



NCALERA NEWS

MARCH-APRIL

2002

COLT -- Chapter Officers Leadership Training

By **Bill Hedgpeth, Z-Tech Sales**
Vice President, Treasurer

COLT was put on in Chicago, Thursday March 14th through Saturday March 16th. The weather was cold for any one, especially anyone from California, 2 degrees above 0. But the conversations and presentations were lively and exciting.



The reasons I attended were two fold. One, Chris Jumper and Brian Everhart recommended it highly. Secondly, it is the Chapter's role to try and get more people interested in and involved with ERA, overall, and in understanding our relationship with the National Organization.

The sessions covered ERA Bylaws, Policies, Membership, Legal and Tax Issues, Communications, and Chapter programs. Inputs were solicited from each Chapter to hear about their strengths and weaknesses. Ironically, most chapters have the same issues, declining membership, and lack of enthusiasm among the officers and membership.

We discussed how 11 of the different Chapters addressed these issues and accumulated some good ideas for each of us present to take back to our Chapter. Here are a couple of examples:

Chicagoland requires each officer to generate a book on his or her duties, how they do the job and what they learn. At the election of new officers, the old officer hands his book of the job to the new officer. In that way, no one has to relearn the system every year and there is a record of the good and bad things tried. Don't reinvent the wheel if you do not have to. Good Idea.

IN THIS ISSUE

COLT Report	1
Profit Opportunity	2
News & Views	3
President's Column	6
Chapter Officers	8

NCALERA NEWS

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R.W. (Bob) Parsons, editor

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MEETINGS & SPECIAL EVENTS

April 3-7 ERA's 2002 National Management & Marketing Conference

April 9^h Michaels at Shoreline Regular Meeting

June 4th Michaels at Shoreline Regular Meeting

Ohio uses a method where each officer is assigned 3 new potential members or ex rep-member-organizations for the year and their job is to try and get one of them to join. They invite them to meetings, take them to lunch and work as a welcome wagon when they interface with the Chapter or it's functions. All expenses are covered under the Education Fund.

Texas has a welcome host at every function that welcomes new principals or reps. When they attend a meeting the host greets them and gives them information about the Chapter and assumes the role of a big brother. It works!

We have a Chapter COLT book that will be at meetings and I am available to talk to anyone who is interested in becoming an officer and attending this session in the future.

I would say that many of the ideas suggested for the Chapter apply as well to our daily operations and have direct correlation in our own organizations. Anyone who has an opportunity to attend a COLT session should certainly attend. I for one am grateful for the opportunity afforded me. Only 14 people attend each session and if any new officer can attend, I recommend it.



You will hear a

NEW PROFIT OPPORTUNITY

Presented at the next meeting, to be held at Michael's at Shoreline, April 9th.

This topic should attract a lot of attention. We are going to hear some very important facts and see demonstrated a way to improve customer relations, gain even deeper personal penetration into accounts and (did we mention?) make a little money at the same time.

2001 was a bear for practically all reps, particularly in the cash-flow department. We hear all kinds of rumbles about principals making new demands but not busting their tomato-cans at paying their commissions – what there is left of them after splits (sharing? dividing?). Suffice it

to say, our industry is changing – faster than ever before and not always for the better.

Advanced Material Solutions started in life in the early '90's as a facilitator, providing software that enabled contract manufacturers to provide “a single purchase order solution to their customers for complete turnkey manufacturing.” Before long the decision was made to go directly to the OEM Customer.

Their success – and the changing times we live in – enabled them to introduce a new service division, AMSXS (www.amsxs.com). This division focuses on those customers who have excess (or no-demand) inventory sitting on their shelves. This is a major challenge OEM's face today.

Their customers like the fact that liquidation of excess can be done at a reasonable loss-expectancy, with complete confidentiality, and a complete audit trail – when sold; how much; ship costs; payment receipt, all before they have to pay AMSXS!

Come hear how Tom Smith, V.P. of Sales, is developing relationships with reps that can be very profitable, without diluting your sales effort on your existing principals. You will gain new importance to your customers and facilitate greater penetration into key accounts.



NEWS & VIEWS

By Bob Parsons

The first of May will give us two years as Chapter Office Manager. It has been rewarding, but very frustrating at times. One of our “charter” commandments was to computerize the operation. This we have done whenever possible. So far, it has worked well, but there is one thing about which we must comment. Computer support service often stinks! Not the support, *the service!*

The telephone is the first challenge. It doesn't take long to realize that you must go through a series of menus that

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finally connect with a voice, one often gets a “screen” person, and then more waiting.

Most of the screeners with whom we have talked are pretty reasonable people. Their job is to determine whether or not your call is legitimate and if you have called the right group. They do this, even though most have little or no technical training. As it happens, a few are absolute pains. Their job is carefully laid out to maximize its speedy resolution.

Some can be downright rude in carrying it out.

During the introduction to the call, there is almost always a reference to their web site. “Do you know that the same information used by our technicians is on our web site? Well, it is.” (This should sound familiar to our fellow Dell users) And then they give you the URL (address). Yes, it may be there but try to find it.

Most web sites we visit are all but useless unless one has been directed by a service tech or gets lucky. We visualize a bevy of web designers out there who are so enamored with the mechanics of page layout, hyperlinks, and only God knows what else, that they forget that the visitors to the site are in need of help!

Now, you might ask yourself why this condition exists. We have arrived at the conclusion that the reason they are so inept at providing service is that they think they cannot afford to do any better.

Technicians demand training, must be articulate at fielding questions, and require a certain amount of tenacity. And, technicians cost money.

Their fee-based service is better. The techs are usually not as overworked and answers are more to the point. The problem is that just getting the problem identified is a challenge that many techs face on many of their calls. To the user, this almost precludes the use of the per/minute services. Once you sign on with a per/minute person, you are stuck, even if it takes an hour. Further, you pay -- whether or not the problem is resolved.

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The per problem, fixed fee selection demands that you know enough about what your problem is to make a judgment as to whether or not the fixed fee is worth the gamble. Our choice is fixed fee.

Probably the best service policy we have encountered is that used by Intuit for their Quick Books clients. They quickly discovered that their “support” inquiries are more often than not procedural stuff heavily involving bookkeeping rather than technology, per se. Their callers are frequently less thoroughly trained in both factors than other software users might be.

As a result, Intuit offers a “Premier Service” that provides to their subscribers 24-7 for a full 12 month, yearlong service. \$169 Sticks in our mind as the fee. We went through a nightmare earlier in our tenure (during May of 2001) and decided to enroll. To date we have called several times, enough that our confidence in Quick Books is very high. Unless the ERA-powers-that-be offers strong objections, we will renew this very cost-effective service.

We repeat our previously arrived at conclusion that the reason software houses are so inept at providing service is that

they think that they cannot afford to do any better. We feel certain that Intuit's service policies are in no small way responsible for their leadership in their field all these years. We wonder, sometimes, if other producers of software in our world ever think about their customer's needs.

We don't want to sound like a broken record, but darn it, things are looking up. The business newspapers and magazines are all touting the rise in the stock market and how solid is the growth. Nobody expects the kind of year we all had in 2000, but we can expect better times than 2001.

We heard at least one rep talking about a "big deal" that he had cooking. His was almost child-like enthusiasm, almost as if he had a new toy. In the past, hardly a meeting went by that someone didn't reflect this kind of anxiety and joy about an up-coming event. It is good to see it back.

What we are not seeing is a consistent consensus of opinion around the improvement (or not) in the technology sector. No less an authority than Business Week recently published a feature entitled, "Tech's Best Hope: Pockets of Prosperity." You may want to view this article on their web site, www.businessweek.com.

In this article, they re-stated the expectations that much of any current raise in sales might well be due to the rebuilding of inventory. They indicate that the worst depressed part of this sector is that of cell phones and computers. They point out that this negatively impacts the semiconductor industry, among others. Later on, they point out that the semiconductor industry enjoyed a 49%

increase of sales over the same period last year. We doubt if all that increase is just inventory rebuilding.

We enjoyed a nice presentation at the recent ExComm meeting from Dick Foley, Chairman of the Trust Committee who supervises the investment of the Chapter's funds received from the sale of our share of WESCON. The Executive Committee was given the details of our investments, how they are performing and where it looks like they are going. The original investment was made in January 2001. Since then, not the best time to enter the market, the investments have lost money. The newest quarter shows a recovery, perhaps equal to half of our losses during the previous year. We look forward to more gains before the year is out.

We look forward to hearing reports from the ERA National Marketing conference being held April 2-7 in Florida. They are going to be hard-pressed to duplicate the quality of activities held here in Monterey last year. We wish them well.

Finally,

Since we mentioned an up-coming birthday (in this job), we want to send along a word of thanks to the Chapter Officers, the members, and the many friends from other locales for all the support that we have received. Becoming a "secretary" instead of a rep has set in motion a whole 'nother set of disciplines. The kind of evaluation formerly given our inside and outside staff is now directed toward ourselves.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Brian Everhart

As we approach our 2nd quarter, we would like to pass along to our members an outline of our agenda for the remainder of our term. We have some exciting plans for 2002 and look forward to carrying them out.

**ERA WEB SITE**

We have decided to go ahead on upgrading our web site. We have partnered with the ERA Southern California and the Southwest Chapters. We benchmarked their software and we are in the process of upgrading it to meet the needs of our chapter. Ed Blake of Ed Blake Associates and Ron Jenkins of Westech Associates have done an outstanding job of bringing this program to life. In time, this program will have a much broader scope than the directory/website as we now know it.

The software will allow individuals to print hard copies of the directory for those who want them. Pictures will eventually be offered as well as hyperlinks to personal web sites. We will employ a webmaster to maintain the Website and to do the enhancements necessary as this program progresses.

National will be hosting one such luncheon on 11-05-02.

I need not remind all the members at large that membership is the key to a healthy chapter. So lets all support it and do what we can.

MEMBERSHIP

We are continuing to offer valuable benefits to our prospective members such as a enhanced website, educational programs and working meetings with excellent guest speakers.

2002 BUDGET

Bill Hegpeth of Z Tech Sales now assumes a dual role in our chapter as Treasurer and Snior Vice President. A budget has been submitted and accepted for 2002. There are provisions for educational programs as well as many other articles to run our chapter. We must acknowledge Bill's willingness to do double duty.

Bill Hedgpeth returned from the ERA Colt program with a list of prospective agencies who are not in the ERA at present. The membership chair will be concentrating on these companies and inviting them to a series of luncheons to explain the benefits of joining the ERA. Chris Straube heads this group and we expect him to ask some of our current senior members to attend as a guest speakers. Ray Hall of ERA

EDUCATION

Michael Onken of Bridge Marking chairs this important area of our chapter. Some continuing programs are going to be available as well as some new ones. CPMR will continue to be available to members.

Chip Doyle will be offering sales aid programs. A Palm workshop will be added. Many more ideas are coming soon.

BYLAWS

I have asked Gene Lape of the J.E. Lape company to rewrite and update our chapter bylaws. This hasn't been done since 1970. We are awaiting ERA National's update on their bylaws (to be submitted during the National conference) before we can finish our own revisions. This should be accomplished in the 2nd Quarter of 2002.

CHAPTER MEETINGS

We are going to host several speakers at our chapter meetings. These include:

4-9-02-TomSmith (see elsewhere in this newsletter for a report on this meeting)

6-4-02 -- Kathy Erikson of Capsco will be speaking on distribution now and beyond the year 2002.

8-6-02 -- Chip Doyle -- Sales Aides (more to come on this excellent speaker.)

9-30-02 -- Golf Outing

11-05-02 – Presidents night will welcome Ray Hall of ERA National

OWNERS FORUM

Bob Parsons will be heading up this event. The idea here is to select topics such as:

- 1) Split commissions;
- 2) E-Commerce;
- 3) Distribution

and then hold round table discussions related to the topic. This would be open to the owners of their agencies.

All in all we expect long and rewarding year ahead for our chapter. We will continue to focus on the needs of our members and we plan on making our chapter the best of the ERA and the one to benchmark in the year 2002.



Chip Doyle at work.



Typical Owner's Forum

The Northern California Chapter of ERA is one of the more active chapters within the national association. We have received numerous national awards to prove it. Our success is a direct result of the interest and effort put forth by its members and the officers listed below, all volunteers

CHAPTER OFFICERS, CHAIRPERSONS & DIRECTORS

OFFICERS	NAME	COMPANY	A/C	PHONE	FAX
Chairman of Board	Chris Jumper	JEM Electronics	925	417-1033	417-1458
President	Brian Everhart	Everhart, Inc.	408	865-0344	865-0343
Senior V.P.	Bill Hedgpeth	Z-Tech Sales	408	257-5371	257-5651
Treasurer	Bill Hedgpeth	Z-Tech Sales	408	257-5371	257-5651
Mmbrshp V.P.	Chris Straube	Straube Assoc.	650	969-6060	964-6526
Secretary	Eric Robinson	E.S. West	408	565-9050	565-9055
Past President	Bill Walsh	Westech Associates, Inc.	650	961-1422	968-9898
Past President	Lon Hudson	Ross Mktg.	408	988-8111	492-0197
National Director	Mark Conley	O'Donnell Assoc. No.	408	456-2950	943-8243
Alternate Nat'l Del.	Lon Hudson	Ross Mktg.	408	988-8111	492-0197

DIVISION V.P.'S

Communications	Hugh Shyba	Shur Sales	408	399-7487	399-4767
Components	John Latimer	Luscombe Eng.	408	370-2020	374-8663
Computer Prods.	Eric Robinson	E.S. West	408	963-1008	565-9055
Instrumentation	Brian Levien	Sentech Measurements	530	792-0175	792-0515
Materials	Doug Evans	Paxcell Group	775-	831-1333	831-1367
RF/Microwave	Charlie Dickinson	C/G Associates	510	790-1193	790-1383
SAVE	Phil Kipnis	Pacific Coast Visions.Com	408	988-1444	988-1707

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Ambassador	Hugo Shane	Executive Director	408	243-3372	246-4413
Ambassador	Tom Mollard	Life Member	650	968-1581	
Archivist	Jean Lape	J.E. Lape Co.	650	345-3021	345-3952
Directory	Steve Ross	Ross Marketing	408	988-8111	492-0197
Education	Michael Onken	Bridge Marketing	650	827-3600	827-3609
Golf Tourney	Ron Jenkins	Westech Assoc.	650	961-1422	968-9898
Internet	Edward Blake	Edward Blake Assoc. Inc.	408	934-3955	956-9732
Scholarship	Brian Trankle	Jack Logan Memorial Fund	650	343-2416	
Distributor Coord.	Shirley Burres	Recht Assoc.	650	964-6321	964-8165
Nominating	Chris Jumper	JEM Electronics	925	417-1033	417-1458
Newsletter	Bob Parsons	Chapter Office Mgr.	408	243-3372	246-4413

SERVICES, INC.

President	Bill Walsh	Westech Assoc.	650	961-1422	968-9898
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CHAPTER STAFF

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