


Answering the “WHY?” Question

Ask any member of the 72-year-old Electronics Representatives Association (ERA) why his or her firm belongs, and the responses will vary as much as each individual company does. Just as each professional field sales (rep) firm covers various territories ... for thousands of manufacturers ... by selling their products to countless customers across all sectors of the electronics industry, the reasons for investing in ERA membership are many and far-ranging. Thank you for taking the time to read just some of those reasons.

EDUCATION



Continuing education is a primary focus of ERA. Some of the most valuable learning occurs on an informal, rep-to-rep basis among members, but organized activities and easily accessible resources, like the following, are also critical.

• National Conference and Other Events ...

... for reps and manufacturers offer how-to and informational programs, workshops and networking focused on sales management, marketing and sales/industry trends.

• ERA University ...

... provides member firm personnel, family members and others with hundreds of on-line business and personal development courses offered each month for only \$79 per course (for 12 lessons or 24 hours of instruction).

• CPMR and CSP Programs ...

... are the standards of rep professionalism. ERA members receive tuition discounts on both courses from the Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF), which was founded by ERA in 1985 and now includes 30+ associations as sponsors.

The *CPMR (Certified Professional Manufacturers' Representatives) program*, for rep firm owners/president/successors, runs one week a year for three years (every January at Arizona State University).

The *CSP (Certified Professional Salesperson) program*, for rep firm salespeople is a multi-day class conducted in various cities several times each year.

• Chapter Programming and Activities ...

... are members' local connection to their fellow reps in the same territory. The rep-specific educational and informational programming and events include: how-to

seminars; presentations by leading manufacturers and customers; local trade show sponsorship; industry social events; rep-to-rep exchanges and networking.

• *The Representor Magazine* ...

... is a quarterly periodical of 36-48 pages produced for reps and manufacturers. It is sent to all member reps and 3,000 manufacturers at no charge. The content covers: field sales processes; rep firm and sales management; marketing; rep-principal relationships; legal, tax, public relations, sales and technology advice columns; industry news; plus ERA chapter and marketing group news.

• “Rep First” Best Practices ...

... are shared on a national and local level whenever ERA members come together. In addition, industry guidelines are available on the ERA Web site on becoming a rep, operating a rep council, requesting split commissions, reporting POS and forging shared investment plans (for missionary lines). Also available are summaries of rep commission protection laws in effect in most states.


• Contract and Evaluation Guidelines ...

... are available on ERA's Web site for agreements between: reps and manufacturers; stocking reps and manufacturers; reps and employees; reps and sub-reps. Also available are forms/guidelines for reps to evaluate prospective principals and for manufacturers to evaluate prospective reps.

• Many Other Publications ...

... are also downloadable from the ERA Web site, including: a multi-year archive of all material from *The Representor*; resources describing why and how manufacturers benefit by selling through reps; reprints of industry publication articles; and a cost of sales spreadsheet (for manufacturers to compare rep versus direct costs).

NETWORKING



Many ERA members say their greatest membership ROI comes from networking with fellow reps and from building peer relationships, both in their own territories and across the globe. ERA supports and facilitates networking in a number of ways.

• Locally, Nationally and Internationally ...

... reps network via chapter activities, conferences and other events. This is how many reps: find new lines and help principals find reps in other territories via referrals from/to fellow members; learn how their peers are solving current problems; share what technology, communications systems and software they use and why; and

exchange industry information about trends, principals, customers and more.


• ERA's On-line Rep Forum ...

... which is now in development, will allow members to use the association's Web site to “talk” to fellow reps, ask questions, seek advice and network.

• Trade Show Activities ...

... including special Lines Available Bulletins, business center services, on-site meeting space and programs are hosted by ERA at major industry events, including EDS, the NSCA Expo, Electronica and Southcon.

MARKETING



To assist members with marketing their rep firms and their principals' products, ERA offers a variety of resources, tools and programs.

• The Locator ...

... is an on-line directory of electronics industry reps, available 24-7 to manufacturers worldwide. The Locator offers detailed search capability and data about each rep firm, including product specialization, personnel, optional services, sales volume, top customers and principals. Reps can update their own listings at any time.

• Vortex Rep Management and E-Marketing Tools ...

... are designed by and for electronics industry reps. These resources include: a versatile e-marketing campaign service; rep firm Web site design and Internet strategies services; a global design (splits) tracking program; and a business opportunity tracking program.

• Lines Available and Hot Lines ...

...are weekly or instant bulletins sent to ERA members to alert them to manufacturers seeking representation.

• Global Exposure ...

... for ERA members to international manufacturers is provided via the **Locator**, **The Representor** and **Trade Show Activities**, including at Electronica, the world's largest electronics trade show, held every other year in Munich, Germany. Among regular programs at Electronica, ERA co-hosts seminars on how to sell via reps in North America.

• DTAM (Distribution Total Available Market) Reports ...

... are developed annually by several ERA chapters for their territories. On a broader basis, the ERA 2008 Conference Committee is collecting basic DTAM data in every North American territory.

MANAGEMENT

In addition to the already-noted **Locator, Vortex Management and E-Marketing Tools, Lines Available and Hot Lines services, "Rep First Best Practices, Contract Clauses and Guidelines, Many Other Publications and DTAM Reports,** ERA provides members with these management tools.



- **Expert Access (Free Phone Consulting) ...**

... for legal, tax, professional field sales, insurance and public relations advice is available to members from ERA's team of rep-savvy consultants.

- **Confidential Matchmaking Service ...**

... allows members who wish to buy, sell or merge a rep firm, find a sub-rep or form an alliance with other reps (within or beyond their territories) to advertise to fellow members via free, targeted e-mails.

- **Customized Survey Service ...**

... provides members with the ability to easily create, transmit and tabulate Web-based surveys of customers, principals, distributors and/or employees. Staff assistance is included, and sample questionnaires are available for members to adapt for their own use.

ADVOCATING FOR THE REP PROFESSION



Some reps feel networking brings them the greatest value for their ERA dues. Others firmly believe in belonging to the *only* electronics industry organization that speaks and acts on behalf of their profession. ERA advocates for professional reps through *The Representative* and the previously described **Contract Clauses and Guidelines, Many Other Publications and Trade Show Activities.** ERA is also engaged in these activities.

- **Advancing and Protecting the Rep Profession ...**

... is ERA's most important mission. With the Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF), which ERA established 22 years ago, and the 30+ associations that are now its members, ERA is continuously supporting the rep profession by: providing articles to industry periodicals about the value of reps to both manufacturers and customers; producing tools reps can use with manufacturers weighing the rep-versus-direct question; interceding when customers pressure manufacturers to bypass their reps; supporting academic research and working with university business school and marketing department faculties and students to expand their knowledge of outsourced field sales.

- **Monitoring of and Lobbying for State Rep Laws ...**

... is conducted in cooperation with other rep associations. Passing and/or updating state laws to protect rep commissions are an ongoing focus of attention. (Summaries of ALL current state laws are available on the ERA Web site.)

PURCHASING

ERA delivers discounts to members on a wide array of business products and services, including **ERA University, the CPMR and CSP programs, the Vortex Rep Management and E-Marketing Tools and ERA's Survey Service.** Many other discounts are also available, including from both rep-specific and general business suppliers.



- **Insurance Programs ...**

... offered at ERA-discounted rates are available for life, long-term disability and accident plans as well as identity theft protection and business owners' (property and professional liability) coverage. Expert consultants also assist ERA members with finding the best possible rates for group medical coverage.

- **Other Discounts for Members ...**

... are provided by rep-specific software and service providers (i.e., Beganto, Inc., DataForce CRM, Empowering Systems, Growth Dynamics, NeHaNet and RPMS) as well as general business service providers (Avis and Enterprise Car Rental, DHL and Airborne Express Shipping, NNSI Telecommunications, Office Depot, Penny-wise Office Products and Verisign Web Services).

**Are you ready to GET REAL
about YOUR ERA membership?
Want to learn more about
what you may be missing?**

**For further details,
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