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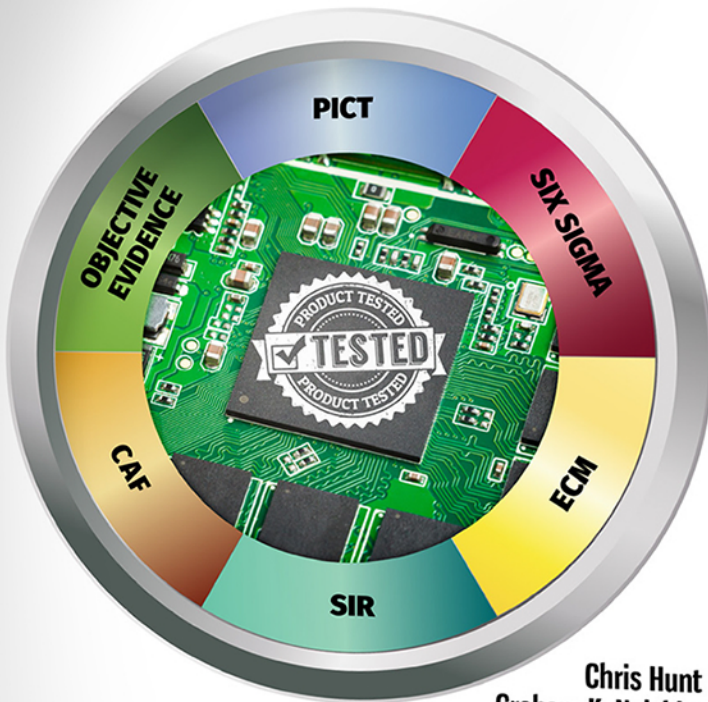
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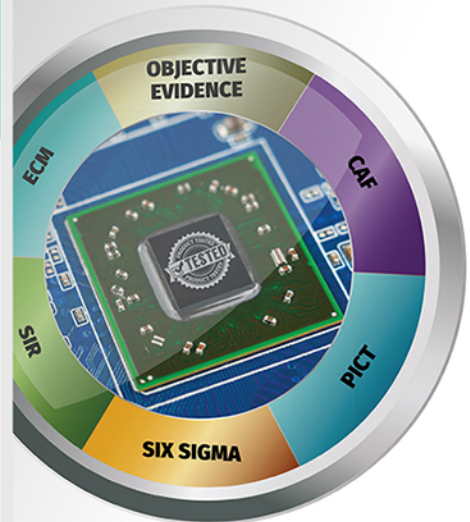
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## Boost Your Sales

Every part of your business can be evaluated as a process, including your sales funnel. Optimizing your selling process requires a coordinated effort between marketing and sales. What are the key steps to achieving that optimization? In this issue, we ask industry experts in marketing and sales for their best advice on how to turn the art of sales into a science.

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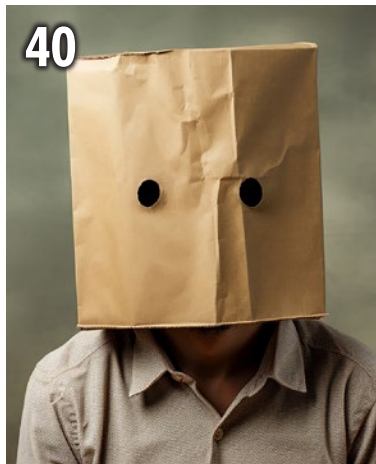
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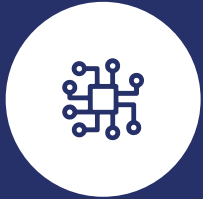
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# Boost Your Sales

## Nolan's Notes

by Nolan Johnson, I-CONNECT007

Everyone is talking about how to implement artificial intelligence into their business model, but this month, we look at perhaps the most human of all the functions in our business: marketing and sales. Amongst all the digitization and electronic communication that is changing our world, it has yet to replace the process of building relationships, which is where most sales take place.

To tackle this topic, we conducted a roundtable discussion with a panel of experts on marketing and selling in electronics manufacturing. Our panel includes a former Fortune 200 vice president, an expert industry consultant, an industry-leading expert on content marketing, and experienced marketing professionals. With a virtual room full of folks passionate about marketing and sales, the





conversation was, as would be expected, lively and informative.

With so much to share on the topic, we then asked our experts to take a deeper dive into their topics for separate articles. To that end, Barry Matties discusses what marketing should be, along with methods and channels to accomplish your marketing goals. Dan Beaulieu tackles the discipline of account planning, while Dan Feinberg builds upon the relationship factor. I also contributed an article on what it means to qualify a customer, building off the successful Miller Heiman strategic selling methodology.

We get bonus feature content from our regular columnist Mike Konrad, vice president of communications for SMTA, who loves to talk about marketing; in his column, he considers the emergence of “conscious marketing.”

Finally, Ron Lasky wraps up his two-year journey with “Maggie Benson.” Ron has shown admirable creativity in exploring manufacturing process analysis by creating a series of melding facts and experiences with situations pulled from his real-world experience, all held together by an ongoing storyline. Ron, we thank you for your unique approach to moving the conversation forward in the industry.

Speaking of moving the conversation forward, we always welcome reader input. We can often be found at industry shows and conferences; we learn a great deal from the conversations we have with you, our readers, when we meet at events. That said, don't wait for a show to let us know what you're thinking. Drop me a line at [nolan@iconnect007.com](mailto:nolan@iconnect007.com) any time. We'd love to hear from you, and you're guaranteed to get a reply. **SMT007**



**Nolan Johnson** is managing editor of *SMT007 Magazine*. Nolan brings 30 years of career experience focused almost entirely on electronics design and manufacturing. To contact Johnson, [click here](#).

COLUMN EXCERPT

## Global Sourcing Spotlight: The Myth of 'Buying American'

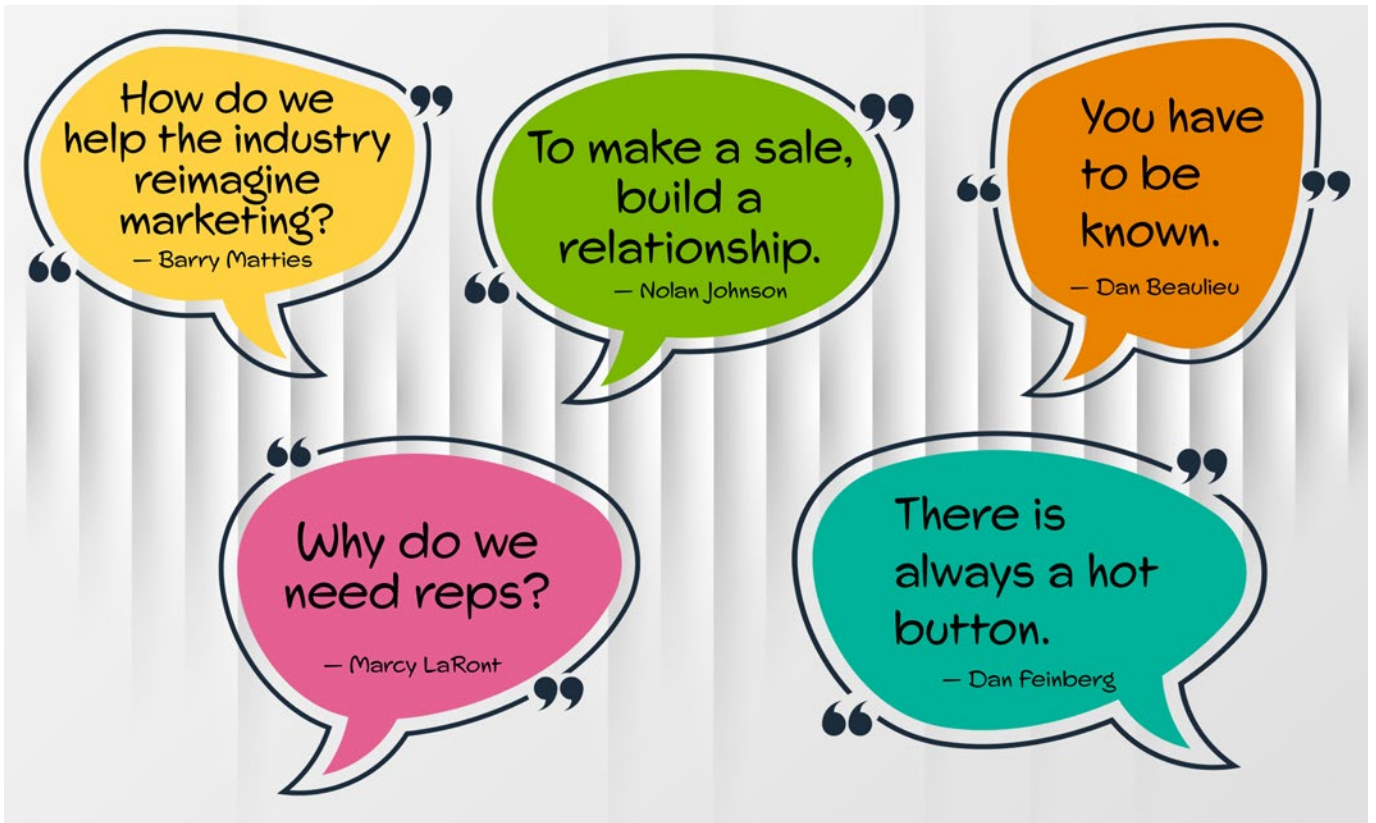


By Bob Duke

President of the Global Sourcing Division  
at American Standard Circuits

As I talk about global sourcing around the country, I often run into some resistance from good-intentioned people who want to do the right thing and buy American. It is a philosophy I can appreciate and respect. But one day, after having heard this argument again, I decided to investigate. I did some research to find out whether the things we assume are made in America actually are.

I know that “buying American” has been deeply ingrained in the American psyche for generations. It represents a sense of patriotism and loyalty to one's country, and it's often associated with the belief that purchasing products labeled as “Made in the USA” supports domestic industries and workers. However, this notion can be misleading and oversimplified. In reality, the global economy is far more interconnected than it appears, and many products labeled as American are, in fact, a blend of international components. This column explores 12 instances where you may think you're buying American but you're not. [Click here to continue reading at SMT007.](#)



# Sales and Marketing: Our Roundtable of Experts

Feature Interview with the I-Connect007 Editorial Team

If you've ever heard of a product and thought about how it would work in your life, that's the result of marketing. It's a subtle yet powerful force in how business operates today. For this issue of *SMT007 Magazine*, we gathered some of the most widely recognized authorities on marketing and selling electronics manufacturing services. They explain the sales and marketing process and what it takes to be successful in today's competitive climate—whether you're on the giving or receiving end.

How much thought do you give to your selling and marketing process? Who is doing it for you? The rep or maybe the applications engineer? Use this roundtable as a starting point for

a deeper discussion with your own team about boosting your efforts, and your bottom line.

**Barry Matties:** Everyone, it's great to be here with you as we talk about marketing—something that can be easily overlooked in running a business. Let's start with Dan Beaulieu. You've worked for many years in marketing and selling. What advice do you have for your customers?

**Dan Beaulieu:** I tell them that you have to be known. No matter what you build, get your name out there. But it's a building process, so be patient. We've all heard about the client who places three ads and then says, "Nothing

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Dan Beaulieu

happened.” But what’s happening is you are making people aware of what you do and why you do it better. That’s what leads to more customers.

**Matties:** How do you define the sales process and how do you get people to follow it?

**Beaulieu:** First, you warm up your leads. That’s the marketing part of it. You do some content marketing, like newsletters, tech bulletins, and posts on social media, or strictly educational content, like a book with I-Connect007 or technical paper. The salesperson can take comfort that it’s not a cold call because it has been “warmed up” through marketing. Your book program, I would say, creates some pretty hot leads.

The next part is the reach out. I’m finding that people hate to pick up the phone and talk to a potential customer, but that’s what sales is. As we do great marketing, we also have to train the salesperson. For example, say we do a lead generation project and then give those names to the salesperson, who comes back to us and complains that we didn’t give them any phone numbers. I want to say, “Well, why don’t we make the call and eliminate your part altogether? It seems we’re doing everything else anyway.”

Therefore, the process is taking the lead and calling the person. There’s no way around it. But you take comfort that the person already

knows who you are. That’s because of marketing. The customer feels that you’re doing them a favor by selling them your product. That’s how I train people. Don’t go in there, hanging your head and saying, “Please, sir, can I have an order?” Go in feeling the strength of your product. Be confident that it fits the customer perfectly, and that you can sell it. Then do that over and over again.

Be prepared for your sales call, whether on the phone or in person. Have an agenda; know what you want and the steps to getting there. Along with that, know when to shut up and listen. Remember, the customer has been warmed up, so listen and find out what their problem is. How can you help them? If you listen carefully, they will tell you what they need. Then follow up, but be patient.

The last step is to “sell” the potential customer to your own company. Make sure your company understands what this customer brings and why they should work with this customer. Your company will be making the product, so they need to see that it’s the right amount and type of business, and that it’s synergistic to what you’re building already because it promotes your brand.

**Matties:** It seems like that last step should be done in the beginning because you don’t want to waste your time on a company that doesn’t fit. We’ve seen companies bring in the wrong business and pay dearly for that. Not just in resources, but in reputation as well.

**Beaulieu:** Yes, that’s true. There is qualification in the marketing and planning phases as well. I was at a meeting once, and we were reviewing account plans, which are a qualification process because they include how much business will come from this customer per year. The person putting up the account plans said, “We’re losing because it takes too long to quote. Our processes are slow.” They had three plans in a row, and the total available market for the year was \$7,000. Planning exposes the priorities.

**Dan Feinberg:** Isn't that part of the marketing? Before it even goes to sales, you have to look at the potential. I was vice president of sales for a Fortune 200 company. But when we were still just a tiny company, we took most of the market from our competitors. We did it through sales, not marketing. We had individual salespeople who were not only selling the product but were finding out who the key decision-makers were and then building personal relationships with them.

**Beaulieu:** The account plan was a filter that caused them to focus on accomplishment, not activity. The sales plan doesn't come from marketing, it comes from the salesperson. We'll find people on their own and bring them to the party. The account plan filters these accounts. If there are hot buttons and crucial steps to winning that account, they get identified in the plan.

**Feinberg:** There is always a hot button. Sometimes, you get it on the first visit; sometimes, you get it three years later. If you don't have a good product, getting more than the first sale will not happen. The foundation is that you have a good product, a good process for the product, and that your product is consistent. Price is not as important as your own cost. You need to ask, "What's the cost to use my stuff, not necessarily the price of the individual unit of my product."

**Nolan Johnson:** What I'm hearing is that marketing creates the interest and captures the leads while sales gets the business. Does that qualifying process start with the handoff to sales?

**Feinberg:** Yes, not 100% of the time, but quite often.

**Matties:** The lead development process is commonly confused with the selling process. Developing leads is not a selling process. Marketing generates leads for your sales team to then develop the next step. Relationships matter at any level, as do the type of relationships. The younger generation, for example, as it turns out, doesn't want to spend time in the factory. You get more of the, "Just send me the video tour," or "Just send me the link to the information." Dan Beaulieu, what shifts do you see today in approaching those relationships?

**Beaulieu:** You've got to find better ways, and I really hammered on that during the pandemic, especially in the beginning. I had been going to my clients with a plan on how to sell when you couldn't visit your customers in person. I really came down on salespeople who were complaining about not being able to take a client out for lunch. It seemed like all they cared about was the hamburger, and I'd tell them that if a hamburger was the only pitch they had, then your shop had no value. I followed that up by helping them find ways to boost their expertise in the relationship. For a couple of those shops, their business almost doubled because we focused on relationships in a different way.

Another point is about expertise. Someone recently asked me, "Why does this salesperson only book a couple million bucks a year, and another salesperson from the same company books \$12 million a year?" I said it wasn't a fair assessment. The guy booking \$12 million shouldn't even have "sales" listed on his business card. He's an applications engineer who can go to any high-end company and fill the room by talking about circuit boards, whereas a salesperson with an English degree is basically a peddler. Therefore, bring value to the relationship. When





Dan Feinberg

the customers see you walking the walk, they know, “That guy is going to teach me something today.”

**Marcy LaRont:** When do you bring that technical person into the process?

**Beaulieu:** It depends on the customer, but it’s more important today than ever and will continue to be so. I’ve been doing some recruiting with large offshore companies, and they pay a lot of money for a qualified applications engineer (AE) because that person is the face of the company. They might be paying that person \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year, and they’re likely handling a \$250 million Apple or Intel account alone. There may be a salesperson involved as well, but this person becomes the company’s expert consultant to the customer.

You’re also seeing this in more domestic shops. When we started in this business, the experts were the OEMs; they had their own shops and were building these things themselves. They would contact the merchant shops and show them how to build it—a real job shop situation. That’s mostly gone now. The expertise lies in the board shop. That means the AE is a technical salesperson who becomes increasingly important. They are out there talking about the industry. They’re not even talk-

ing about their current capabilities, but about what they can do for the customer right now.

**Johnson:** So, to make a sale, you need to build a relationship. To do that, you must increase the expert knowledge at the board shop?

**Beaulieu:** Yes, absolutely.

**Feinberg:** You have to be sure the potential is there to get paid well so salespeople don’t want to lose their accounts. In my career, 25-30 years ago, our top salespeople made hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on commission, not salaries. They did whatever it took to keep those key decision-makers happy.

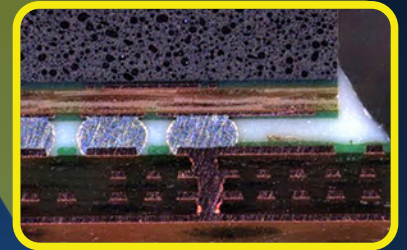
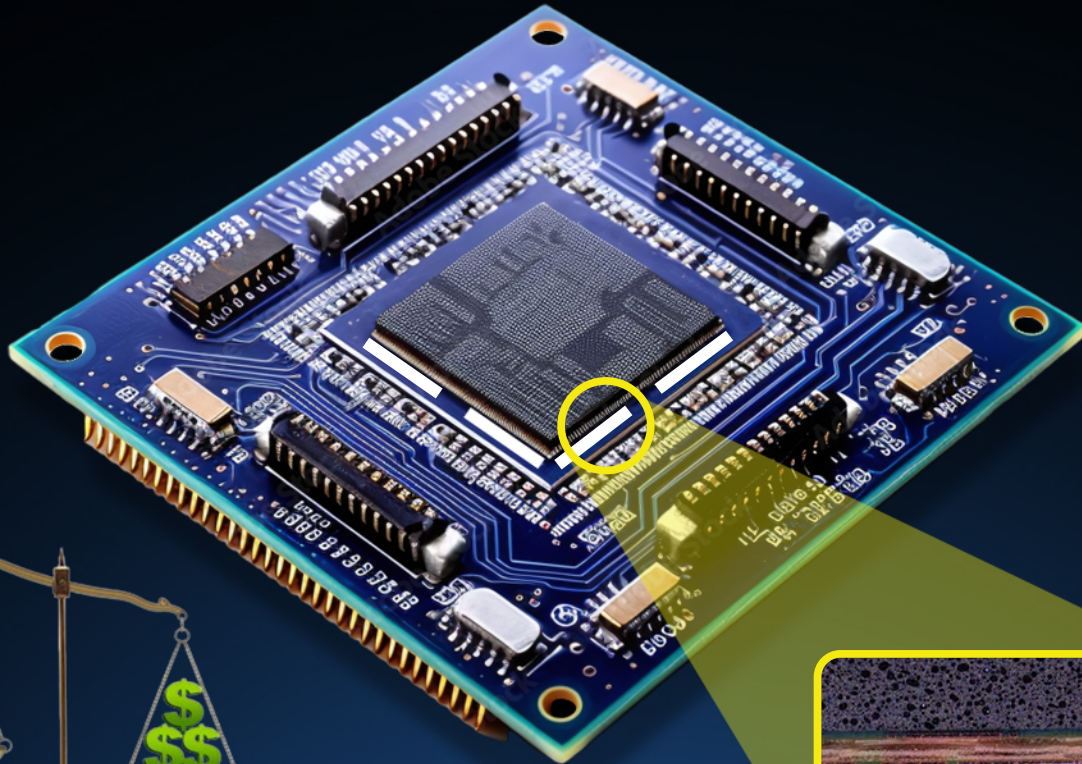
**LaRont:** Compensation for sales has been a battle in every company I’ve worked with. How has that changed over time?

**Beaulieu:** I really don’t know why anybody would be a PC board house sales rep right now. I’m trying to find them, and they all have horror stories. The deals are terrible. They spend at least 10 months of their own time and money before they see a dollar, especially if it’s the higher technology or military stuff. The rep is doing all the marketing, getting the meetings, and working through all their qualifications and surveys. Payment is slow, and often the board shops get letters to extend the terms to 90 days. The rep gets paid another 30 to 60 days after that, so it’s now six months later, and the commission rates are just 5–7%. I’m losing the ability to convince people it’s a good deal.

The direct salespeople are doing somewhat better. I’m seeing deals that are \$100,000 and 2%. Now, if you’re working for a \$50–\$60 million shop, that’s good compensation for a direct salesperson. But we need reps, and I don’t know how we will solve that problem.

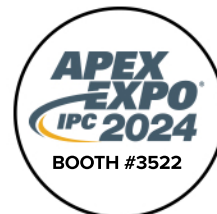
**Johnson:** So, if you need reps, and applications engineers are the most effective, does the role of a rep change into more of a technical expert?

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Marcy LaRont

**Beaulieu:** In our industry, reps are salespeople, so they need the AE because there's a feeling that you'll get more "truth" from the AE. People have that sense, whether it's true or not. The customer will believe the AE more than someone with a sales title on their business card.

**LaRont:** Why do we need reps?

**Beaulieu:** A rep has special skills to bring people to the table. When you know the accounts you want to go after, you look for a rep with equity in those accounts. Those reps have established the relationships you need.

**Matties:** How does the board shop overcome the compensation challenge of that first dollar earned being six months away?

**Beaulieu:** I have an idea that I'd like to see gain traction: You pay for progress and accomplishment. For example, you bring in an NDA and that earns you \$500. You get the first quote and that's another \$500. If these are accounts you weren't doing business with before, it's worth making those payments on those milestone payments. The rebuttal I get is, "What if they just have a lot of friends and bring in 20 NDAs?" I say, "Great. Do you know how much

you would pay in marketing to get 20 NDAs? If your rep is doing it, you now have the names, a signed NDA, and customers who want to do business with you. Maybe they're just helping a friend, but who cares? You're now connected to those customers."

**Matties:** What's their response? That they've been promised pots of gold that never deliver?

**LaRont:** It is often the perception of business owners that they are overpaying their reps. Are reps really worth it?

**Beaulieu:** It's more basic than that. Owners don't like reps and vice versa. The rep part I've already talked about; it takes too long, and the owner has been burned by reps in the past. Most owners understand manufacturing better than they understand sales. Barry, you've seen that when your sales are down, they fire their salespeople and buy a drill. That kind of thinking is still out there.

**Matties:** How do we help the industry reimagine selling, the value of marketing, and the value of a rep? Dynamics have changed.

**Beaulieu:** I'm actually more encouraged about marketing. More companies are interested in it, so the next step is getting them to be patient with the process. Direct sales has some issues that need to be addressed: There needs to be better training, salespeople need to be in it for the right reason, compensation needs to be addressed, and we need to catch up the younger generation. We skipped a generation, and we need leadership.

**Matties:** What do you think the customer wants from a salesperson these days?

**Beaulieu:** On the non-technical side, they want an advocate, someone who keeps the relationship smooth, and gets their voice inside the company. They want someone who has solu-



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tions, whether that's an AE or someone in quality assurance. Then, ironically, when the customer is mad that something went wrong, they want a salesperson to show up so they have someone to yell at and who eases the way.

**Matties:** What advice do you give a board shop today about sales and marketing?

**Beaulieu:** First, you need marketing; you have to be found. Then there needs to be more education for the salespeople, and more respect. People think sales is black magic, but it's not. It's a complete, structured process, right down to qualifying the account, forecasts, and weekly reports. How can you play a game without a scorecard?

**Matties:** How does someone prepare themselves to become a salesperson in this industry?

**Beaulieu:** This is a cool product, so get excited about it. That's where we've fallen down, frankly. Respect the product. We couldn't have gone to the moon or built a Tesla without it. Young people have passion. They want a mission, to believe in what they're selling, and that they're doing the customer a favor by selling boards that will go to Mars, for example.

Next, show them their future. A high school graduate working in customer service makes more than the starting salary of a teacher with a \$160,000 education. You can make a good living in this industry, so show that, with ambition, they have a career path.

Finally, have respect for the process. Help them have a regard for what's being built and the people who are building it. As a salesperson, you represent them. Also, this is your

craft, so never stop learning. Read books, attend seminars, and find a mentor.

**Feinberg:** When you succeed, have pride in your accomplishments.

**Beaulieu:** Absolutely.

**Matties:** Now, when you're selling or marketing your board shop, they're all about the same: They all have application engineers, solder mask departments, process engineers, and so on. How does a board or assembly shop stand out? What do you say?

**Beaulieu:** The simplest answer is to bring the customer—both literally and figuratively—to the table and create a plan. I'm sure big EMS companies had sessions and asked, "What can we put in front of this major customer?" Board shops don't do enough of that. I feel like I have to wrestle them to the ground to have a two-day sales meeting once a year. After that, the challenge is to put the sales plan into action.

Respecting the customer includes understanding how a customer is hurt when you screw up. I've fought with board shops who think on-time product delivery doesn't matter that much. A few years ago, domestic board shops were 83% on time. Thankfully, I think it's in the 90s now.

So, bring the customer to the table, respect them, and provide what they need to be successful in their industry. Do what the customer cares about, and you'll be outstanding. Once you do all that, use marketing to tell your story.

**Matties:** That's a perfect way to wrap up this discussion. Thank you all. **SMT007**



# Electronics Industry Mourns Loss of Colleague and Visionary Michael Ford



others could see it. What new system, standard, or concept could help move things forward for the better? Michael could move those ideas to the forefront and was always seeking the views and ideas of others in the process. He had a singular gift in helping everyone he encountered see the future with him in his articulate and compelling way that brought everyone into the process, whether an individual or a full conference hall.”

He started his career with Sony, including eight years working in Japan. He was instrumental in creating and evolving software solutions for assembly manufacturing that meet the most demanding expectations. He was an established thought leader for Industry 4.0 and digital Smart factories, and an active contributor to industry standards.

In 2020, Michael was given the IPC President’s Award as recognition for contributions, including CFX, traceability, secure supply-chain and digital twin standards.

In 2021 Michael was awarded the Dieter Bergman IPC Fellowship Award and chose Villanova University’s engineering department as the recipient of the grant which in turn awards a scholarship to benefit the promotion of opportunities for women in the industry.

His column for I-Connect007 was titled Smart Factory Insights, and he frequently took commonly-held ideas and pushed the boundaries of current thinking. He often found ways to improve business operations or create new business models that built off current frameworks.

“Michael has been such a generous and knowledgeable columnist for so long,” says Pete Starkey, a technical editor for I-Connect007. “He was a genuinely lovely man and a worthy recipient of our ‘Good for the Industry’ award. I can’t believe he’s gone.”

One time we asked him for his sage advice, and he said, “Always keep an open and progressive mind. Listen to and understand perspectives from all of those around you.”

Sadly, longtime I-Connect007 columnist, industry visionary, and friend Michael Ford passed away Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024. “In this time of sorrow, we can take solace in the knowledge that Michael leaves a great legacy of contribution to the electronics industry,” according to a statement from Aegis Software.

Michael was senior director of emerging industry strategy at Aegis. He was a prolific writer and speaker whose work and ideas put him at the forefront of electronics manufacturing. Working for Aegis gave him the opportunity to apply his software for electronics manufacturing experience to further drive technology solution innovation.

In the statement from Aegis, Michael was described as “always envisioning what was needed to achieve an improved manufacturing future before



# Effectively Conveying **Your Brand**— and Your Message

Feature Article by Barry Matties

I-CONNECT007

What is your brand and message, and why is this important? After 40 years running a business, I've learned the true core values of marketing and why it is critically important to any business success story. You must define and share your message, align your team, and stay in it for the long term. Here are several tips and examples to help you get there.

## Content Marketing

One of today's best marketing tools is content marketing, a term most know but few utilize well. It goes beyond sending a press release to announce you will be exhibiting at a show. Content marketing is taking part in, and driving the industry conversation as an expert.

## *What does this mean?*

You must focus on educating your prospects by providing solutions to their pain points. These are issues that are extremely challenging or create frustration and waste in their processes. This allows you and your team to become the leading recognized experts committed to solving problems. Problem-solvers are rewarded with business. If you focus on education, you don't have to "sell" to increase sales.

## The Power of Branding

Branding means creating awareness about your company and/or product to differentiate your presence in the marketplace. Short-



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term thinking and expectations should not be applied here; branding is an ongoing, long-term process. Creating a solid company brand increases your product's value; you can charge more for your products and services, which pays for marketing and increases your profits.

### ***How can we establish and measure branding?***

Branding is measured not in the short term, but over years of dedication to building that brand. If I ask you to name a fast-food restaurant, for example, you will most likely say McDonald's, even if you don't eat there. McDonald's has owned that space for many years, likely because the company advertises consistently over the long term. It achieved market saturation and remains at the top.

At one time, there was no such thing as fast food. At one time, there was only one McDonald's restaurant. But the company discovered a niche and capitalized on it. The quickest way to own a brand in the marketplace is to find an opening where a name brand doesn't exist. What is your niche, and how can you position your message to demonstrate that you either offer something that no one else does, or you offer it better, smarter, faster, or more efficiently? Take the time to think about what your brand really is.

A simple measure of branding is the number of impressions into your target market. Remember that if your target markets are B2B, you will not have ever-growing numbers. A fixed number defines B2B markets. The measure, therefore, is not how many people saw your ad one time but the number of times your ad got in front of the right people in your market. In other words,

you want each prospect to see your message as often as possible.

Of course, other measures come into play over time as well. You start to see your sales increase. You notice a higher demand for your products. More people contact you to do business. You are more recognized at trade shows. More people think of you first in your chosen category, like people did with McDonald's in fast food. You're established and are measuring your brand.

## **Define Your Message**

The message is the stated value that defines your offering and communicates that to your customers. The message should not focus on how great you are, but on the benefits to customers by doing business with you.

What does this look like? Consider these two messages that might be included in a branding message:

- Everyone wins with our product
- Improve your yield by 35%

The first statement is vague and targets everyone as a winner. It seems safe on the outside, but it hardly serves as a compelling argument to gain business.

The second message talks directly to the potential customer. "Improve your yield by 35%" is very clear and direct. This value is strongly compelling to prospects who want to increase yields. It gets their attention, and it positions you as someone who increases quality and throughput. Remember, the mind likes simplicity, not complexity. So, your message should be clear, concise, accurate, and stand on its own. Most often, you





don't need a paragraph to explain it. Looking at the two examples I cited, you want potential customers who are focused on increasing yields and who will think of you first. Let your message solve their problems.

Now, use clear messaging to build your story, your marketing message. This should be communicated everywhere you go. You become your message. Bring your message into your branding ads, share your expertise through columns and articles, write a book on the subject, and put your message on your business cards. It's especially important to share this message with your team. Everyone must be aligned on the message and help promote it, no matter what team or department they're in. As a manager, talk about it constantly to everyone everywhere. There is real power when the whole team is aligned.

## **Memorable Messaging Matters**

Successful branding is about making your message memorable. Message recall is more likely as you reach saturation, but be sure it resonates with the emotional minds of the prospects. Playing to a customer's emotions can't

be overstated. We understand that the higher the emotional content, the greater the recall. So, when we say it resonates with the emotional mind, we're talking about moderating the number of impressions needed for prospects to recall the message. Combining saturation with a message that appeals to the emotional mind is the best approach.

If a prospect says, "I don't really know you, your values, your reputation, or what you stand for," how likely is it that they will do business with you? This may feel extreme but don't assume your prospects already know these things about you. Start with your own story and continue to educate your customers and prospective customers. Otherwise, you are leaving it up to your competitors, and they are probably not sending out the message you want.

### ***Why does this matter?***

Your values are the things you stand for, what you bring into your business, and how you lead your team each day. The identity or brand you put out there matters because we like to do business with companies we know—the ones

who have strong reputations and solid core values. Once you have instilled these values in your team and those values guide everything they do, that should come through in your brand messaging.

It shouldn't still be the case, but there are companies that operate with "questionable" business methodologies. They promise everything, yet deliver disappointment. Those are the ones we want to avoid doing business with. The core values in those organizations are not aligned with building a long-lasting relationship with their customers, suppliers, or employees.

Core values don't change with market conditions. They stand the test of time. The best way for your customers to know your values is to live them in front of customers daily. This includes all your marketing, ads, columns, interviews, shipping boxes, or any point of contact with a prospect or customer. Ensure your prospects know who you are, your reputation, and what you stand for. Live, share, and reinforce that daily. This will make doing business with you a much easier choice for prospects.

There are a few companies you already know which are safe to do business with. These are the ones consistently doing what they say they will do and doing so without hidden cost. Amazon is one that comes to mind. Amazon has built a solid reputation with consumers. Their marketing plan is strong, and their branding is everywhere, right down to their shipping box with a smile. They are not perfect, but when they miss the mark, you know they will strive

to make it right. It would be nice if all business transactions were that predictable.

## Aligning Your Marketing Message

Marketing alignment begins with having a clear message ready to share. Once you do, align it with your business development team. But don't stop there. Marketing is a company-wide effort. Everyone in the company needs to know your organization's marketing message, including reps and distributors. By

aligning your entire team, you will soon find many more ways in which everyone in your company can contribute to strengthen your position and grow sales.

For example, your engineering department may contribute a monthly column for our magazines. Others on your team may participate in our industry roundtables, again sharing your message with potential customers. Remember that

these are not sales pitches; they are examples of how you are the go-to expert (content marketing). If your team is not aligned with the marketing mission, your potential customers may be confused, which will have a negative impact on sales.

If your marketing message positions you as the expert on increasing yields, and your team is not aligned with that position, how do you know what they are (or aren't) sharing? Let's say your mission is going to the moon, but your team is not aligned, so you have team members out buying swimsuits instead of spacesuits because they think you are going to the beach. This is a terrible waste of time and resources.





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## Alignment Is About Focus

Incorporate the message into your ads and supporting marketing materials to cement your aligned marketing. This reinforces the alignment with your team, reps, distributors, customers, and potential customers. The more public it is, the stronger it becomes.

## Everybody's in Sales

Closing sales is typically the responsibility of your sales team. But while you need a strong professional closing sales, it's not solely their responsibility. In reality, the salesperson is only as good as the team that produces the deliverables; they're selling the team's capability, attitude, and commitment. A high-quality sales pitch or on-time delivery is a great place to start. Still, in the long run, it's about the team producing the deliverables that sustains the ability to make sales, not just the salesperson. Having long-term, repeat customers is one

of your most vital sales tools, only achieved through your aligned team effort.

At a minimum, anyone who has contact with customers and potential customers should understand the selling process and what it takes to make a sale, so let them help. Remember, selling is not about one presentation; it's about building relationships. The more meaningful relationships your entire team has with potential customers, the more likely they will become customers.

Making sales is about the impression your organization leaves in your prospect's mind. The delivery of your message creates a perception in the prospect's mind, which can be problematic if it's a conflicting message. For example, suppose your salesperson tells a prospect about your fantastic customer service, and then gets stuck in an automated phone loop. What if a customer calls and the call is answered poorly? It will immediately set a negative impression.

If a prospect visits your website and finds outdated information and broken links (the IT department is in sales, too) or goes on a factory tour and sees your team not wearing safety glasses, these experiences set an impression. Every opportunity to cast a good impression on a potential customer is essential.

Not everyone will be on the front line of sales, but their voice is still valuable. We are increasingly seeing companies feature their teams in marketing and advertising, and to their benefit. We see their faces and read their stories in ads and trade shows. They are even writing columns and articles for trade publications. Your people are valuable; they add strength and substance to your selling process, and you should consider their positive impact. Maybe we need to add “sales” to everyone’s title?

## The Key to Sales

Marketing is a very broad and misunderstood topic. It is an important investment, a cost of doing smart business. Everything I’ve explained comprises an essential piece of the

marketing (and sales) formula, explaining what marketing is and how it works in concert with your sales effort.

It all comes back to my original thoughts about content marketing. It is the smartest way to create your brand, and develop your story and the identity you want to convey. If a prospective customer doesn’t know about you, they won’t buy from you. So, tell them.

I can still hear the old-school naysayers arguing that marketing is an unnecessary expense, saying things like, “What are the salespeople for?” However, the most important reason to market your business is because prospective customers must know about you before they can buy from you, and you must control the narrative of who “you” are. I challenge you to consider that your position on whether to engage in marketing, whatever that may look like, will either support and position your salespeople well or make their jobs getting that first appointment much more difficult. Good marketing is good business, and I wish you all luck in your journeys. **SMT007**

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# Make the Most of Your Marketing and Trade Show Investment

Trade shows are an investment of valuable resources: time, money, labor, travel, and time away from the office. In fact, the average trade show investment in the United States is between \$40,000–\$60,000 ([inkwellusa.com](http://inkwellusa.com)) simply for a booth. Trade shows take tremendous effort, and every exhibitor’s goal is to get the greatest return on investment, which translates into closing sales.

Being at the show and having products ready to present is just part of the ROI equation. It is also critical to make your booth a destination so magnetic that prospects arrive at the event with a plan to seek you out, ready to do business. To really maximize your investment and success, the work begins long before the show doors open. Pre-show marketing is

a critical part of any successful trade show strategy.

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# MilAero007 Highlights



## **RTX Raytheon's GhostEye MR Proves Operational Readiness During U.S. Air Force Exercise** ▶

GhostEye MR was designed and developed by Raytheon, primarily through internal research and development investments. During the recent exercise, GhostEye MR was successfully integrated with NASAMS' Air Defense Console and the Battlespace Command and Control Center (BC3), a command-and-control element used by the U.S. Air Force.

## **Global Deep-Space Advanced Radar Capability Extends AUKUS Partnership** ▶

Northrop Grumman Corporation is developing the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) that will track objects in the geosynchronous orbit, protecting critical U.S. and allied satellites. DARC is a global network of three advanced ground-based sensors to be operated in collaboration with AUKUS alliance partners, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

## **Airbus Helicopters to Expand Unmanned Aerial System Portfolio with Acquisition of Aeroval** ▶

Airbus Helicopters and Aeroval have signed an agreement regarding the acquisition of Aeroval and its unmanned aerial system (UAS), Flexrotor, as part of a strategy to strengthen its portfolio of tactical unmanned solutions. Flexrotor is a small tactical unmanned aerial system designed for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) missions at sea and over land.

## **Leidos Deploys New Flight Service Voice Communications System** ▶

Leidos has announced the successful deployment of a new Flight Service Voice Communications System (FSVCS) using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology, developed in coordination with Rohde & Schwarz USA. The flexible and scalable system includes interfacing with legacy analog connections and new digital voice communication. The design minimizes dependency on traditional point-to-point communications and increases voice availability with the general aviation community.

## **Lockheed Martin Awarded Contract for 18 Space Development Agency Tranche 2 Satellites** ▶

The Space Development Agency (SDA) has awarded Lockheed Martin a contract to build 18 space vehicles as part of its Tranche 2 Tracking Layer constellation. Lockheed Martin will provide 16 wide field of view missile warning/missile tracking space vehicles with infrared sensors and two space vehicles with missile defense infrared sensors that can generate fire control-quality tracks to provide preliminary missile defense mission capabilities.

## **DARPA Moves Forward on X-65 Technology Demonstrator** ▶

DARPA has selected Aurora Flight Sciences to build a full-scale X-plane to demonstrate the viability of using active flow control (AFC) actuators for primary flight control. The award is Phase 3 of the Control of Revolutionary Aircraft with Novel Effectors (CRANE) program.

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# The Evolution of Conscious Marketing

## The Knowledge Base

Feature Column by Mike Konrad, SMTA

Marketing is an evolving field, and the strategies that worked in the past may no longer be as effective in today's digital age. Traditional marketing, characterized by companies boasting about their products' greatness through technical specifications and braggadocious statements, is becoming increasingly obsolete. In contrast, conscious marketing focuses on providing solutions to problems by educating and connecting with the audience on a deeper level. Younger generations, in particular, have developed automatic filters in their minds that sift out marketing hype. This shift toward problem-solving and value creation is redefining the landscape of marketing.

## The Decline of Traditional Marketing

Traditional marketing, often associated with flashy advertisements, jingles, and in-your-face product promotions, has lost its luster in recent years. The reasons behind this decline are multifaceted:

- 1. Consumer skepticism.** Consumers have become more discerning and skeptical about marketing claims. They are no longer easily swayed by over-the-top promises and self-praise.
- 2. Information overload.** The digital age has flooded consumers with information. Bombarding them with technical specifications and boasting about product





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greatness can be overwhelming and counterproductive.

**3. Changing consumer behavior.** Modern consumers seek solutions to their problems, not just products. They are inclined to research and explore options independently before making a purchase.

**4. Generational shift.** Younger generations, such as Millennials and Gen Z, have grown up in an environment saturated with advertising. They have developed filters to tune out traditional marketing messages.

## The Rise of Conscious Marketing

Conscious marketing recognizes the need to adapt to these changes in consumer behavior and preferences. It revolves around several key principles:

**Education over promotion.** Instead of pushing products, conscious marketing emphasizes educating consumers. This approach seeks to inform and empower customers with knowledge, making them more capable of making informed decisions.

**Solutions to problems.** Conscious marketing is all about providing solutions to the challenges

and pain points that customers face. Companies that can demonstrate a deep understanding of their audience's needs and offer viable solutions are more successful.

**Value-centric.** It's no longer enough to talk about product features and benefits. Conscious marketing prioritizes delivering value to the customer. This can come in the form of helpful content, resources, or experiences that enhance the customer's product or life.

**Relationship building.** Building lasting relationships with customers is a cornerstone of conscious marketing. Companies aim to connect with their audience on a personal level, and this fosters trust and loyalty.

## The Effectiveness of Conscious Marketing

Conscious marketing strategies have shown significant effectiveness in the current landscape:

**Engagement.** By providing valuable content and solutions, conscious marketing captures the attention and interest of consumers actively seeking answers to their problems.

**Trust-building.** Conscious marketing techniques build trust with the audience. When a company demonstrates a deep understanding of its customers' needs and offers genuine solutions, trust is naturally established.

**Long-term brand loyalty.** This is fostered by building relationships and providing ongoing value. Customers who feel connected to a brand are more likely to remain loyal.

**Data-driven insights.** Conscious marketing leverages data analytics to understand customer behavior





and preferences better. This information allows companies to refine their strategies and deliver more personalized experiences.

## Examples of Conscious Marketing Success

Several companies have embraced conscious marketing strategies with remarkable success:

**HubSpot.** HubSpot's inbound marketing approach focuses on creating valuable content that addresses the pain points of businesses. Their blog, webinars, and educational resources have positioned them as a thought leader in the marketing industry.

**Airbnb.** Airbnb's "Experiences" campaign doesn't just sell lodging; it offers unique, curated experiences that travelers can enjoy. This approach resonates with consumers seeking authentic and memorable adventures.

**Red Bull.** It's not just an energy drink; it's a lifestyle brand. By hosting extreme sports events and creating exciting content, Red Bull has built a loyal following beyond their product.

**Patagonia.** Patagonia's marketing goes beyond selling outdoor gear. They are committed to environmental and social responsibility, and their marketing campaigns reflect this commitment. This approach resonates with eco-conscious consumers.

## How Conscious Marketing Stands Out Over Traditional Marketing

In an era characterized by information overload and consumer skepticism, conscious marketing has emerged as a powerful and distinct approach that sets it apart from traditional marketing methods. Let's explore some ways in which conscious marketing distinguishes itself and why it is gaining prominence:

**Customer-centric approach.** Conscious marketing places the customer at the center of its strategy. It recognizes that consumers today are not merely passive recipients of marketing



messages but active participants in the decision-making process. By understanding and empathizing with the customer's needs, challenges, and aspirations, conscious marketing builds a genuine connection.

**Value-based communication.** Traditional marketing often revolves around product-centric communication, focusing on what a product does or how great it is. In contrast, conscious marketing places a higher emphasis on value-based communication. It doesn't just list features but demonstrates how those features can address specific customer pain points and improve their lives.

**Educational content.** Conscious marketing prioritizes education over promotion. Instead of bombarding customers with flashy ads and empty slogans, it provides valuable, educational content that empowers consumers with knowledge. This approach not only builds trust but also positions the company as an industry expert.

**Problem-solving orientation.** Traditional marketing tends to boast about a product's attributes and specifications without necessarily addressing the customer's underlying problems. Conscious marketing, on the other hand, is all about providing solutions. It strives to

connect the dots between the customer's challenges and the product's capabilities.

**Transparency and authenticity.** Conscious marketing thrives on transparency and authenticity. It acknowledges both the positive and negative aspects of a product or service, fostering a sense of trust. In contrast, traditional marketing often involves exaggerations and idealized portrayals that can erode trust when reality falls short of expectations.

**Long-term relationship building.** While traditional marketing often focuses on short-term gains and quick conversions, conscious marketing adopts a long-term perspective. It seeks to build lasting relationships with customers based on trust, loyalty, and mutual understanding. This approach not only secures repeat business, it generates positive word-of-mouth referrals.

**Adaptation to changing consumer behavior.** In a world where consumers actively seek solutions to their problems and filter out marketing noise, conscious marketing adapts more effectively. It aligns with how modern consumers conduct research, make informed decisions, and engage with brands.

**Data-driven personalization.** Conscious marketing leverages data analytics, not to bom-

bard customers with generic messages, but to deliver personalized experiences. By understanding individual preferences and behaviors, companies can tailor their offerings and communications to meet customer needs better.

## Conclusion

Conscious marketing represents a shift toward a more customer-centric, transparent, and empathetic approach to marketing. It stands out over traditional marketing by recognizing that consumers seek solutions to their problems rather than just products. By focusing on education, value creation, and authentic relationship-building, conscious marketing not only resonates with today's consumers, it paves the way for sustained success in the evolving marketing landscape. As businesses continue to adapt to the changing expectations of their audience, conscious marketing is poised to lead the way in connecting with and serving customers effectively. **SMT007**



**Mike Konrad** is founder and CEO of Aqueous Technologies, and vice president of communications for SMTA. To read past columns, [click here](#).



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# Relationship Selling Never Grows Old

Feature Article by Dan Feinberg

Many years ago, I was a regional sales manager for a well-known supplier, and we had one of the world's largest PCB fab facilities in our region. Part of my responsibility was to prove our product to that fab's process engineering team. Our product happened to be red, while the fab was using our competitor's product, which was blue. Just as we were successfully building a very good relationship with this company, the competing sales team said or did something to anger the responsible process engineer. I was soon informed that they would change to our product. The engineer said, "I can see my room turning red." I attribute this change to a well-built relationship spiced up with a little good timing.

The first step for a sales team is to directly interact with the targeted customers, converting the leads (created by advertising and research done by the marketing team) into sales. Marketing is the first chapter, and sales is the rest of the story. Get to know the customer and build a relationship with the key decision-makers, be they process engineers, purchasing agents, or just about everyone in between.

It is important to recognize that sales and marketing are related but not the same. I find it interesting that some people are not aware of the difference. The confusion is understandable in that the goal of both functions is to enter a market with a product and/or service and gain sales. One of the ways I learned to



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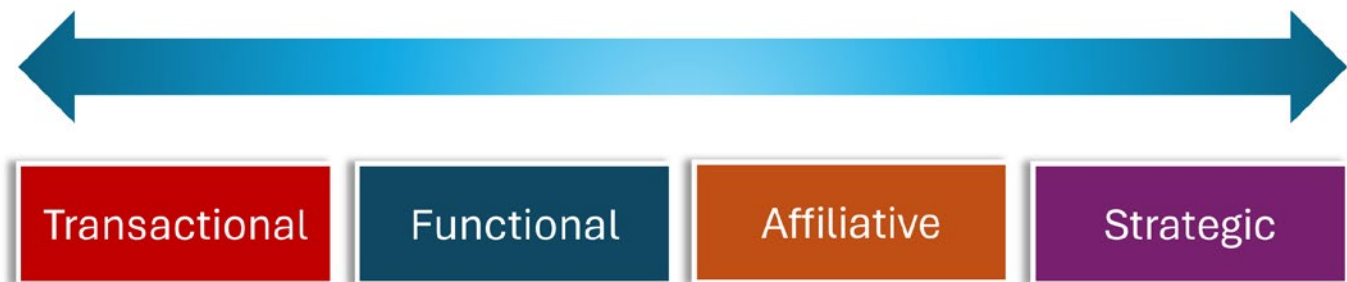


Figure 1: As this figure depicts, business relationships range from transactional, or one-time purchases, to strategic partnerships that are often likened to a marriage. Somewhere in between are functional and affiliative relationships that may look like friendships. (Source: *Marketing Principles v. 1.0*, a free online book.)

gain business was to enter a market by showing product value (marketing) and gaining business opportunities by building sound personal relationships with key decision-makers (sales).

The main goal of business development is to obtain, invent, and/or produce something needed or that can be used by an industry segment. This is done by using market research to determine the industry segment's needs (using a larger set of activities, market research on pricing, identification of competition, strength, and weakness of competing products) and then testing the product to ensure it meets those needs as much as possible. Use that to build a marketing plan and product introduction timeline, issue announcements, advertise, etc. Then, the sales process starts.

While marketing activities are usually indirect (identify prospective customers), sales activities are usually direct (interact with customers), and success is far more probable if the relationships between the salesperson/team and the process engineer/purchasing agent making the final decision have been established and are strong.

I've had the opportunity to see these basic tenets repeatedly work, whether the product was electroless copper, dry film photoresist, etchant, or laminate. Good, strong relationships allow the salesperson to discuss the advantages of your product and create the opportunity to discuss and overcome objections. Selling to a friend is far more possible than to someone you hardly know. A friend

will inform you of any potential issues and allow you to offer ways to overcome them.

Build that relationship by treating each potential customer as a friend and finding ways to build a modest social relationship. Develop respect and make your relationship add social, technical, and economic value. Earn trust by helping to resolve any issues quickly. Help them gain credibility with their employer. Their reward will be growing their position in their company, and yours will be the same, along with getting a commission on the additional sales.

Be constantly aware that relationship-building and improvement are ongoing processes. The relationship you build with your prospective customer will be mutually beneficial and not only protect the business you have gained, but absolutely provide additional opportunities in the future.

Even in this age of digital business practices, the value of human relationships is crucial to the sales process and should not be overlooked. While marketing's efforts are to introduce the sales team to as many new prospects as possible, it's up to the sales team to build those relationships into purchasing customers. **SMT007**



**Dan Feinberg** is a technical editor at I-Connect007, founder of Fein-Lines Associates, and an I-Connect007 columnist. To read his columns, [click here](#).

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# Shifting From Prospect to Customer

Feature Article by Nolan Johnson

I-CONNECT007

All art is process-oriented or procedural—a bold claim that many artists might take issue with. Still, painting with oil on canvas follows a process of building colors from bottom to top; watercolor on paper follows a different process. Learning a musical instrument follows a process, and building the skills to play music with others requires precise communication and a mastery of the song to be played. These are all procedural things.

Contrary to popular belief, selling is also more a process than a magic-filled art, and one part of the process that seems artful (but is actually procedural) is qualifying your prospect. Qualification answers this fundamental question: “Is this lead a good fit as a customer or not?”

## The Process

Start with your business plan, a working business model, and a strategy. Know who you want to go after, and with what product or service. Now, how do you determine whether a prospect is right for you?

The old saw in sales is, “If you’re going to get a ‘no’ from the customer, get it as soon as possible.” Don’t waste your time on someone whose mind is made up. This sounds reasonable, but successful salespeople will tell you to be persistent and that “no” means “not at this time.” So, how do you tell the difference?

The Miller Heiman Strategic Selling method is one of the most authoritative sources on the concept of selling as a strategic partnership between the buyer and seller. In their book,





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*The New Strategic Selling*, Robert Miller and Stephen Heiman outline archetypes that help with qualifying.

The idea is not necessarily to disqualify a prospect but rather to learn what motivates the buyer so you can reach a mutually beneficial solution.

B2B transactions can be rather large and complex. The authors define it as having one or more of the following elements in place<sup>1</sup>:

- The buying organization has multiple options
- The selling organization has multiple options
- In both organizations, numerous levels of responsibility are involved
- The buying organization's decision-making process is complex, meaning that it is seldom self-evident to an outsider

The next set of categories zeroes in on the roles and motivations of the multiple decision-makers in your prospective customer's organization.

## Types of Buyer Roles

- **Economic:** Gives final approval to buy. The economic buyer can override everyone else's recommendations. If you don't have the support of the economic decision-maker, you don't have the sale.
- **User:** Speaks of the impact your service will have on doing their job. There may be several people in these roles.
- **Technical:** Focus on the service itself and how well it meets objective specifications. Technical buyers don't have the authority to say yes, but they do have the power to say no with finality. There may be several people in this role as well.
- **Coach:** Guides you to your sales objective by providing the information needed to strike the right position with each buyer role. Miller and Heiman make it clear that coaches provide a map that guides you to the buying influences for your customer. Coaches may be inside or outside the organization.





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In a complex sale, expect to find all four roles present; some participants may have more than one role. As a salesperson, it is crucial to identify the decision-makers and their roles. The next step is to understand each decision-maker's assessment of the situation and their buying influences.

In their book, Miller and Heiman identify four perspectives or "positions" that a decision-maker might take:

- **Growth:** This person believes that the performance gap can be closed by either just making more, by making it better, or both. If your proposal does either, you'll have their attention.
- **Trouble:** Something has deviated from the intended plan and the buyer needs help. Show that your proposal will quickly eliminate the issue and you've got a sale.
- **Even keel:** This buyer doesn't see any gaps between the present and desired state. They don't have an incentive to change.
- **Overconfident:** This buyer is unreceptive to change because they see actual results as better than expected.

Both you and your customer "always have a position, and for that reason you always have a strategy, whether or not you can articulate what it is," the authors write. No matter their role, decision-makers who have a "growth" or "trouble" perspective are more receptive to new solutions than "even keel" or "overconfi-

dent." Pragmatically, getting the last two to shift their perspective can make or break your resolve. This is where the coach role delivers value: Understanding each influencer's motive and position can help you deliver something they each need as a part of the sale. The authors write, "The first thing you need to do with each account is to make your current position visible."

## A Personal Example

Early in my career, I worked as a factory-based technical expert at an EDA software company. My specialty was IC design verification software. It was my job to work with account managers and their FAE partners in sales situations. When qualifying a new account, the account manager would concentrate on finding all the decision-makers, understanding their roles, and concentrating on relationships with the economic decision-makers. The FAE would use the account manager's org chart to work with the technical and user decision-makers to understand what problems needed to be solved—the win/win. As a tech expert, my role was to help find solutions back at the factory with which to deliver that win/win combination.

When we played our roles properly, the customer's decision-makers would organically develop a business case stating the problem to be solved, how we would help them solve it, and financial details culminating in a projected ROI. Almost always, there was a "compelling event"—a broken process, an inefficient tool or method, a capacity issue, or the like. It was this pain point that would convert "even keel" and "overconfident" decision-makers into motivated participants. Once we uncovered that compelling event, we could demonstrate how to resolve that critical breakdown.

For IC layout verification customers, the compelling event was usually that the IC designs required too many prototype samples

on silicon before they had a working version. Verification software could identify poorly formed transistors in the topography and other weaknesses in the design's manufacturability. Verification could also exhaustively verify that the physical layout of the design was 100% faithful to the schematic used as the guide.

It was often at this point where pre-existing tools and processes broke down. The verification step required (and still does) significant compute power and could run for multiple days before completion. By showing that we could deliver faster run times, easier job setup, more accurate results, and easier to read reports—all leading to shorter design cycles, fewer trial runs of expensive silicon fabrication, and lowered project costs—we usually found a compelling event for everyone.

Yet that compelling event often was not enough to make the sale. Using the Miller Heiman methods, we learned to recognize that without a compelling event, we had no sale. Even with a compelling event, we needed sufficient personal motivation amongst all the various decision-makers; otherwise, we had no sale. With nearly all our attention as a sales

team focused on the qualification process, the close just seemed to take care of itself.

## Conclusion

A thorough study of how to qualify prospects is well beyond the scope of this article, but highly recommended. There are several quality texts on the topic, Miller and Heiman's book being just one of them. Once you've refined the process, your own personal expression will undoubtedly emerge. That is when art happens, when what is expressed and/or accomplished by you personally—while following the process—begins to reflect your personal style. Once you become a master of the process, bending the rules without breaking them brings creativity and art to your qualification and sales efforts, and makes your sales funnel more efficient. **SMT007**

## Reference

1. *The New Strategic Selling: The Unique Sales System Proven Successful by the World's Best Companies*, by Robert Miller and Stephen Heiman, published in 2005.

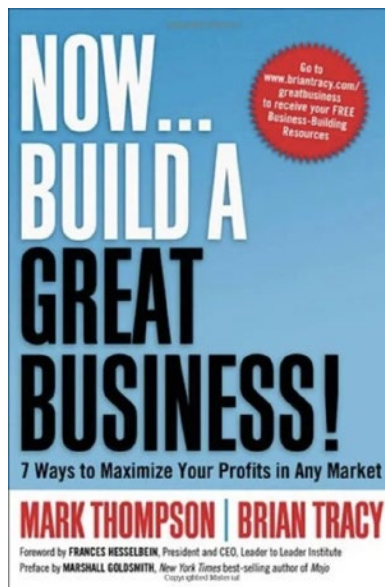
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## Now... Build a Great Business! 7 Ways to Maximize Your Profits in Any Market by Mark Thompson and Brian Tracy

This gem of a book is an oldie but goodie. In this fast-moving world, it is amazing that a 12-year-old book is still as pertinent now as it was then, but I guess that's the true definition of a business classic.

Truth be known, I just reread this book for the third time since I first read it 10 years ago, and it makes sense: The advice still applies today.

The book covers every aspect of growing your business, including the sales process, something that too many companies do not spend enough time on. Sure, they



tell their salespeople to get out there and sell but they don't take the time to create the right sales process.

This is a short book, and the authors pack a lot into these pages. I keep it right at my fingertips and it's a recommended read, to be sure. Every time I open this book and read a few pages, I learn something new. If you are serious about growing your business, then make sure to read this book. Now, go build a great business.

This is an excerpt from Dan Beaulieu's column, Dan's Biz Bookshelf; read the rest of it [here](#).

# Set Your CM Business on Fire



Feature Article by Dan Beaulieu

D.B. MANAGEMENT GROUP

What often surprises me when working with contract manufacturers (CMs) is that many of them, especially the ones earning less than \$25 million a year, have not done much planning for their future. I've realized that many started to build a specific sub-assembly as offshoots of a larger company.

One company, for example, started as an offshoot of Caterpillar, which promised them unlimited business if they would start a small company nearby to service their needs. The same was true of several smaller contract manufacturers in the Phoenix area that were started to serve Honeywell. In the Seattle area, Boeing was surrounded by these smaller "satellite" companies that started up to serve the airplane giant.

Around the world, these small CMs were promised all the business they needed into the "unforeseeable future." Now that unfore-

seeable future is here, and after several years, "all the business they would ever need" has dried up. It's now time for these companies to do what they have never done before: Plan for their future.

Even just five or six years ago, these contract manufacturers really didn't need to spend their time thinking about strategy, direction, branding, marketing, or sales. They had a strong base of business they could rely on, and the rest of their backlog came automatically over the transom.

That has changed. These companies now find themselves in dire need of strategic planning and everything that comes with getting their names into the marketplace: Becoming known, finding and wooing the right customers, creating account plans, and growing their businesses.

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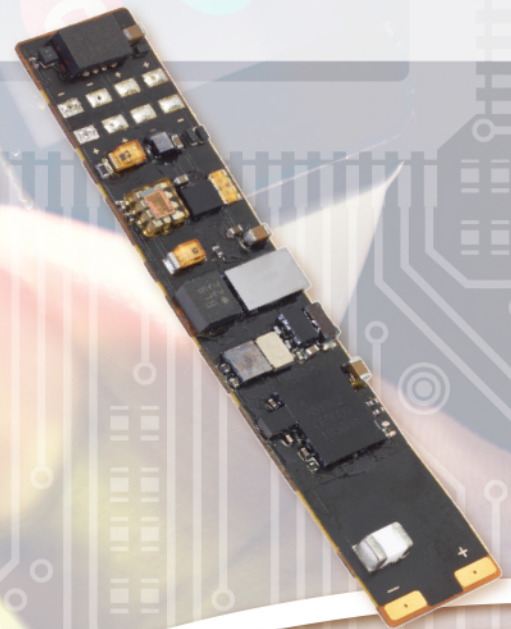
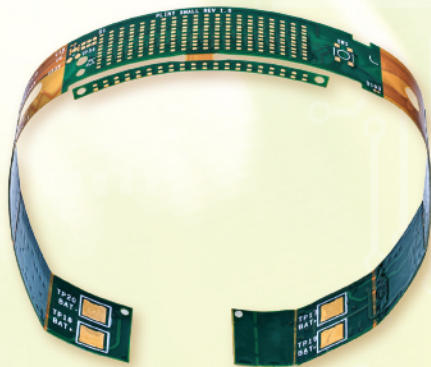
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## The Strategic Business Plan: What Business Are You In?

The strategic business plan should be part of a company's foundation and sales efforts, and the best way to develop, execute, and implement a strategic business plan is to be intentional and focused. This can't be the owner's plan alone; developing a good strategic business plan must involve the entire management team. This helps create ownership of the plan across the board.

I highly recommend having open discussions about the future of your company. Here are some thought-provoking, self-examining questions you can use with your teams:

- What business are we in?
- What market do we serve?
- What do we do?
- What do we do well?
- Why do people buy from us? Who are our customers?
- Why did we start the company?
- What are we good at?
- What is our technology level?

*[Click to download my strategic business plan questionnaire.](#)*

Answer these questions properly, and you will have a complete strategic business plan for your entire team about the direction of your company.

## The Customers: Who Is Your Ideal Customer?

Knowing exactly what type of customer you want is the key to your success but remember that you can never be all things to all people. You must choose a lane. Evaluate your current customer base and decide who your best customers are and why. Why would they buy from you? What do they like about you and your product and services?

Next, use this information to create an ideal customer profile, which is designed to describe



the customers who need your products and services. This profile should list the qualities and characteristics, including their:

- Market
- Qualifications they require
- Technology
- Services
- Position in their own market (you want to collaborate with leaders)
- Chemistry between you and them
- Value of the things that you do for them
- Ability and willingness to pay their bills

*[Click to read Targeting the Ideal Customer.](#)*

## The Competition: Your Worthy Opponents

Who is your competition? To truly evaluate your position in your chosen market, you must know who else is there. What is the competition offering your customers? Once you know this, you can determine how you will do the job better. In short, to offer something different, you must figure out how to best your competition and be downright outstanding.

Look for gaps in the marketplace. What do your customers want that no one else is supplying? Remember that every single successful company looks for a need in the market and then meets that need better than anyone else.



One way to be better than everyone else is being easier and more pleasant to deal with. You can also have the best process controls. Understand your customers' needs today and for the future.

Customers want to be understood, so look for ways to be better and climb to the top. Don't be afraid to think differently. Successful companies aren't afraid to break new ground, to go where no other company in their market has gone before. Don't limit yourself to the "rules" of your marketplace. Break them and set yourself apart.

## Marketing and Selling: You Must Be Found

"Build it and they will come" only applies to movie baseball fields in Iowa. The rest of us must work hard at being noticed. This means developing and implementing a comprehensive marketing plan.

The good news is that there are so many solid options to help your company be seen.

Use trusted sources to provide industry-specific content in I-Connect007 publications, newsletters with Constant Contact, and networking tools within LinkedIn and HubSpot. These companies are efficient, effective, and economical.

Make the most of digital marketing using SEO and Google ads. Let your marketing plan encompass all these ideas. It's worth the time, effort, and cost.

Developing a good marketing plan is the key to getting your name out there. The most important thing about a marketing plan is to be consistent and patient. You must have the

courage to get your message out there in many different ways. Be creative and persistent, so that you draw in the customers and make them want to work with you.

This will not be easy at first, but a comprehensive marketing plan with detailed actions, dates, and milestones consistently followed is the best way to get your name in front of potential customers.

## Sales: You Have to Talk to Someone

Once you've determined your strategic direction, created an ideal customer profile, and launched your marketing plan, it's now time to put yourself in front of potential customers. There's just no way around it; you have to follow the leads you developed. One suggestion is to take your ideal customer profile and use it as a template to search out the right customers. I liked using LinkedIn. It helps me find the right customers and learn a lot about them. Armed with this knowledge, you can make

your move. Now, connect, meet, and start the sales process.

It is often said that every salesperson actually sells twice: They sell the customer, but they have to sell their own company on servicing that customer.

That's when the target account form is especially useful. When done properly, this form will provide your entire team

with a comprehensive profile of the customers you are targeting, why you are targeting them, and why the team and the company should focus on them. The account plan tells the ops folks the kind of business they can expect, including the technology and services.



# TARGET ACCOUNT PLAN

Fields to include in your sales database

- 1 Customer:
- 2 Address:
- 3 Phone:
- 4 E-mail:
- 5 Key persons:
- 6 Type of company:
- 7 Type of product(s):
- 8 Technology:
- 9 Dollars bought annually:\*
- 10 Percent of your type of business (list types here):
- 11 Competitors:
- 12 Your company's standing:
- 13 Potential growth:
- 14 Hot buttons:
- 15 Actions to book more business:
- 16 This year's actuals:
- 17 Next year's annual forecast:
- 18 Forecast by quarter:
- 19 Forecast by month:
- 20 Comments/plan of action:\*

*\*extremely important categories*

The projected business (forecast) from that account also lets them know how many people they will need as well as any new equipment they will need.

The best part is that when you combine all the target account plans, you have a month-by-month, customer-by-customer forecast for the company as well. If you want to succeed with your sales effort, your sales team needs to develop and present account plans to the rest of the team on a regular basis.

*Note: See my sample account plan (left).*

## The Annual Meeting: Planning for the Year and Beyond

The final step in planning for the success of the future of your company is the annual meeting. This is when all the planning and tools come together. One planning session early in the year with your team can set your plans for the whole year. Implementing and launching this plan early in the year allows you to take advantage of the months ahead.

The entire management and sales team should attend this meeting. Everyone should report on the results of the previous year in their own departments and then talk about their plans for the coming year. This is the one time of the year where everyone comes together, agrees on the company's future direction, and makes a commitment to themselves and each other to have a successful new year.

The ball is now in your court. You can sit back and hope the phone rings or get busy building your business. Spend the time to think carefully about your business, create ideal customer profiles, and go after those new accounts you worked so hard to find. Have a great year and a great future. **SMT007**



**Dan Beaulieu** is president of D.B. Management Group, and an I-Connect007 columnist who writes regularly about marketing and sales. To read past columns, [click here](#).

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2/3 of electronic industry companies have difficulty finding production workers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>IPC. (2017). Findings on the Skills Gap in U.S. Electronics Manufacturing.

# The Journey Was Worth It

## Maggie Benson's Journey

by Dr. Ronald C. Lasky, INDIUM CORPORATION

*Editor's note: Indium Corporation's Ron Lasky wraps up this series of columns about Maggie Benson, a fictional character, to demonstrate continuous improvement and education in SMT assembly.*

Maggie Benson was in an expansive mood. It had been almost three years since her grandfather asked her to take over Benson Electronics. By using Lean techniques, cost modeling the assembly process, and implementing continuous improvement, the company made significant profitability improvements.

The acquisition of several companies went smoothly for the most part. With the same improvement techniques applied to these

acquired companies, they also yielded impressive results.

All these efforts resulted in Benson Electronics having sales more than five times what they were when she and her husband John took over, and, better yet, profitability increased eight-fold.

She was most satisfied with the growth in some key personnel, such as Chuck Tower. Chuck was now essentially running one of Benson Electronics' facilities. Chuck did a great job implementing Lean techniques wherever he worked in the growing number of Benson facilities.

Maggie was also grateful that the workers appreciated the many educational opportuni-





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ties they were offered. From GEDs to graduate degrees, Benson's financial contributions to the company's employee education program had paid off in improved job performance and company loyalty. In the past two years, only a handful of the hundreds of employees have resigned.

Maggie let out a happy sigh as she thought of these successes. Then Sue March and Andy Connors came to mind. Both came to Benson Electronics right out of high school, as neither really had a "life plan." However, after a short time, they became model employees. It was clear that both were very sharp, so Maggie encouraged them to attend night school at the local community college. Currently, they are enrolled at Ivy University as part-time juniors.

Maggie's eyes drifted to her copy of Elon Musk that Professor Patty Coleman gave her. Suddenly, her phone rang, jarring her into the present, and she answered the call.

"Benson Electronics, Maggie speaking," she said. "How may I help you?"

"Maggie, it's Patty Coleman," said the voice on the other end.

"Professor Patty, what's up?" Maggie asked.

"Sue and Andy will need a senior honors project, and I was hoping you would be their industry mentor," Patty answered.

Having been a student of Ivy U, Maggie knew all about the honors program.

"Sure, what do you have in mind?" Maggie asked.

"I would like to have them investigate the realities of Industry 4.0 (I4.0), especially where it has been implemented and how it is working," Patty said. "I have to admit to being a bit of a skeptic."

Maggie also felt that I4.0 was a little more hype than reality, so she immediately thought this project was worthwhile, and exclaimed, "I think that is a great idea."

They chatted a bit about the details, and then Patty added, "Have you had a chance to read the Elon Musk biography, especially about 'The Algorithm' and 'The Idiot Index'?" Patty asked.



Sue March and Andy Connors discussing their senior project on "The Algorithm," "The Idiot Index," and I4.0.

"I just finished that part," Maggie replied.

"I think these concepts, if implemented, will have a profound impact on profits, more so than I4.0," Patty opined.

"I agree, I don't see that I4.0 is that focused on getting cost out like 'The Algorithm' and 'The Idiot Index' are," Maggie continued.

"Without these tools, SpaceX and Tesla would not have survived," Patty added.

"So, let's have Andy and Sue investigate 'The Algorithm' and 'The Idiot Index' vis a vis I4.0," Maggie suggested.

"That was my thought exactly," Patty summed up.

Will you implement "The Algorithm" and "The Idiot Index" in your business? **SMT007**

Dr. Ron note: "The Algorithm" and "The Idiot Index" are profound and should be cost-cutting tools in all companies. These concepts seem to be neglected in reviews of the Musk biography.



**Ronald C. Lasky** is an instructional professor of engineering for the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College, and senior technologist at Indium Corporation. To read past columns, or

contact Lasky, [click here](#).

Download Lasky's book, *The Printed Circuit Assembler's Guide to... Solder Defects*. You can view other titles in the I-007eBooks library [here](#).



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## A New Generation of AI AOI

Roberto Gatti is CEO of Delvitech, a Swiss company that has launched a new generation of AOI utilizing an AI neural network. As Roberto explains, their approach was not to bring another AOI machine to the market; instead, they focused on bringing a new technology to an AOI system.

## CalcuQuote Celebrates Its First Decade of Innovation and Transformative Solutions



Chintan Sutaria

CalcuQuote, a supply chain solution provider for the electronics industry, is celebrating its first

decade of innovation and transformative solutions.

## Smart Factory Insights: The Sustainability Gold Rush

A gold rush represents an opportunistic, get-rich-quick scheme. With just one or very few potential winners in each case, most participants are left disappointed with their share, especially when compared to how much effort they put in. These scenarios are usually not thought through very well, even by the winners. When it comes to sustainability in manufacturing, I've seen a gold rush of sorts to find solutions, but the pieces are disjointed and not uniform. Sustainability needs to be a forever thing—not a race to find gold, but rather a race to work together.



## IPC Hand Soldering Competition 2024 Regional Qualification—United Kingdom

Join the UK Regional Qualification for the IPC Hand Soldering Competition (HSC) to take place at Farnborough International Exhibition Centre on 6-8 February 2024. Skilled soldering experts (F/M) will be competing for 60 minutes on a complex circuit board assembly to win the 2024 National title, earn a cash prize, and compete for a coveted spot at the IPC Hand Soldering World Championship later this year.



## Foxconn's Ingrasys Honored as World's First AI Server Lighthouse Factory

The World Economic Forum (WEF) announced its latest batch of lighthouse factories on Dec. 14. Ingrasys, a subsidiary of Foxconn Technology Group, was selected for its Taoyuan NanChing factory by leveraging AI to significantly improve production efficiency, becoming the world's first AI server lighthouse factory.

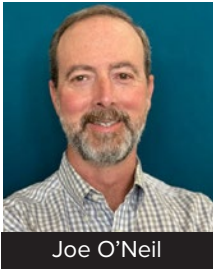
## Salt Creek Capital Portfolio Company Acquired Blackfox

Salt Creek Capital is pleased to announce that its portfolio company, Electronics Manufacturing Training Holding, has acquired Blackfox Training Institute.

Founded in 1996, Blackfox is a leading provider of IPC training and certification services. Electronics Manufacturing Training Holding is also the owner of EPTAC, an internationally recognized leader in IPC training and certification.



## Economic Outlook: Joe O'Neil Has More Optimism than Concerns



Joe O'Neil

Joe O'Neil's background includes operating both printed circuit fabrication and printed circuit assembly companies. In his current role, Joe contributes to the strategic initiatives at IPC, including his involvement in developing

advanced fabrication technologies demonstration facilities in the U.S.

## North American EMS Industry Shipments Up 0.2% in November

"Despite a small rise in new orders this month, the year-to-date trend deteriorated to its lowest point in 2023," said Shawn DuBravac, IPC chief economist. "With one month remaining in the year, shipments should end the year higher compared to last year, despite weak order flow."

## ROCKA Solutions Forges Strategic Partnership with Weller Tools, Global Leader in Soldering Technology

This collaboration enhances ROCKA Solutions' commitment to delivering industry-leading solutions to its clientele. As a trusted distributor and representative, ROCKA Solutions is thrilled to bring Weller Tools' innovative products to its customers.

## Arch Systems Announces Strategic Collaboration with Jabil for Global Electronics Manufacturing Data and Analytics Solution

Arch announces a three-year strategic collaboration with Jabil Inc. The agreement, effective from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2026, solidifies a long-term international collaboration between the two industry leaders.



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**Qualifications:**

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# Career Opportunities



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4. Interact regularly with other Taiyo team members, such as: Product design, development, production, purchasing, quality, and senior company managers from Taiyo group of companies

### ESSENTIAL DUTIES:

1. Maintain existing business and pursue new business to meet the sales goals
2. Build strong relationships with existing and new customers
3. Troubleshoot customer problems
4. Provide consultative sales solutions to customer's technical issues
5. Write monthly reports
6. Conduct technical audits
7. Conduct product evaluations

### QUALIFICATIONS / SKILLS:

1. College degree preferred, with solid knowledge of chemistry
2. Five years' technical sales experience, preferably in the PCB industry
3. Computer knowledge
4. Sales skills
5. Good interpersonal relationship skills
6. Bilingual (German/English) preferred

To apply, email: [BobW@Taiyo-america.com](mailto:BobW@Taiyo-america.com) with a subject line of "Application for Technical Sales Engineer".

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## IPC Instructor Longmont, CO

This position is responsible for delivering effective electronics manufacturing training, including IPC certification, to adult students from the electronics manufacturing industry. IPC Instructors primarily train and certify operators, inspectors, engineers, and other trainers to one of six IPC certification programs: IPC-A-600, IPC-A-610, IPC/WHMA-A-620, IPC J-STD-001, IPC 7711/7721, and IPC-6012.

IPC instructors will primarily conduct training at our public training center in Longmont, Colo., or will travel directly to the customer's facility. It is highly preferred that the candidate be willing to travel 25–50% of the time. Several IPC certification courses can be taught remotely and require no travel or in-person training.

Required: A minimum of 5 years' experience in electronics manufacturing and familiarity with IPC standards. Candidate with current IPC CIS or CIT Trainer Specialist certifications are highly preferred.

**Salary:** Starting at \$30 per hour depending on experience

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**Schedule:** Monday thru Friday, 8–5

**Experience:** Electronics Manufacturing: 5+ years (Required)

**License/Certification:** IPC Certification—Preferred, Not Required

**Willingness to travel:** 25% (Required)

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# Career Opportunities



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## Technical Marketing Engineer

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### Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering or related field with a basic understanding of engineering theories and terminology required
- Basic knowledge of schematic design, PCB design, and simulation with experience in OrCAD or Allegro preferred
- Candidates must possess excellent writing skills with an understanding of sentence structure and grammar
- Basic knowledge of video editing and experience using Camtasia or Adobe Premiere Pro is preferred but not required
- Must be able to collaborate well with others and have excellent written and verbal communication skills for this remote position

EMA Design Automation is a small, family-owned company that fosters a flexible, collaborative environment and promotes professional growth.

Send Resumes to: [resumes@ema-eda.com](mailto:resumes@ema-eda.com)

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# Career Opportunities



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- Engineering
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- Various Manufacturing

All interested candidates should contact Arlon's HR department at 909-987-9533 or email resumes to [careers.ranch@arlonemd.com](mailto:careers.ranch@arlonemd.com).

Arlon is a major manufacturer of specialty high-performance laminate and prepreg materials for use in a wide variety of printed circuit board applications. Arlon specializes in thermoset resin technology, including polyimide, high Tg multifunctional epoxy, and low loss thermoset laminate and prepreg systems. These resin systems are available on a variety of substrates, including woven glass and non-woven aramid. Typical applications for these materials include advanced commercial and military electronics such as avionics, semiconductor testing, heat sink bonding, High Density Interconnect (HDI) and microvia PCBs (i.e. in mobile communication products).

Our facility employs state of the art production equipment engineered to provide cost-effective and flexible manufacturing capacity allowing us to respond quickly to customer requirements while meeting the most stringent quality and tolerance demands. Our manufacturing site is ISO 9001: 2015 registered, and through rigorous quality control practices and commitment to continual improvement, we are dedicated to meeting and exceeding our customers' requirements.

For additional information please visit our website at [www.arlonemd.com](http://www.arlonemd.com)

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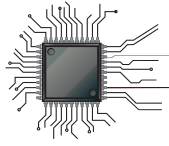
## Are You Our Next Superstar?!

Insulectro, the largest national distributor of printed circuit board materials, is looking to add superstars to our dynamic technical and sales teams. We are always looking for good talent to enhance our service level to our customers and drive our purpose to enable our customers to build better boards faster. Our nationwide network provides many opportunities for a rewarding career within our company.

We are looking for talent with solid background in the PCB or PE industry and proven sales experience with a drive and attitude that match our company culture. This is a great opportunity to join an industry leader in the PCB and PE world and work with a terrific team driven to be vital in the design and manufacture of future circuits.

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# Career Opportunities



**MivaTek**

**Global**

## Field Service Technician

MivaTek Global is focused on providing a quality customer service experience to our current and future customers in the printed circuit board and microelectronic industries. We are looking for bright and talented people who share that mindset and are energized by hard work who are looking to be part of our continued growth.

Do you enjoy diagnosing machines and processes to determine how to solve our customers' challenges? Your 5 years working with direct imaging machinery, capital equipment, or PCBs will be leveraged as you support our customers in the field and from your home office. Each day is different, you may be:

- Installing a direct imaging machine
- Diagnosing customer issues from both your home office and customer site
- Upgrading a used machine
- Performing preventive maintenance
- Providing virtual and on-site training
- Updating documentation

Do you have 3 years' experience working with direct imaging or capital equipment? Enjoy travel? Want to make a difference to our customers? Send your resume to [N.Hogan@MivaTek.Global](mailto:N.Hogan@MivaTek.Global) for consideration.

### More About Us

MivaTek Global is a distributor of Miva Technologies' imaging systems. We currently have 55 installations in the Americas and have machine installations in China, Singapore, Korea, and India.

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## Become a Certified IPC Master Instructor

Opportunities are available in Canada, New England, California, and Chicago. If you love teaching people, choosing the classes and times you want to work, and basically being your own boss, this may be the career for you. EPTAC Corporation is the leading provider of electronics training and IPC certification and we are looking for instructors that have a passion for working with people to develop their skills and knowledge. If you have a background in electronics manufacturing and enthusiasm for education, drop us a line or send us your resume. We would love to chat with you. Ability to travel required. IPC-7711/7721 or IPC-A-620 CIT certification a big plus.

### Qualifications and skills

- A love of teaching and enthusiasm to help others learn
- Background in electronics manufacturing
- Soldering and/or electronics/cable assembly experience
- IPC certification a plus, but will certify the right candidate

### Benefits

- Ability to operate from home. No required in-office schedule
- Flexible schedule. Control your own schedule
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- Training and certifications provided and maintained by EPTAC

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# Career Opportunities



**American Standard Circuits**

Creative Innovations In Flex, Digital & Microwave Circuits

## CAD/CAM Engineer

### Summary of Functions

The CAD/CAM engineer is responsible for reviewing customer supplied data and drawings, performing design rule checks and creating manufacturing data, programs, and tools required for the manufacture of PCB.

### Essential Duties and Responsibilities

- Import customer data into various CAM systems.
- Perform design rule checks and edit data to comply with manufacturing guidelines.
- Create array configurations, route, and test programs, penalization and output data for production use.
- Work with process engineers to evaluate and provide strategy for advanced processing as needed.
- Itemize and correspond to design issues with customers.
- Other duties as assigned.

### Organizational Relationship

Reports to the engineering manager. Coordinates activities with all departments, especially manufacturing.

### Qualifications

- A college degree or 5 years' experience is required. Good communication skills and the ability to work well with people is essential.
- Printed circuit board manufacturing knowledge.
- Experience using CAM tooling software, Orbotech GenFlex®.

### Physical Demands

Ability to communicate verbally with management and coworkers is crucial. Regular use of the telephone and e-mail for communication is essential. Sitting for extended periods is common. Hearing and vision within normal ranges is helpful for normal conversations, to receive ordinary information and to prepare documents.

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For information, please contact:

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[IPCAPEXEXPO.ORG](https://www.ipcapelexpo.org) | [#IPCAPEXEXPO](https://twitter.com/IPCAPEXEXPO)



## PODCAST! Designing for Reality with ASC Sunstone

In Season 2, listeners can expect in-depth conversations with VP/manager and published author Matt Stevenson about the specifics that can affect your circuit board during the manufacturing process. Part tutorial, part tips and tricks, Stevenson details the interrelationships between design, fabrication, yields and cost optimization.



## I-007eBooks



### Process Control

by Chris Hunt and Graham K. Naisbitt, GEN3

In this book, the authors examine the role of SEC test and how it is used in maintaining process control and support for objective evidence (OE.) Issues, including solution choices, solution sensitivities, and test duration are explored.



### The Companion Guide to... SMT Inspection: Today, Tomorrow, and Beyond

Advances in artificial intelligence have been limited exclusively to the human world until now, but there are far-reaching applications within the manufacturing sector, too. In this guide book, learn how equipment providers like Koh Young are enabling the Smart Factory of the Future by adopting AI to generate “knowledge” from “experience.”



### Solder Defects

by Christopher Nash and Dr. Ronald C. Lasky, Indium Corporation

This book is specifically dedicated to educating the printed circuit board assembly sector and serves as a valuable resource for people seeking the most relevant information available.



### The Evolving PCB NPI Process

by Mark Laing and Jeremy Schitter, Siemens Digital Industries Software

In this book, the authors look at how market changes in the past 15 years, plus the slow-down of production and delivery of materials and components in recent years, have affected the process for new product introduction (NPI) in the global marketplace. As a result, we feel that PCB production companies need to adapt and take a new direction to navigate and thrive in an uncertain and rapidly evolving future.

## Smarter Manufacturing Enabled with Inspection Data

with expert Ivan Aduna

In this 12-part webinar series, viewers will learn about secure data collection, AI-powered solutions to manage and analyze data, and how to leverage the IPC CFX-QPL to succeed in the transformation to Industry 4.0.



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