purchasing is done for that project. Distribution and delivery is taken care of by the foreman. The supplier stores the material at their facility and when our foremen needs something, they can go on the website on their iPad and pick it off a list. The distributor delivers it the next day to the jobsite."

When it comes to product training, the contractors said "lunch-and-learns"—informative, in-office sessions to impart knowledge and answer questions—are very helpful.

"It is important to us that we are up-to-date in the products that are in our industry," Bass said. "The IEC does a great job with *Insights* magazine, but our suppliers can get these materials in

front of us to test out in the field. Lunch-and-learns are helpful when done at our office in front of our foreman and lead men. This way the feedback is direct and we can move forward with a trial if the product is well-liked."

As a final piece of advice for the electrical distribution industry, Chaves recommends distributors spend more time training their personnel.

"They don't have enough qualified people," Chaves said. "They have to get people more involved and better trained in customer relations."

Kredit agreed. "Service is the number-one thing that I see that people have to focus on. Our customers are demanding a lot from us today, so we need that same response back from our suppliers. Talk is cheap. If someone says they're going to do something, they have to follow through. When I have to constantly call back to ask where we're at, it's very frustrating."

Through IEC, Kredit said he sees market segments around the country that are doing well and others that are doing poorly. Strong business partnerships are more critical than ever when dealing with a volatile economic climate.

"We live in times where there's no consistency," Kredit said. "Things may be going great today. Two years ago we had the best year ever, and last year wasn't too bad, but this year things really took a dip. So we're trying to run a model where we're conservative all the time, being conscious of the fact that the economy can change quarter-to-quarter and month-to-month. You just need to be watching that all the time."

The following contractor executives participated in the IMARK- IEC Contractor Advisory Group on March 11-12, 2014 in Dallas, TX.

Robert Bass

R.K. Bass Electric
Harker Heights, Texas

John Bodensteiner

Price Industrial Electric
Hiawatha, IA

Joseph Cephas

IEC
Alexandria, VA

Edward Chaves

Ralco Electric
Westport, MA

Terry Cole

Hamer Electric
Longview, WA

Evelyn Gorman

GNS Electric
Dallas, TX

Dean Kredit

K2 Electric
Phoenix, AZ

Kristen Williams

Penco Electrical Contractors, Inc
Morrow, GA

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THE VALUE OF MARKETING ROI



You cannot manage or improve what you do not measure. That certainly holds true when it comes to reaping the benefits of measuring an electrical distributor's Marketing Return On Investment (MROI).

MROI analysis helps organizations measure and understand the effectiveness of their marketing by examining business and sales revenue results in relation to specific marketing activities. The benefits of this knowledge enable marketers to focus their budget dollars on programs that deliver the greatest return and to improve or jettison tactics that add little value.

At its most basic, MROI looks like this:

Sales revenue *minus* marketing program costs divided by program costs equals MROI, which is typically expressed as a percentage.

Revenue gain – program costs ÷ program costs = MROI

Quantifying the results of your marketing programs makes market teams more savvy, strategic and targeted in their efforts. It gives management allocating marketing budgets hard numbers to evaluate the success of various marketing tactics. MROI validates the principle that marketing is an investment, not a cost.

Yet, many marketers continue to struggle with marketing ROI measurement.

One of the challenges is the number of variables in the sales and marketing process that make it hard to determine the ROI of a particular marketing effort, or connect the impact of its contribution to a sales outcome.

For example, it typically takes multiple touches to convert a cold lead into a sale which can take place over months, even years. These cumulative touches can range from face-to-face sales calls and exposure to marketing communications to digital interactions. This fact makes it difficult to link an ultimate sale to any specific touch.

A common measurement solution to this challenge is a first touch/last touch approach which assigns all the value to the first or last program that closed the deal. First touch: If a Webinar produces a sale one year later, it still gets the credit. Last touch: If a product demo turns a prospect into a customer, it gets the credit, despite a salesperson's interim nurturing.

Additionally, there are also external intangibles that make it difficult to gauge MROI—the economy, competitive and marketplace forces, the season, the quality of the sales reps. If the customer just got a big contract and is upping his orders to your supply house, is that attributable to successful marketing?

While a well thought out Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategy may lead to an increase in website traffic that increases brand awareness which brings in new customers, it's pretty tough to measure what begat what in terms of measurement.

As Albert Einstein observed, "Not everything that counts can be counted." No question, calculating MROI is not a perfect science. But don't let perfection be the enemy of good. Knowing something about your marketing ROI is better than knowing nothing.

Getting Started

According to a recent The Electrical Distributor (tED) magazine Market Analysis Report based on a readership survey, about half of distributors are measuring marketing MROI to some degree on a quarterly or annual basis. Some are tracking the sales and profitability of their promotions. Others are quantifying incremental sales by product line or customer.

Among distributors surveyed who are currently measuring MROI, comments to an open-ended survey question about the value of doing so included, "... (without MROI) how do you know if you're winning if you don't keep score?" "(MROI) allows us to determine best marketing tools..." and "... (MROI) guides our marketing planning."

Among those distributors not calculating MROI, comments were "difficult to obtain market data," "we don't, but we need to" and "difficult to correlate marketing spend to marketing results."

For those seeking to improve their MROI measurement or begin to get it off the ground, remember that every journey begins with a single step—actually, in this case, several steps.

First of all, if you're not doing it already, measure the ROI of your marketing to your current best customers—say your top 200 accounts,

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high-potential customers that you can cross-sell or sell more to and high-potential prospects. This is where most of the action is and these are the targets you want to measure.

The first step to managing MROI is to quantify the expected outcome from the marketing investment being planned. The second consideration is how that goal will be measured in quantifiable terms by gathering marketing program data.

Define how that outcome, let's say it's sales and lead generation for a new product, will be calculated including the types of data metrics that can be captured as evidence of change and growth. It is best to do these two activities in unison so that MROI metrics reflect marketing program objectives.

Your MROI measurement metrics may include sales revenue, qualified leads, incremental sales, cost per sale, conversion rate, average transaction size, repeat purchase rate, etc., anything that the marketing program is producing.

This doesn't mean you'll have metrics that generate hard data for every

aspect of your marketing spend. Many marketing teams begin with rough assumptions for two or three basic metrics while working toward more detailed measurements as time goes on.

Some marketers fall short in what they measure. Too often, "feel-good" metrics such as advertising awareness, customer engagement or Twitter followers are used to justify the marketing spend instead of pursuing measurements that document sales revenue and improve marketing performance and profitability.

Putting MROI to work

Instead of dealing with multiple MROI data silos, establish a centralized system for collecting and integrating the metric data from various departments. Work with your sales and IT people to build a marketing automation platform that will provide you with timely feedback from sales on the impact of various revenue-driving marketing activities.

The best marketing tactics to measure are those that lend themselves to relevant and targeted tracking. Unique program-dedicated URL landing pages

on your website and dedicated phone numbers are important resources for tracking response rates and sales powered by print and online advertising, direct marketing and email marketing.

Incremental sales initiatives and frequent buyer programs which involve customer invoice tracking are, by their very nature, abundant sources of sales data. When it comes to e-commerce tracking, Google Analytics, which is free, can provide invaluable data on your online marketing efforts, including tracking where your e-commerce traffic is coming from—a Facebook page, an e-newsletter promotion or another website.

Digital marketing is highly trackable, whether it be an e-newsletter or email marketing around a spiff or a new product, driving customers to a dedicated landing page where further sales actions can be documented.

Public relations, a highly marketing-effective and cost-efficient tactic, can be tracked through the number and quality of editorial hits in trade publications and industry websites. PR "impressions" and advertising equivalency—i.e., the cost savings of

➤ *continued on page 69*

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a press release's total column results compared to paid advertising for the same amount of space. Such metrics can justify PR marketing ROI from a cost standpoint.

There's no question that PR supports and impacts sales, yet pinpointing the exact contribution of PR to any specific sale is challenging. PR is about brand building, mindshare and word of mouth over time. Once again, not everything that counts can be counted.

Most distributors who invest in social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube (for product demo videos) or Twitter utilize these social platforms as venues for deepening customer

relationships, sharing industry expertise and announcing promotions. While tracking an increase in "likes," "clicks" and "opens" is a useful barometer, unless the data can be correlated to customer sales actions, they fall into the realm of nice-to-know.

Analyzing the results of marketing ROI and verifying the contributions and success of marketing programs against agreed upon measurement metrics is an important driver for supporting sales, profitability and better marketing in the future. Accurate MROI measurement provides a clearer understanding of the marketplace and shines a spotlight on how to best

communicate with high-value customers and prospects.

Knowing what works and what doesn't based on MROI is eminently worth the work. Otherwise you may be blindly throwing dollars at programs that are not achieving sufficient bottom line value. With marketing dollars scarce, no one wants to unwittingly go down that path. With MROI on the radar, you won't.

Jeff Barnhart is president and CEO of Creative Marketing Alliance (CMA) of Princeton Junction, NJ. CMA is a full-service marketing communications firm recognized nationally as one of the electrical industry's premier marketing partners. Contact CMA at info@cmasolutions.com or 609.297.2235. For more information on how CMA can help you with your marketing needs, visit www.GoToCMA.com.

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Epicor Software Corporation is primarily known for delivering enterprise-wide ERP (Enterprise Resources Planning) software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail and service industries.

In 1994, Epicor Vista Information Systems (a division of Epicor Software) was launched to meet the needs of manufacturing firms that sought to provide point of sale (POS) market share analytics in the home improvement channel.

In 2006, Epicor Vista added another channel to their service—the electrical industry—which is where Epicor had the next greatest concentration of customers on an Epicor platform.

The value Epicor Vista provides is that of key industry level intelligence and analytical solutions for both manufacturers and distributors. “Better reporting systems and software applications like business intelligence (BI) have been helping distributors and manufacturers in this area,” says Ruben Muruato, national sales manager with Epicor Vista.

Muruato suggests that to make the best decisions, you need to effectively use data from outside sources, as well as internal sources. For example, ask yourself the following question:

“If our targeted growth in a category is 10 percent, but we hit 12 percent, is that a good year or a great year?”

Most would say a great year! But what if that category grew by 15 percent? Do you still feel good about your 12 percent growth, knowing that your competition’s growth would have been double yours to average out at 15 percent?

Epicor Vista provides value to both electrical manufacturers and distributors:

For IMARK members: Epicor Vista provides industry analytics services, enabling distributors to track and analyze their market share across a variety of product categories, as well as at the total business level. All at no cost to the distributor.

IMARK members can find information on their market share in the trading area(s) they serve by utilizing Epicor industry analytics services, which incorporates a distributor’s point of sale data into the Epicor industry data warehouse. On Epicor distribution platforms, the report is automated in the software. The initial report is historical and then becomes on-going once a month.

“Epicor industry analytics services work to accommodate the common distribution platforms used in the electrical industry,” says Scot Schaufelberger, senior industry analyst for Epicor. “We work to service distributors that wish to participate in the industry aggregate statistics panel, regardless of their ERP platform.”



For IMARK suppliers: By taking advantage of Epicor industry market share analytics—a competitive market share report—manufacturers can select by category or by entire offerings, and generate reports based off of this that show unit and dollar share, overall market share and average pricing. The unique part of the Epicor Vista reports is that they highlight how products are selling over their competitors all the way down to the SKU level.

“While both distributors and manufacturers share a common challenge of how to effectively use the data that gets collected or captured by their internal business systems, the opportunity to make quicker, smarter, more effective business decisions becomes easier with Epicor Vista,” says Schaufelberger.

IMARK members that are interested in learning more about Epicor industry analytics specific to manufacturers are encouraged to contact Ruben Muruato at RMuruato@epicor.com.

IMARK members interested in learning more about Epicor industry analytics specific to distributors please contact Scot Schaufelberger at Schaufelberger@epicor.com.



Wholesale Electric Supply Company: A Gulf Coast Powerhouse



A longstanding perennial in the top 25 electrical distributors nationwide, Wholesale Electric Supply Company serves the engineering, petrochemical, oil and gas, commercial and industrial construction, MRO, OEM, energy-efficiency and utility industries from its Houston headquarters and a dozen branch locations lining the Gulf Coast in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Wholesale's strategically located branches, experienced management teams, knowledgeable sales associates and an inventory tailored to exceed customers' expectations allow the company to excel in local markets.

The company also provides voice, data, video and electronic communications products and services for telecommunications infrastructure applications as well as automation, control and switchgear services.

As the nation's oil and gas providers grow their global focus, Wholesale Electric Supply has followed its customers and has international locations in Canada, Australia, United Arab Emirates and Iraq.

Wholesale Electric's diversified product lines and services have supported the construction of numerous commercial, industrial and institutional buildings in Houston, the Central Southwest as well as the rest of the nation. Their global petrochemical projects range from the mines of South America and the oil fields of Canada, to remote regions of Africa, Australia and Southeast Asia.

Celebrating its 65th anniversary in 2014, the company's global reach and electrical product diversity is a far cry from its founding in 1949 by Clyde Rutland and his wife Marjorie in a small metal building on the outskirts of Houston. A

legendary figure in the regional electrical industry, Clyde Rutland led the company's growth and expansion for over five decades. Rutland passed away in 2011 at the age of 92.

His proud legacy lives on through his employees. Wholesale Electric is actively represented by Rutland's daughter Pam McKellop, vice president and chairman of the board, ensuring the company remains a family-owned independent distributor. According to McKellop, the growing business still celebrates and nurtures its family business roots.

"Wholesale Electric Supply has a family-owned personality which drives our customer-oriented focus, but our corporate outlook is founded on our diverse skills and ability to function internationally to meet a wide variety of needs," she explains. "Our entire domestic and international staff is committed to



being the competitive benchmark for the electrical distribution industry by providing quality products and services which conform to the requirements of our customers through teamwork, training and integrity."

Other key members of the executive management team include: Bob Bruno, president; Jason Berryman, vice president sales; Anne Blackman, vice president/treasurer; Gary Wardwell, senior vice president/CIO; John Fuller, chief operating officer; Richard Biddy, chief financial officer and Rick McKellop II, executive vice president.

McKellop sees the company's focus on consistent growth and improvement as its strongest suit. "Currently our goals are to strengthen our customer diversity, build our internal and external training programs, and integrate the next generation of employees with the foundational

principles that have made our company thrive."

Bob Bruno joined the company as president in February 2013, bringing a wealth of electrical distribution management experience as well as customer and supplier relationships to the table.

"Wholesale Electric Supply has been able to stand the test of time with quality business practices. Our biggest opportunities lie with expanding and growing both internationally and domestically in today's fluctuating market," Bruno observes.

The company provides customers with proprietary state-of-the-art systems, developed in-house, for managing the construction materials required for projects efficiently and cost effectively.

"Houston has a very large base of Engineering Procurement and

Construction (EPC) firms that are involved in multibillion dollar projects globally," he continues. "Wholesale Electric has been able to meet the needs of this market by developing a materials management system and service designed to reduce the total installed cost of EPC projects."

"Our Internet-based Construction Materials Management System (CMMS) provides a complete materials management system and services designed to reduce the total installed cost of a customer's project," Bruno explains. "CMMS links engineering, purchasing, construction, accounting, vendors and other critical functions to manage the procurement, warehousing, delivery and reporting of materials for construction projects worldwide."

CMMS delivers a myriad of benefits including more efficient

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We Retooled Our Website To Deliver More

EASY NAVIGATION • EXTENSIVE RESOURCES • COMPANY UPDATES

ATTRIBUTES

Class:	Hanger
Sub Class:	Conduit
Package:	Corrugated
Quantity:	100
Weight:	0.09
Material:	Zinc Plate
UPC:	78461012001
Model:	1B

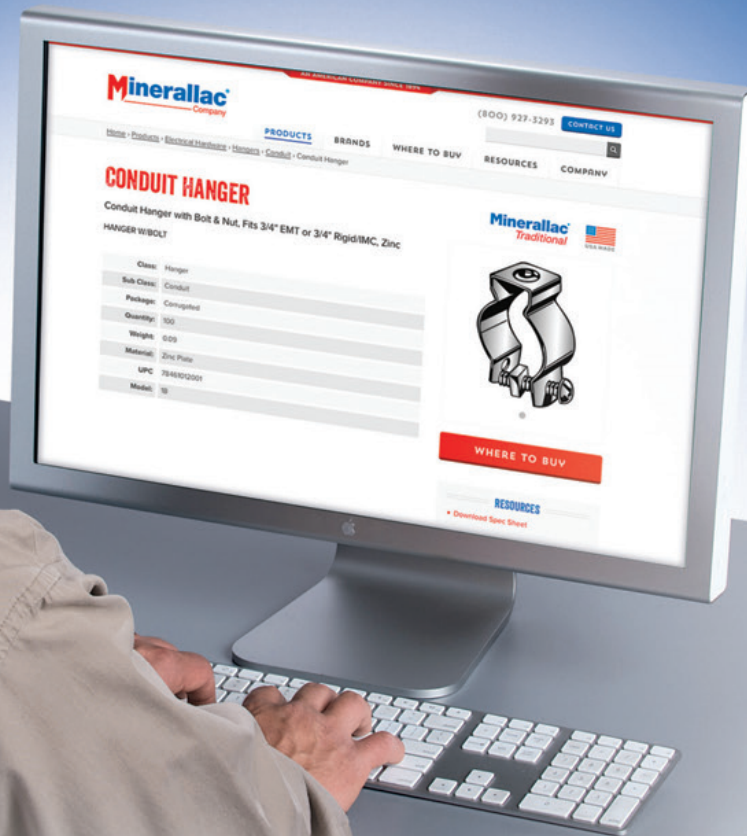
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handling and storage, precision tracking, enhanced field productivity, control and reporting as well as reduced materials costs, he says.

As a certified Women's Business Enterprise, Wholesale Electric Supply was also the first North American electrical distributor company to achieve the internationally recognized quality standards of ISO 9001 certification over two decades ago, according to Bruno.

"ISO certification is part of Wholesale Electric's ongoing quality improvement process," he notes. "Customers benefit from these efforts toward total quality management principles that permeate every area of the company, from sales representatives and office personnel to management."

Bruno breaks out Wholesale Electric's current domestic customer mix as being industrial contractors (22 percent), commercial contractors (22 percent), industrial MRO (16 percent), CMMS (10 percent), OEM-fabricators and manufacturers (9 percent) and others (21 percent).

"As we've grown, we have gained a reputation for maintaining one of

the industry's most comprehensive product lines," Bruno explains. "Our inventory is tailored to meet the needs of both commercial and industrial contractors as well as utilities, plant maintenance and repair operations and original equipment manufacturer contracts. We've also added new services such as a full range of voice, data and electronic communications products and services to create or enhance customers' telecommunications infrastructure."

He sees the company's biggest challenge as ever changing government policy requiring electrical distribution to maintain a degree of flexibility to meet the needs of growth in the energy sector.

"Energy policy is becoming increasingly more important both at the state and national levels and we need to stay at the forefront of these regulatory issues and policies," he says.

On a different front, "more and more of our customers are requesting Harmonized Codes, Country of Origin and customer-specific item numbers to be notated on packing

slips as well as the item's tagging," Bruno says.

He explains that Wholesale Electric's Web-based, electronic storefront has allowed the business to develop seamless communications with customers' computer systems. "We have implemented catalog punch-out, shopping cart and full roundtrip system integration."

"Via the Internet, we are now everywhere our customers are," he points out. "Our electronic systems and exporting expertise enable us to mobilize to sites anywhere in the world. Our technology and our people are at customer projects helping to identify opportunities for saving costs and gaining efficiencies."

"As a Platinum IMARK member, Wholesale Electric Supply is proud to be associated with IMARK's national prominence in the electrical field," says Bruno. "IMARK membership and programs help us maximize profitability, increase market share and strengthen relationships globally. This, in turn, helps improve our business practices which can only benefit our customers."

Family Matters to Lessman Electric Supply Co.

Electrical Distributor Continues Third Generation Legacy



For Lessman Electric Supply Co, a single house electrical distributor located in Sioux City, Iowa, it's always been about family. "We're a family business," says Harlan Lessman, president of the company. "My father, H.D. 'Jiggs' Lessman, worked at WESCO for 21 years, then when he was 45, he quit his job and started Lessman Electric Supply in 1975."

Lessman started in the family business when he was 23 years old. "I graduated college and had a job for about a year," he says. "I ended up coming back home and working for my father."

Out of the 12 employees at Lessman, five of them are family members and they also serve as members of the company's executive management team. They are: Harlan Lessman, president; Ron Westeen, vice president; Randy Lessman, vice president; Curt Lessman, salesman and Andy Westeen, inside sales/information technology.

A third generation family-run business, their ability to stand out in the marketplace is partially due to its employees' longevity, according to Lessman. "My father hired several

employees right out of college and they are still working for us today," he explains. "Basically everyone has grown up knowing each other, which has created an even stronger sense of teamwork and camaraderie."

Another differentiator for the company is the open house they have every year. "Our customers, especially the electricians, are able to come in and have lunch on us to kick-off the new year," Lessman says. "People really look forward to it every year and it's a great way to bring everyone together."

Lessman explains that their customer mix is about 45 percent contractor, 20 percent lighting, 20 percent utility and 15 percent industrial/MRO/institutional. "We do a little bit of everything and there isn't anything we wouldn't sell, given the opportunity," he says.

Providing a high-level of service remains a top priority for the company. "We take care of our customers like they want and deserve to be taken care of and this helps us stand out from the competition," he says.



Given the continued shift towards technology in the electrical industry, Lessman continues to make this area a major focus of its business strategy moving forward. "We are bringing in younger generations and are looking for them to get accustomed to making decisions to run the company, especially in terms of technology," he explains. "Over the years, we have implemented new computer software which has helped us streamline our accounting and inventory processes, making them faster and more unified for our customers."

Lessman is also seeing a shift in how its customers prefer to be serviced. "Our customers are asking us to be more responsive to their needs and get them accurate, up-to-date information on product changes in a timely manner," says Lessman. "They want to be kept abreast of all the changes in the electrical industry and as new products come along, be made aware of their benefits. At the end of the day, if you can help them improve their bottom line, then they will do business with you."

According to Lessman, the biggest opportunity for the company lies in the LED business. "LEDs are the biggest thing right now," he says. "We need to continuously be aware of any changes within this segment of the industry as it will help us stay on the cutting edge."

While the LED business is booming for the electrical distribution industry, Lessman, like other distributors, remains challenged by big box retailers. "They are trying to retain the same business as us so it's essential for us to keep up with them so we can continue to grow," he says.

Lessman takes pride in their membership with IMARK, especially to help them effectively navigate the electrical distribution industry. "Through IMARK we are able to visit with other electrical distributors in a comfortable atmosphere and exchange ideas," Lessman says. "The I-NET groups are especially valuable because we are able to discuss our challenges and hear from other distributors on what is working for them. IMARK truly provides an open forum for its members and the connections we have made are invaluable."

National Lighting Bureau: Creating Demand for High-Benefit Lighting®



John Bachner,
executive director of
the National Lighting
Bureau (NLB)



The National Lighting Bureau (NLB) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to create demand for High-Benefit Lighting®; i.e., high-efficiency illumination designed to optimize performance of visual tasks.

In 1976, when the NLB was initially formed, the nation was recovering from a petroleum embargo that created a demand for U.S. energy independence. Energy conservation was advanced as a key tactic for achieving that independence, and the new, higher prices of energy made conservation worthwhile; the increased value of savings justified the investment to achieve them.

“To reduce energy consumption, President Nixon had in 1973 called for simple energy-conservation measures. That’s when the nation adopted 55 miles per hour as the new maximum speed limit, 68 degrees Fahrenheit as the new, winter thermostat setting, and the removal of unnecessary lighting,” recalls John Bachner, executive director of the National Lighting Bureau. “But many of these so-called simple measures had unintended consequences, as when some folks in Florida realized that the 68 degree winter thermostat setting resulted in more air-conditioning-energy use, not less.”

As far as lighting was concerned, an important unintended consequence was demonstrated when the manager of a Social Security Administration office decided to remove two lamps from each of the office’s T12 fluorescent luminaires. “Energy consumption was cut by a little less than 50 percent because the unneeded ballasts remained connected,” Bachner recalls, “but the amount and quality of light in the space declined considerably.”

That’s when the real financial impact of good lighting—what the NLB calls “High-Benefit Lighting,” was demonstrated. According to a report, worker productivity in the affected office fell by 22 percent. “Assuming the office supported 100 workers making \$15,000 per year, a 22 percent productivity loss would be worth about \$330,000,” says Bachner. “If the cost of the lighting-energy consumed came to \$75 per worker per year, the value of the 50 percent energy reduction would have come to less than \$5,500 per year. The lighting was restored and, when it was, productivity was restored, too.”

That incident gave rise to the NLB, which—soon after its creation—launched what is today called the High-Benefit Lighting Awards Program, to attract and develop case histories that demonstrate the bottom-line value of High-Benefit Lighting.

Readily available at the NLB’s website (www.nlb.org), these case histories comprise an extremely strong financial argument that an investment in a well-designed lighting system is a smart investment that produces a fast, strong return.

Today, the NLB continues on much as it did during its early years, Bachner notes,

educating a new generation of individuals about the value that High-Benefit Lighting can provide. “The biggest change,” he says, “is our growing knowledge about eyes and vision. That’s why some of the newest and most important benefits relate to health issues. Nonetheless, the basic benefits—like improved productivity—remain vitally important.” But improved productivity is far from the only “basic benefit.” For example, Bachner recounts the case of a shopping center that was experiencing challenges because of inadequate lighting in the parking lots. Management installed all-new lighting designed by a professional whose instructions were to “fix it.” He did just that. As Bachner remembers, “The parking lots improved luminance made it look far safer and more inviting at

“Companies shouldn’t have to roll the dice when it comes to lighting,”

- John Bachner, executive director of the National Lighting Bureau

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night.” Although traffic counts increased significantly, the number of auto break-ins and vehicle-vehicle and vehicle-pedestrian accidents decreased markedly, as did assaults. This allowed the mall to reduce the number of security patrols, resulting in a smaller security-staff payroll and less gasoline consumed by security vehicles. Snowplowing was performed faster and with far less damage. And complementing all that, because traffic counts escalated, sales escalated, too. That resulted in more rental income for the owners, less tenant turnover and an increased mall resale value that went up into the millions.

Unfortunately, says Bachner, one of the biggest obstacles to High-Benefit Lighting is “unfortunate attitudes” on the part of some who “must” have verifiable numbers in order to justify an investment in better lighting. “As a result,” says Bachner, “how much a lighting-system upgrade is worth is based on energy savings alone, because it’s difficult to know by how much better lighting will improve productivity,

retail sales and so on. The estimates have to be made based on what’s installed right now, how suitable it is for the tasks being performed, and what the impact of better lighting might be. And it’s all about estimates and some folks will not move forward with that, resulting in a failure to cash in on what often could be the biggest value of all.”

The NLB offers a variety of resource materials that can benefit both electrical wholesalers and IMARK members.

“Electrical wholesalers can provide a valuable service to their customers by being more knowledgeable about lighting,” Bachner says. “We stress the importance of hiring a quality lighting designer, but many people still do not rely on them,” he says. “The more personnel that can provide guidance, the better off everyone will be. There is a huge amount of money at stake. Lighting-system owners and managers, property and facility managers and others with a role to play need to learn about lighting’s role. IMARK members can provide that guidance. If they can simply encourage

lighting-decision makers to retain a lighting designer at least to provide a quick evaluation of the value a lighting upgrade could provide, we'd have jumped a huge hurdle."

The NLB has varied supporters such as manufacturers, trade associations, professional societies, as well as agencies of the federal government. "The NLB's sponsors are a major driving force of the organization," Bachner says. "They benefit the public at large by supporting what we do, and in this day and age, it's refreshing to see them willing to spend money to do it. As far as I'm concerned, the organizations that make the NLB possible are the true heroes of the lighting industry. They're concerned about lighting for the public's welfare."

As to the future of the lighting industry, Bachner is optimistic. "I think growth for the lighting industry will be modest in 2014, but 2015 will be the break-out year," he says. "People still want to ensure that the economic recovery is real and I think we will be seeing a lot of plans taking shape in the months ahead, in housing as well as commercial construction. 2014 will be a good year; 2015 will be a great year."

And as for the NLB's mission, Bachner says, "We as a nation finally seem committed to achieving energy independence, and energy conservation still is a major tactic for achieving that ambition." Bachner believes that everybody in the electrical industry has a role to play in accomplishing that objective. "High-Benefit Lighting that boosts productivity saves time, money and energy. In retail areas it boosts sales. Outdoors it saves money by improving safety and security while generating sales because of its powers of attraction. IMARK members can help just by giving people good advice about lighting. High-Benefit Lighting can make all the difference."



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MEMBER NEWS

Madison Electric Company Celebrates 100 Years as a Michigan Family-Owned Business

In celebration of its centennial, Madison Electric Company, Warren, Michigan, is committed to raising \$100,000 for local charities to show its appreciation for the community that has supported the company in a century of success. The charitable organizations include: Karmanos Cancer Institute, Gleaners Food Bank, Detroit Institute for Children and Michigan Freedom Center. In addition to the fundraising efforts spearheaded by family executive leadership, Madison associates will also participate in planned fundraising events and volunteer activities at the four selected charities throughout the year.

Over the past century, Madison Electric Company has grown from two employees, operating their business out of a small industrial building in Detroit, to a multi-faceted corporation comprised of eight locations, 150 employees and \$80 million in annual sales.

The company was founded in 1914 by brothers Morris and Max Blumberg and has remained under the leadership of their decedents ever since. It enters its second century presided over by Brett Schneider, great-grandson of Morris Blumberg, marking the fourth generation of leadership.

"As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Madison Electric Company, we'd like to thank those who came before us and laid the strong foundation where we stand today," said Schneider, president of Madison Electric Company. "It remains our duty to fix our eyes to the future to ensure just as strong a foundation for the next generation."

Madison Electric Company's greatest milestones have been marked by the leadership's future-focused approach to business. Examples of this include opening branch locations to bring products closer to contractors during the post-World War II urban sprawl; forming the industrial electronics division to provide interconnected products, cable assemblies and production computers during the turn of the century, and investing early into automation, 20 years before it reached the popularity it has gained today.

"Every generation of leadership has made it their goal to leave the company even better than they found it," said Benjamin Rosenthal, chief financial officer of Madison Electric Company. "It's this mentality that drives us to try new things, invest in new technology and expand our offerings."

Representing the fourth generation of leadership of Madison Electric Company are: Brett Schneider, president; Brad Schneider, vice president of operations and Jordan Glass, secretary/treasurer. The company's third generation of family leaders include: Benjamin Rosenthal, chief financial officer; Richard Sonenklar, vice president and chief information officer; Scott Leemaster, vice president and general manager and Jon Waitz, vice president.

Colonial Electric Supply Announces a New Location with the Acquisition of Lighting Fixture & Supply in Allentown, Pennsylvania

Colonial Electric Supply announced the opening of its 25th counter location in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The new location is open for business following the acquisition of Lighting Fixture & Supply, a local lighting and electrical supply house that has served the Lehigh Valley for over 50 years. Lighting Fixture & Supply was founded in 1955 by Rolland W. Rodgers on the philosophy of providing quality merchandise at competitive prices with outstanding customer service. Colonial Electric Supply is one of the largest independent, family owned and operated, electrical distributors in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Colonial's newest stocking branch is located at 1033 Sumner Avenue in Allentown, PA. The facility will support the local lighting, electrical, industrial and construction industries with products and services. "Combining the six decades of LFS relationships with Colonial's logistical competencies makes us together a much stronger force in the marketplace. But the real attraction for us came from their employees' strong passion for customer service," states Steve Bellwoar, president of Colonial Electric Supply.

The Allentown location will fall under the territory of John Rodman, vice president of Colonial's Western Region. Using his experience and knowledge of the area, John will lead the expansion in Allentown, PA and the growth in Colonial's western territory. "Colonial

Electric continues to partner with distributors who provide their customers and employees with a successful atmosphere to do business. The Rogers' family has obviously done that for nearly 60 years. We look forward to extending the Colonial service area with the support of the LFS staff and customers."

Colonial Electric's success is built around employees who provide quality customer service. Branch locations allow Colonial employees to personally serve customers quickly and conveniently with the support of over \$21 million in inventory at its Customer Service Center. In addition, Colonial continues to provide customer-focused programs through 24-hour emergency service, online account management, real-time inventory status and training.

United Electric Supply Company Announces Acquisition

United Electric Supply Company announced the purchase of County Electric and its subsidiaries ESCO and I/O in Pennsylvania and Fairlite Electric in New Jersey. This acquisition demonstrates the company's commitment to delivering high value service to our current markets by integrating United's capabilities with the talent of the County Electric sales team.

As a major electrical supplier for the building and industrial trades, United Electric leads the industry by remaining at the forefront of technological and marketplace developments. In addition to stocking a full range of electrical supplies, the company provides engineering and design capabilities, energy audits, cost reduction services, inventory management and e-commerce through a trained staff of engineers and products specialists.

Blacks Electrical Supply Wins REBRAND 100 Recognition

Blacks Electrical Supply, Greenville, South Carolina, is one of 100 organizations worldwide to earn inclusion on the prestigious 2014 REBRAND 100 list.

Worthwhile, a Greenville, South Carolina-based digital agency, worked with Blacks on its updated brand. Blacks introduced its new brand and logo early last year.

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As part of the rebranding process, Blacks embraced a new brand promise of “The Best Service, Every Time.” This idea became the guiding force behind a change in company culture that led to a highly successful sales year.

“Whether it is a sales rep handing a potential customer a new Blacks business card, or someone spotting one of our trucks on the road, or the rollout of our new line of hats (seen on the head of every contractor in town), we get comments like, ‘Nice looking! I like this look! The new look really stands out!’ from longtime customers and new customers,” Blacks president Craig Owens said. “This rebrand has brought a renewed sense of ownership throughout our organization.”

The REBRAND 100 recognizes excellence in brand repositioning around the world. Blacks earned the distinction level, which includes the 50 best global rebranding campaigns after the five “Best Of” awards.

Blacks is on the distinction list with companies from more than two dozen countries. Ten United States companies are on the list, including American Airlines, Hyatt Hotels and Stanley Tools.

Worthwhile’s work on the Blacks brand included the new logo, diagnostics, statement of the new brand promise, signage, marketing collateral, digital marketing campaigns and more.

“We’re excited about this award. We’re even more excited about the growth and opportunity that our work has created for Blacks Electrical Supply,” Worthwhile CEO Dan Rundle said.

Dickman Supply Receives National Innovation Award

The National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED) and UnleashWD developed the Unleashing the Spirit of Innovation award to encourage and recognize a distributor and a manufacturer with a culture of innovation in the electrical industry.

Doug Borchers, Dickman Supply vice president, proudly accepted the distributor award at the NAED national meeting held in San Francisco, California.

According to Borchers, receiving this honor, “is a testament to the innovative, creative, hard-working people at Dickman Supply who get the job done for its customers every day.”

Dickman Supply President, Tim Geise, has been telling associates to “just say yes” to customer requests for 25 years. The beauty of this is a naturally occurring culture of innovation. The award winning Green Energy Solutions Division, a Happy Hour delivery service, emergency services and complete inventory management solutions are just a few of the programs with their beginnings in the simple act of saying yes to a customer in need.

NAED is the voice of electrical distribution, providing members with the best tools, information and assistance to help them thrive financially and to improve the electrical distribution channel. The four basic pillars of the NAED mission are to provide members with networking, advocacy, education, and defined standards and research.

UnleashWD brings together the world’s most innovative minds, creating an environment where distributors are immersed in innovative thought. There are more than 300,000 wholesale distribution companies generating economic growth and creating 1 out of 20 private sector jobs in the United States. In this changing economy, leaders in the industry must shift ideas from outside the common distribution model into their operations to continue to grow and develop. The UnleashWD Innovation Summit is a one-of-a-kind conference promoting original, creative and disruptive thinking in the wholesale distribution industry.

Granite City Electric Supply Announces Launch of Newly Re-Designed GraniteCityElectric.com

Granite City Electric Supply, Quincy, Mass, has gone digital. The electrical supplier has spent the last year creating a living, breathing information resource for the electrical contractor community. A modernization in a slowly adapting industry, the new GraniteCityElectric.com is a place to learn, share best practices and have a community exchange of ideas.

The new site is also an e-commerce platform where customers can find and purchase electrical supplies complete with data, cut sheets and MSDS sheets. Customers can create an account, place orders and schedule deliveries quickly and efficiently right from their desktop, laptop, tablet or phone. The site is fully loaded with electrical contractor tools and resources including electrical and energy saving mobile applications, lighting calculators and tools, and manufacturer online education and training.

The biggest addition to the site is the Electrical Solution Center. Broken down by residential, commercial and industrial electrical topics, this area of the site is for electrical professionals looking to read or share industry tips, tools and best practices. This electrical information center has something for everyone—constant updates on new products, trends and applications. Customers who submit their own tip, video or product review will have the chance to win Boston Red Sox tickets and spend a “Fantasy Day” at Fenway Park.

To ensure the site is well maintained, Granite City Electric Supply has hired a new and fully-dedicated digital marketing specialist whose sole job is to keep the Web site and social media pages current with interesting content including branch events and energy summits.

Gross Electric Selected as a Finalist for the 2014 Showroom of the Year Awards

Gross Electric has been selected as a finalist for the fifth annual Showroom of the Year Awards. The awards, which honor the top lighting retailers in North America, are presented by *Residential Lighting* magazine and the Dallas Market Center, which hosts the Dallas International Lighting Market twice a year. This is the premier buying event for the lighting showroom market and *Residential Lighting* is the leading trade publication serving this segment.

During the summer edition of the show, one Showroom of the Year was named in each of the three dollar-volume categories (annual revenue under

\$2 million, revenue under \$5 million, and \$5 million and over) from a field of 10 finalists in that category.

For the second year in a row, 50 percent of the scoring for the Social Media Star Award was determined by “likes” posted to finalist profiles within the Showroom of the Year Social Media Star Event on *Residential Lighting*’s Facebook page through May 19 (www.Facebook.com/ResidentialLighting). Official judges’ scores complete the remaining 50 percent of scoring for that category.

Three geographically diverse professionals judged the finalists and winners. This year’s judges were visual merchandising expert Linda Cahan of Cahan and Company Retail Design Consulting, West Linn, Oregon; social media guru Leslie Carothers, CEO of The Kaleidoscope Partnership, Houston, Texas and small business consultant Brian Moran, founder/CEO of Brian Moran & Associates, Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey.

Any independent lighting retailer in North America is eligible to enter the competition. Entrants were judged comprehensively on a variety of aspects of their business including merchandising display, marketing and advertising, customer service and engagement, employee education and motivation, and community involvement.

“Lighting retailers are working harder than ever to serve customers, from stepping up educational efforts that keep them abreast of LED lighting technologies to product presentations that prompt inspiring environments,” says Laura Van Zeyl, publisher and editorial director of *Residential Lighting*. “What’s just as impressive is that they continue to contribute to their industry and communities in meaningful ways. We’re proud to partner with Dallas Market Center on a program that honors the best examples of brick-and-mortar lighting retailing in the 21st century.”

“We were excited to be chosen as a finalist for Showroom of the Year,” says Laurie Gross, president of Gross Electric. “Our people are our greatest asset and we are happy to share this honor with them.”

At press time, a list of final winners was not available.

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U.S. Lamp Provides Comprehensive Lighting Upgrades and Helps with Energy Conservation Projects for Chippewa Falls School District and the School District of Crandon

The Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District and the School District of Crandon were recently recognized with a "Focus on Energy" incentive check presentation at the 16th Annual WASBO Facilities Management Conference in Wisconsin Dells on March 14, 2014.



Pictured from left are Jeremy Bellille, lighting consultant/sales for US Lamp; Randy Knowlton, director of buildings grounds & safety at Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District and Al Bohl, energy advisor for Focus on Energy.

This Focus on Energy incentive of \$55,438 was presented to the Chippewa Falls School District for comprehensive lighting upgrades provided by US Lamp in eight buildings throughout the district as well as exterior lighting projects at 11 of the facilities.



Pictured from left are Al Bohl, energy advisor for Focus on Energy; Ray Smith, director of maintenance at the School District of Crandon and Lee Christenson, lighting consultant/sales for US Lamp.

This check presentation illustrates the Focus on Energy incentive of \$66,700 to the School District of Crandon for energy projects done by the district.

Warshauer Receives Legrand's Marketeer of the Year Award...Again!

Warshauer Electric Supply has been named Marketeer of the Year for 2013, for the second year in a row, by electrical manufacturer Wiremold/Pass & Seymour/Legrand.



Pictured (left to right): Jim Warshauer, president of Warshauer Electric Supply and Pat Rando, sales district manager of Legrand, North America.

Distributors are nominated for the award by their sales representative based on marketing activities conducted over the course of that year that directly contribute to sales growth. Additional consideration is given to marketing efforts that increase product awareness, merchandising effectiveness and the knowledge displayed by employees and customers.

Warshauer achieved the Marketeer of the Year Award through a combination of the following marketing initiatives: counter and showroom displays, monthly promotions, new product and event announcements distributed with monthly billing, involvement with residential builders, website banners, printed literature, networking\ association events, e-newsletters, trade show exhibits, customer training events and lunch 'n' learn seminars, all of which were executed in conjunction with Legrand.

CEP Certification, LLC Announces Latest Certified Electrical Professionals

CEP Certification, LLC (CEP Certification), a limited liability corporation established by the National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED), has announced its May 2014 Certified Electrical Professional – Inside Sales (CEP – IS) and Certified Electrical Professional – Outside Sales (CEP – OS) certificants.

CEP is a certification program for distributors, manufacturers and others in the electrical distribution channel.

Certification gives the holder credibility in their industry and increases the professionalism of the industry as a whole. CEP certification identifies that the holder has demonstrated expertise in areas such as product knowledge, customer service, sales skills and other skills giving them added credibility in the electrical industry.

For additional information, contact NAED Member Services at certification@naed-cep.org. Suggested courses, candidate guides, sample exam questions, self-assessments and other helpful materials can be found at naed-cep.org.

The following IMARK member employees have been awarded the Certified Electrical Professional—Inside Sales:

- Kyle Beaird, Dakota Supply Group, Rapid City, South Dakota
- Joe Bojarski, Parrish-Hare Electrical Supply, Dallas, Texas
- Steve Bruns, Loeb Electric, Columbus, Ohio
- Douglas Chadwick, KIE Supply, Kennewick, Washington
- Tony Faulkner, Wiseway Supply, Florence, Kentucky
- William Hertrich, The Hite Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Katra Johnson, Loeb Electric, Columbus, Ohio
- Chris Kohler, Wiseway Supply, Florence, Kentucky
- Randy Van Huss, Wiseway Supply, Florence, Kentucky
- Dale Wilson, Loeb Electric, Columbus, Ohio

The following IMARK member employees have been awarded the Certified Electrical Professional – Outside Sales:

- Jay Adams, W.A. Roosevelt (a division of Dakota Supply Group), La Crosse, Wisconsin
- Gary Bottger, KIE Supply, La Grande, Oregon
- Nathan Rada, J.H. Larson Company, Hudson, Wisconsin
- Nicholas Sarakatsannis, Wiseway Supply, Florence, Kentucky

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Springfield Electric Announces Organizational Changes

Springfield Electric, Springfield, IL, has announced the following organizational changes:

Drew McMinn has accepted the position of regional vice president. McMinn will oversee all aspects of the business for the five locations assigned to the company's Region One, which includes their Bloomington, Champaign, Danville, Peru and Rockford branches. His previous responsibilities included managing the company's 18-person strategic business unit.

Don Harrod has accepted the position of branch manager for both the Quincy and Hannibal branch locations. Harrod



Drew McMinn



Don Harrod

will manage all aspects of the operations, sales and marketing for both branches.

Gary Huwe has accepted the position of strategic business manager. He will manage all aspects of the Strategic Business Unit as well as support the team leaders in key supplier management.



Gary Huwe

Kris Kincaid has accepted the position of branch manager, Mattoon, Illinois. Kincaid will transition from his current role as branch manager, Danville to his new responsibilities in early spring. He will manage the day to day operations and lead all sales and marketing efforts in the Mattoon marketplace.



Kris Kincaid

Dan Lewis will add the management responsibilities of the Danville Branch to his current



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role as branch manager of Champaign. Lewis will coordinate all operations, sales and marketing for both branches.

Springfield Electric has been in business since 1932 and has grown to 16 locations in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri. The company currently employs 300 associate owners.



Dan Lewis

Summit Electric Supply Hires Brian Rindels as Director of Credit

Brian Rindels joins Summit Electric Supply as the company's new director of credit.

Rindels has more than 23 years of credit experience working for multi-billion dollar, leading business suppliers and technology solutions providers, including 16 years at the executive level. His career demonstrates continued success at improving valuable performance metrics while managing the functions, finances and processes of large teams of associates. Rindels was recently director of credit for one of the nation's largest building materials suppliers, Pro-Build.



Brian Rindels

"Brian brings not only an impressive resume but a strong set of values that align very well with our values and culture at Summit and a deep seated belief that a primary role of the credit functions in a company is to support and help grow its sales," says President and CEO, Victor R. Jury Jr.

"I am very pleased to be joining the Summit family," says Rindels. "Summit's commitment to customers, both externally and internally, is the core of the company's ongoing success. In addition, Summit continues to embrace its entrepreneurial culture, which I look forward to being a part of."

Hubbell Lighting Hosts a Sold Out Exclusive IMARK Training Session

The Hubbell Lighting Solutions Center is extremely pleased and honored to be a supporting and continuing educational partner for IMARK members. Hubbell Lighting provided an information-packed lighting solutions and product training workshop to over 50 IMARK member participants, representing over 26 member companies on April 29th through May 1st at their Greenville, South Carolina lighting headquarters. "The energy of IMARK attendees was contagious and the excitement to apply the knowledge gained was extremely exciting to see," stated Chris Bailey, director of the Hubbell Lighting LSC.

Topics covered included trends in LED lighting technologies, new product innovative solution options, selling tools and cash flow positive financing education. A building walk through tour was also provided demonstrating and featuring the latest in lighting innovation showcased in action.

Leviton Introduces the Dollars & Sensors® Online Energy Audit Tool

Leviton introduced the Dollars & Sensors (D&S) Online Energy Audit Tool for lighting retrofit applications. Dollars & Sensors is available as both a desktop application as well as via mobile device, effectively turning Android®, Apple®, Blackberry® and Windows® devices into an instant energy audit tool.

Leviton's D&S is a powerful sales tool that makes audits simpler and easier when compared to alternative methods. Leviton saves lighting professionals time and removes the guesswork from conducting energy audits and generating return on investment reports and analyses by providing a customizable bill of materials for each project. This allows distributors, contractors and other lighting professionals to deliver a cost-effective solution to their customers faster with a clearly communicated demonstration of the potential energy savings and return on investment.

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D&S streamlines the energy audit process to save lighting professionals time and money spent on audit and proposal generation. This all-in-one tool allows professionals to use a smart device to effectively conduct a sensor energy audit as they walk through a space with key decision makers. The simple interface for D&S intuitively guides users on how to easily input audit information using a smart device. Basic audit information includes inputting room size, existing lights and energy saving Leviton sensor and LevNet RF™ Energy Harvesting Wireless products in use.

"By combining D&S with our in-house application engineering design expertise and no cost sensor layout services, Leviton is able to quickly and easily provide high performance solutions that deliver immediate savings and returns on investments," says Peter Kleinman, director of distribution marketing, Leviton. "Leviton is truly the single source for improving energy efficiency and taking the guesswork out of energy management projects."

Learn more about D&S and access the tool at leviton.com/dollarsandsensors.

Omni Cable Wins NAED'S 2014 Unleashing the Spirit of Innovation Award

Omni Cable announced that it has been selected as a recipient of NAED's 2014 Unleashing the Spirit of Innovation award.

Omni Cable submitted its Continuous Improvement Team's Lean/Six Sigma initiative for NAED's Unleashing the Spirit of Innovation award, which encourages and recognizes a culture of innovation as well as individual efforts throughout the electrical distribution



From left, Omni Cable's Stacy Fromhold (Marketing) and Tracy Pfizenmayer (Sales).

industry. "We're so fortunate to have bright, creative and dedicated employee-owners driving these initiatives and making Omni Cable best in class," said Jeff Siegfried, Omni Cable's president and CEO. The award was presented to Omni Cable during the

NAED National Meeting in April. The company was also featured in *tED Magazine's* April 2014 issue for its achievement.

Omni Cable's Continuous Improvement initiative was created to increase the company's overall efficiency and customer satisfaction. To help guide the initiative, the company formed a Continuous Improvement Team to establish value in Omni Cable's internal processes from the customer's perspective. Omni Cable's Stacy Fromhold (Marketing) and Tracy Pfizenmayer (Sales) are currently leading the team and overall initiative. Their objectives are to identify the needs of customers, understand the company's business processes and tailor those processes so they become more valuable to customers.

Omni Cable and the Continuous Improvement Team are in the midst of implementing internal operational improvements for their latest project.

NSi Announces New Executive Vice President of Sales and Executive Vice President of Marketing and Business Development

NSi announced a new executive vice president of sales, Tom Wallace, reporting to Randall Parian, president of NSi Industries. The company also announced a new executive vice president of marketing and business development, Pamela Erickson.



Tom Wallace

Tom has most recently held the position of director of electrical sales of the New York District for Graybar. Of his 26 years in the electrical industry, he spent 24 with Panduit Corporation, starting in sales and moving through the positions of district and region sales manager to his latest position of vice president of sales for the Eastern Region. Tom brings an array of abilities that are well suited to the growth NSi aims to achieve. He is excited to work with NSi's sales force to lead growth and to collectively develop a world-class sales organization within NSi.



Pamela Erickson

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Pam is responsible for marketing and product management as well as several strategic accounts. Pam joins NSi after several years as vice president of marketing for the US Electrical Division at Affiliated Distributors. Prior to that, Pam was director of marketing for Milbank Manufacturing Supply in Kansas City, Missouri. Before her tenure in the electrical industry, Pam spent 15 years in the aerospace arena with DIT-MCO, a manufacturer of cable harness test systems. She graduated from William Jewell College with a BSBA.

Thomas and Betts Promotes Liz O'Grady

Liz O'Grady has been named director of national Accounts for the US/Latin America Electrical Division reporting to David Dean.

Frank Geib, national accounts manager; Clarissa Jenkins, marketing administrator; Nick Bongiolatti, national accounts specialist; Glenda Thomas, national accounts; Antoinette James, national accounts specialist; Verlean Rubin, executive administrator and Gary Wetherhold will report to Liz.

Liz joined Thomas & Betts with the Carlon acquisition in 2008 and has a strong background in the electrical industry. She has been recognized by the National Association of Manufacturers and NAED for her contributions over the years. Liz adds tremendous value to the industry and the Thomas & Betts team.

Universal Names New Regional Distribution Sales Manager and New Field Application Engineer

Universal Lighting Technologies announced the addition of lighting industry expert Salvatore Manganaro to the Universal team as the new regional distribution sales manager for the northeast territory of the United States. The company also welcomed Benjamin Koelbl to the OEM sales team as field applications engineer for the western region of the United States.

Manganaro joins Universal with more than a decade of experience in the electrical industry. Since graduating

from the University of Massachusetts in 1996, he has successfully served in various regional and national management roles, including specialized vertical market growth roles.

Throughout his career, Manganaro has garnered extensive knowledge and skill in marketing, management, development and distribution in the electrical field. As an executive national account project manager, he developed, managed and implemented energy conservation projects such as LED, Controls, T8 and EMS systems.

"At Universal, one of our biggest strengths is maintaining solid relationships with our distribution partners," said Marty Pint, vice president of distribution sales. "We're dedicated to helping them bolster their business through vertical marketing. Since Manganaro has considerable industry experience in this area, we'll be able to bring even more opportunities to our partners. And as any good sales manager knows, there is nothing more valuable than bringing a lead to a distributor."

In his new role, Manganaro will be responsible for growing the Northeast distribution channel by managing and supporting agents and distributors like Gemco, Osterman and Yusen. Additionally, he will be implementing new programs designed to introduce the latest products and increase sales.

With a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering (BSEE) from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Koelbl joins Universal with six years of experience in field applications engineering. His most recent position was lighting field applications engineer for a major electronic component distributor. Prior to that, he worked for a telecom equipment manufacturer for eight years as both a sales engineer and a hardware and software design engineer.

"Ben has extensive expertise with today's lighting technologies," said Michael Thomas, Universal's director of LED applications, "including LEDs, optics, thermal materials, connectors, IC's and power supplies. He's created some of the most state-of-the-art luminaires and that experience will only serve to strengthen Universal's growth and position as the premier OEM light solution provider in North America. Ben's background paired with the support of Universal's engineering and product teams will allow us to really



Salvatore Manganaro



Benjamin Koelbl

broaden our reach among the industry's top lighting designers."

In his new role with Universal, Koelbl will act as the field technical resource contact, supporting Solid State Lighting (LED) systems and products. He is based in Hermosa Beach, California.

Legrand Introduces New Line of Rubber and Watertight Products

Legrand announced the availability of its new line of Pass & Seymour® Rubber and Watertight plugs, connectors and receptacles.

The new Rubber and Watertight products are designed specifically for highly corrosive and wet industrial locations. These include food and beverage processing, petrochemical production, marinas and shipbuilding, pulp and paper mills, mining, water and waste water facilities, warehousing and refrigeration and temporary power sites.



"These environments offer exceptional business prospects for our Pass & Seymour® Rubber and Watertight products and we have expanded our line by over 80 items," said Trevor Gardner, Pass & Seymour industrial product manager at Legrand. "This empowers our distributors to sell the right components for an entire industrial job. We are also able to offer contractors a wider array of choices to solve complex challenges in demanding corrosive and wet environments."

Both the Rubber Plugs and Connectors and the Watertight Plugs and Connectors are constructed from tough thermoplastic elastomer which enhances endurance against hard impacts, oils, chemicals, heat and extreme weather.

Rubber Plugs and Connectors contain industrial-strength brass blades and contacts that resist heat and provide excellent conductivity. Two screw cable clamps secure wires and provide superior strain relief. Fast installation is enabled with both quick thread assembly screws and a

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imagination at work



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keyed body and cover, which facilitates easy alignment. Molded-in non-slip grips also make the plug and connector devices easy to assemble and handle.

Watertight Plugs and Connectors are able to resist high-pressure hose downs of 1,500 psi. Nickel-plated blades and contacts offer long-lasting, superior corrosion resistance. A multipoint sealing system provides environmental protection of NEMA 4, 4X, 6, 6P and the devices are IP67 rated. Color-coded sealing bushings accommodate a large range of cord diameters and large ribs on the device body provide a superior grip when mating.

Watertight Receptacles contain a spring-loaded flip cover that protects the device when it is not in use. Corrosion resistance is enhanced by a stainless steel hinge spring and pin and an impact-resistant Valox lid, cover plate and receptacle body allow the receptacle to withstand impacts, chemicals and corrosion. Duplex versions contain a lockout/tagout capability.

Back boxes for receptacles are available with ½" – 1" dead-end and feed through openings.

Mersen Introduces New HP10J Helioprotection Fuse for PV Installations

Mersen (formerly Ferraz Shawmut) announced the launch of the newest and most efficient UL 2579 listed photovoltaic fuse—the HP10J, an exciting addition to the existing Helioprotection® fuse line, which already includes the HP6M, HP10M and HP6J.



The new HP10J photovoltaic fuse line provides superior overcurrent protection at the re-combiner box and inverter levels and covers applications ranging from 70A to 400A, 1000VDC. The enhanced fuse construction of the Helioprotection series makes it ideal for continuous temperature and current cycling withstand adding to system longevity. Low minimum breaking capacity capabilities of 1.35 times the fuse-rated current value allows for safe circuit interruption under typical low-fault current conditions produced by PV arrays.

Protect off-grid or grid-tied PV systems from unexpected ground faults and line faults using the Helioprotection fuse line. Primary customers for this fuse are solar array combiner box builders, solar inverter manufacturers and solar installers and integrators.

The conversion of solar energy to electricity is a reliable process, as long as it's properly protected. In addition to its new Class J photovoltaic fuse offering for 1000VDC, Mersen offers a dedicated range of protection components specifically designed for solar power generation and distribution including fuses, fuseholders, wire management solutions, disconnect switches, surge protective devices, monitoring solutions and safety products.

MSP NEWS

IDEA Appoints Susan Streich to Manager of Wholesale Data Services

The Industry Data Exchange Association, Inc. (IDEA) announced its appointment of Susan Streich as manager, Wholesale Data Services. Susan was formerly national sales manager at IDEA and now will be responsible for the IDW Data Synchronization Platform and managing the Data Management Specialist team. Streich brings over a decade of electrical channel experience to IDEA and over 20 years of experience working with product content.

"I'm passionate about educating manufacturers and distributors on how to increase sales, improve marketing efforts, eliminate errors and take costs out of their business," said Streich. "I look forward to continuing IDEA's efforts to help customers run their business more efficiently, from improving sales analysis and Web stores with accurate, complete product data to helping counterpeople find the best products for the job."

Prior to joining IDEA, Streich was integral to Vista Information Services during her tenure at Epicor (formerly Activant Solutions) and spearheaded the market research project in the electrical industry. She

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also spent eight years at a large buying group consortium in the food distribution industry, and began her career categorizing and analyzing point-of-sale data for A.C. Nielsen, a global leader in measurement and information services.

According to Bob Gaylord, president and CEO of IDEA, "Susan has proven her ability to help electrical distributors and manufacturers determine the best solutions for their business needs. She will now be taking that a step further to help them implement those solutions and continually increase their return on investment."

Streich has been active in the National Association of Electrical Distributors (NAED) Women in the Industry group for many years and will continue to participate in key industry events.

Lighting Industry Expert Bill Attardi Launches New Website

After 20 years of distributing his EnergyWatchBlog to an audience encompassing thousands, longtime electrical industry insider Bill Attardi has launched a new dynamic website, www.EnergyWatchNews.com.



"EnergyWatchNews builds on the momentum of my EnergyWatchBlog," says Attardi. "By continuing to provide the electrical industry with vital information on energy management products,

projects and energy-efficient solutions, it's my goal to keep the industry up-to-speed on the latest developments and trends in electrotechnology, while offering new and innovative ways for industry members to promote their products and services."

EnergyWatchNews is designed to be a comprehensive knowledge, products and news resource for the North American electrical industry's manufacturers, distributors, energy service companies (ESCOs), contractors and facility professionals.

EnergyWatchNews also offers a wide variety of advertising opportunities ranging from Web ads and

case studies to product showcases and product promotions. The site provides an opportunity for energy industry companies to effectively reach thousands of key decision makers within the industry in a powerful and cost-effective way.

For more information on EnergyWatchNews and advertising opportunities, visit www.energywatchnews.com.

IMARK NEWS

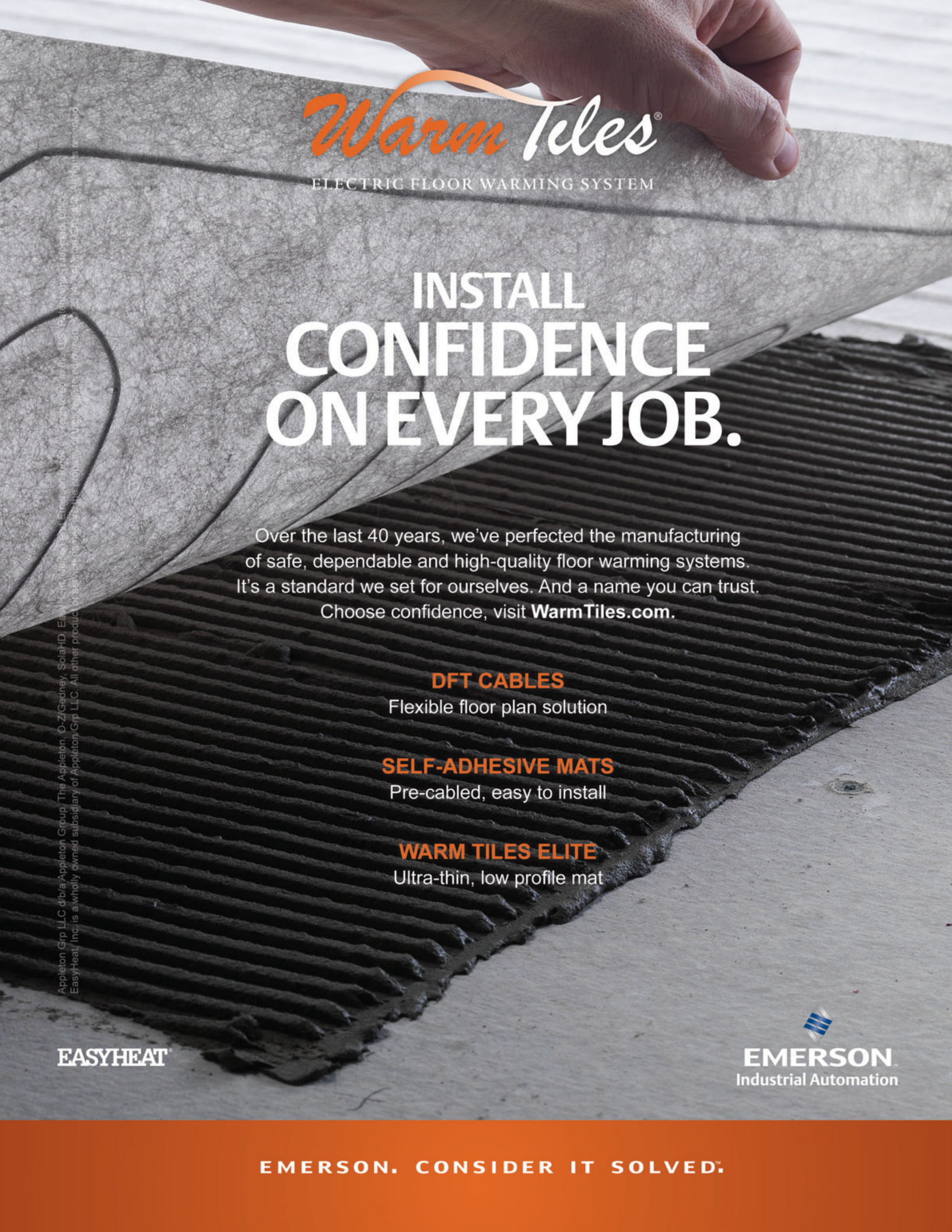
IMARK Canada Launches Online University for Member Distributors

IMARK University Canada, powered by BlueVolt.com, provides IMARK Canada member personnel with access to high-quality Web-based learning materials related to the products and applications of key product groups in the electrical and lighting industry. The online university is dedicated to providing practical, efficient training so IMARK Canada members can grow sales and solve customer problems.

There are currently more than sixty (60) courses on IMARK University Canada. Today, courses from Acuity Brands Lighting-Canada, Broan Nutone Canada, EGS Electrical Group-Canada, Hammond Power Solutions, Intermatic Canada, Juno Lighting Group and Universal Lighting Technologies are available. New courses will be added throughout 2014.

There is no cost for IMARK Canada members related to training on IMARK University Canada.

All learning modules on IMARK University Canada are prepared by IMARK suppliers. The typical course takes 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Each course includes a brief quiz to reinforce the most important elements of the information conveyed. Member employees that successfully pass the quiz that accompanies each course receive a modest financial incentive reward that can be redeemed for gift cards.



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NEMA Commends President Obama's Commitment to Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs)

President Barack Obama announced a commitment that his administration will continue to use energy savings performance contracts (ESPCs) to upgrade the energy efficiency of federal facilities. He set a goal for federal agencies to enter into \$2 billion of ESPCs over the next three years, adding a specific target to his December 2013 announcement that the federal government would continue to use ESPCs to improve the performance of federal buildings and save taxpayers money through 2016. This will bring the total commitment up to \$4 billion since President Obama first issued a goal for ESPCs in 2011.

"These investments will save Americans billions in energy costs, promote energy independence, and, according to independent estimates, create tens of thousands of jobs in the hard-hit construction sector," the White House stated in a press release.

NEMA President and CEO Evan R. Gaddis commended the Obama administration for setting an ambitious and achievable goal.

"Today's commitment builds on a history of dedication toward making federal facilities more energy-efficient and productive," Gaddis said. "More than half of the energy we consume in the United States is wasted and federal buildings are no exception. The federal government spends more than \$6 billion each year on energy, so just a small improvement in energy efficiency can mean millions of taxpayer dollars saved."

The federal government has already entered into \$2.7 billion in ESPC projects that will pay for themselves at no cost to taxpayers.

NEMA and its member companies are committed to working with the administration to increase the nation's energy efficiency through high-performance buildings, Smart Grid technologies, industrial energy efficiency, residential energy efficiency and intelligent transportation systems.

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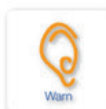
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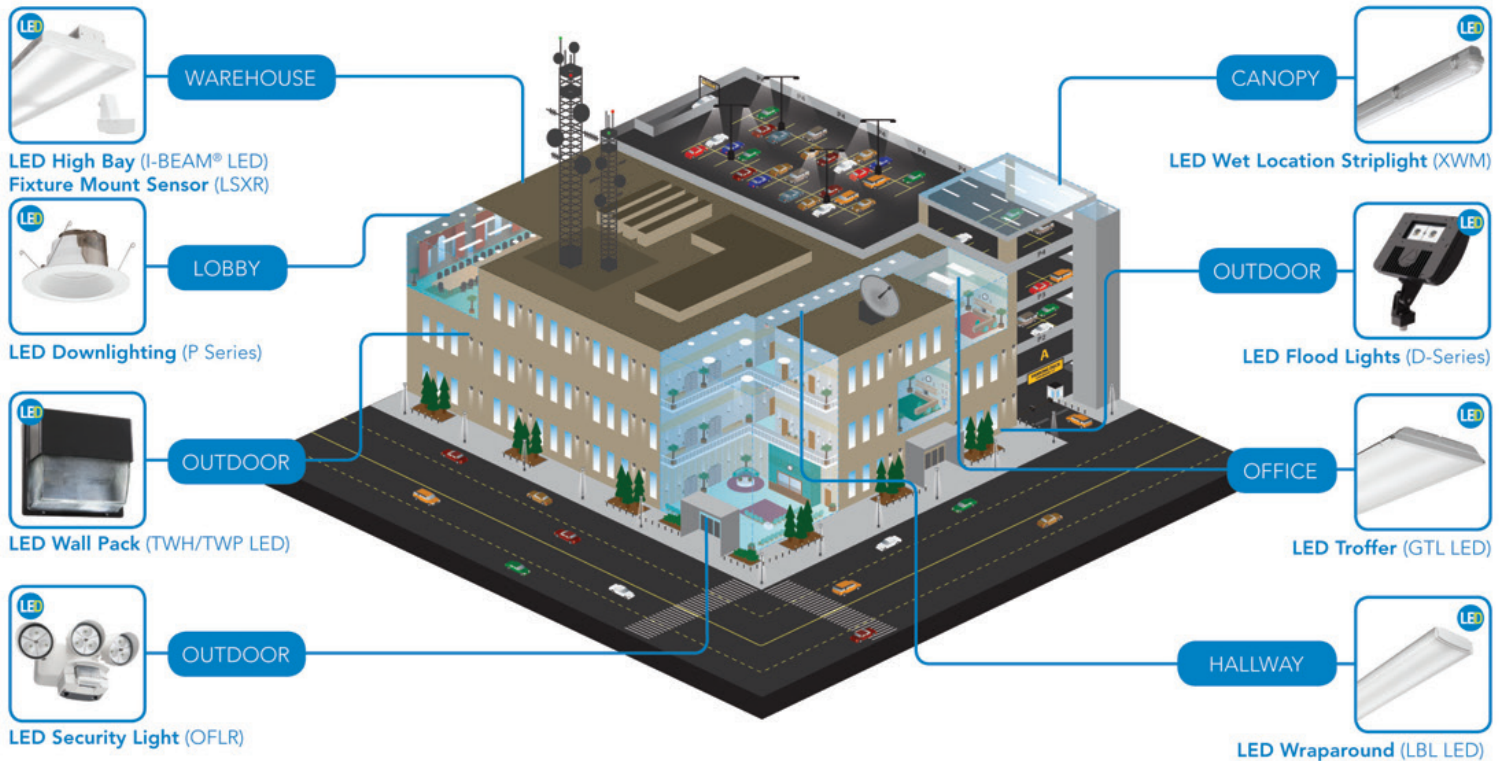
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