

Integrate



THE OFFICIAL TRADE JOURNAL OF NSCA | SPRING 2021

What Defines Success in 2021?

Fueled by our new *Financial Analysis of the Industry* report and its tried-and-true metrics, we analyze how NSCA members are setting benchmarks in this unpredictable market. **PAGE 5**



Why Customers Choose Monthly Payments Over Capital Expenses **PAGE 12**
Meet Your NSCA Community: Felix Media Solutions, Primex, Mood Media, and more.

PUBLISHED BY

NSCA
3950 River Ridge Drive NE, Suite B
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
800.446.NSCA • 319.366.6722
Fax: 319.366.4164
www.nasca.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

Mike Boettcher
New Era Technology

Vice President

Ray Bailey
Lone Star Communications

Secretary

Tim Hennen
IVCi

Treasurer

Dan Schmidendorff
Communication Company

Immediate Past President

Josh Shanahan
Sport View Technologies

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dale Bottcher

AVI-SPL

Brad Caron

SIGNET Electronic Systems

Christina De Bono

ClearTech Media

Kyle Habben

Electronic Contracting Company

Laurie MacKeigan

Backman Vidcom

Don Mastro

AVI Systems

© Copyright 2021 by the National Systems Contractors Association (NSCA). All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Except as permitted under the United States copyright act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, be manipulated or entered into or stored in a database system without the prior permission of NSCA.

Statements of fact and/or opinion are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not imply an opinion of the officers or board of the association. Send letters regarding materials to: NSCA, c/o Building Connections Editor, 3950 River Ridge Drive NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402.

YOUR TRUSTED ADVISOR



FAI Key Findings: **What Defines Success in 2021?**

NSCA recently published its **2021 Financial Analysis of the Industry**.

This report always creates debate and dialogue amongst members, and this year was no exception. Much of the discussion centered on profitability and the trend of eroding net profits.

Many NSCA members started out as technicians, sales reps, engineers, or other skilled workers within the industry. Only a few came from a business background or went on to complete advanced degrees in finance or a related

field. As such, many struggle to create measurable and sustainable financial goals, believing that a leading indicator of success is defined by how busy they are. In other words, if you're busy, you must be winning. *Not always.*

Something else to consider is how you think about what you're building toward—or what you want your company to become. How does the risk/reward of being an equity owner match up with other places to invest or build wealth? Return on assets? Return on equity? EBITDA? Free cash flow? More sophisticated economic value-added modeling? Or, even more apparent in the world of outside investors and private equity, is a client-acquisition, subscriber-based, recurring revenue growth model where profitability is set aside until the company is recapitalized through acquisition.

One of my jobs at NSCA is to make sure that, over the course of a member's career, their company increases in value and provides a successful exit valuation. I sometimes joke that I want our members' businesses to be worth more than their buildings in 20 years. And that's not always the case for companies that struggle just to break even each year.

Many integration companies struggle to create measurable and sustainable financial goals and assume that a leading indicator of success must be defined by how busy you are: If you're busy, you must be winning. *Not always.*

By itself, the *Financial Analysis of the Industry* report doesn't tell the whole story. Use it alongside our **Compensation & Benefits Report** to determine your success; many corporate structures provide a benefit to reduce equity through compensation.

In some instances, you may also need to make sure your company properly accounts for income and expenses by rebuilding your financial report as shown by NSCA's standardized chart of accounts. That will give you the best benchmarking picture and direct comparisons to other integrators.

Inspired by the dialogue our recent report generated, we challenged NSCA board members and our Financial Leadership Council to fill in the blanks in this sentence:

From a financial perspective only, a successful year would look like _____ as measured by _____.

See page 18 to find out how they each chose to finish this sentence.



Chuck Wilson, Executive Director

NSCA
cwilson@nsca.org

NSCA Members Define Their 2021 Success

NSCA's latest *Financial Analysis of the Industry* report was released in the midst of a pandemic. That was a first!

As we analyzed results, we realized that benchmarks and company goals in 2021 are somewhat influenced by a very unique market climate. It made us wonder how integrators are targeting success this year. We asked NSCA board members and members of our Financial Leadership Council to anonymously share how they define success in 2021. The responses varied, of course, but here are some examples:

"As a CPA and business owner, you might expect my answer to be numerical or formula based; however, there is no one single formula or measurement for financial success.

"I define financial success as **looking forward with freedom and confidence**. Specifically, having the freedom to choose your customers and jobs based on good working relationships; choosing jobs that can differentiate your expertise, thereby increasing customer satisfaction; customers that are good payers and meet or exceed your customer/job profitability targets. With this freedom comes the ability to turn down jobs and customers because they do not fit your profitability targets or are difficult to work with, which would negatively affect your culture, employee morale, and turnover in the long term.

"With this freedom, a company must have confidence that it has a solid financial position to turn down work that does not fit those parameters. Determining what constitutes a solid financial position includes numerous attributes, such as backlog, existing customer relationships, sales projections, net income projections, free cash flow, equity, and much more."

"Our overarching financial metric is a targeted annual EBITDA generation sufficient for maintaining working capital requirements and funding planned, growth-driven strategic initiatives. For the upcoming fiscal year, a pretax return of 4% of sales will allow us to attain these levels of liquidity. Key for us will be to **monitor operating expenses as we shift more to an opex model**, which will drive down recognized revenues temporarily but will have the longer-term benefits of improved margins and an enhanced value proposition to present to our customers."

"Hitting our overall sales quota and technology discipline targets, **reaching our budgeted EBITDA and GP targets**, accurate and timely financial reporting with very few corrections/restatements, effective cash management via a short client invoice collection period, and providing 25% of MRR to total revenue . . . not necessarily in that order."

"The measurement of financial success is not simply measured by the bottom line in a given year but instead is a multitude of measures. For us, looking at the return on assets is key year in and year out. Also, are we bringing in more cash than **we are putting out each year?** Focus on the long-term strategic plan (if you don't have a plan, then you have hopes and dreams and no direction to apply energy).

"For us, the recent strategy is to **grow our managed service and recurring revenue** model, so showing growth in this area as a percentage of overall revenue and success in performing against the SLAs that accompany those agreements is key to long-term success.

"Sustainability is an important piece of ownership value for a company like ours. Keeping the talented workforce engaged and employed while remaining profitable will allow the company to grow well into the future and open up countless opportunities for future value creation."

"I know several electrical contractors and cabling contractors that earn 5% at the end of the year. They consider themselves to be in the commodity business. They focus less on client retention, employee benefits, and recurring revenue specifically by design. **If an integrator cannot earn at least 10% by adding value, they should focus on becoming a commodity contractor.** Less than 10%, to me, is not worth the aggravation, stress, and associated risk." ▲

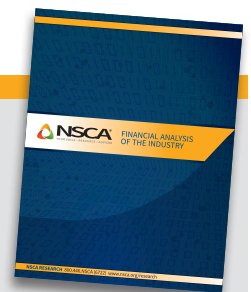
Integrate IN THIS EDITION

- 4 Calendar: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Workshop
- 5 Research: *Financial Analysis of the Industry Report & Electronic Systems Outlook*
- 6 Education Foundation: Your Employees' Subtle Adversity
- 8 Member Success: Electronic Contracting Company Improves Internal Collaboration
- 10 An Inclusive Solution to Recruiting Challenges
- 12 Customers Driving Recurring Revenue
- 14 Can You Be an Energy Integrator?
- 16 Does Your Budget Hold Water?
- 18 On Members' Minds
- 20 We Are NSCA: Felix Media Solutions
- 22 We Are NSCA: Primex
- 24 NSCA Partner Updates
- 34 Tips for Unexpected-Scenario Planning
- 36 The Post-Pandemic Role of an Integrator
- 38 The Mistake Business Owners Keep Making
- 40 Why Integrators Should Pay Attention to the SolarWinds Hack
- 42 I Am NSCA: Mood Media's Amy Blackburn

NEXT STEPS

Learn more about NSCA's 2021 *Financial Analysis of the Industry* on page 5.

Download the report here.





DEI Workshop for Integrators

Watch Archive

If you attended the virtual Business & Leadership Conference (BLC) and watched Dr. Ivan Joseph's keynote about the business benefits of DEI, then you no doubt left wondering how to improve your company culture. Attending this workshop is the next logical step.

You already know that fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is the right thing to do. Better DEI policies and culture lead to more effective top-talent recruiting (today's job candidates are far more likely to factor prospective employers' DEI reputation into consideration) and overall business improvement (empirical data from McKinsey & Company demonstrates that embracing DEI produces an 11% likelihood of increased performance over similar companies).

This workshop outlines the next steps your company can take to make an impact right away. NSCA Business Accelerator **Insperty** helps lead the discussion. Aisha Thompkins, director of Insperty's

Equal Opportunity and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Services Team, will not only present but also interact with the group and help companies identify action items that make sense for their unique situations.

Don't miss this important post-BLC workshop! **Watch**

Want More from BLC? You Got It!

We know how it goes. At the end of a great Business & Leadership (BLC) session, you're filled with enthusiasm and the best of intentions. But, somehow, the plans to implement new business strategies get derailed by ... almost anything, really. To avoid this slip, AVNation is hosting a series of follow-up video podcasts featuring recent BLC keynoters. Reset your enthusiasm and move forward with improving your company!

Learn more and register at www.avnation.tv.

Webinar: NSCA Chief Economist Dr. Chris Kuehl Provides Market Update

The NSCA community frequently leans on NSCA's Chief Economist Dr. Chris Kuehl for insight into how economic factors will impact the integration market. That's even more true as the industry battles the pandemic. On April 27, Dr. Kuehl will get into specific details about the economic outlook.

Register Now

Webinar: 2021 Legislative and Regulatory Challenges Agenda

There is a growing slate of legislative bills in many states that can potentially limit integration companies' ability to do business. In this April 6 webinar, NSCA's Chuck Wilson and members of the Connected Technologies Industry Consortium will tackle two key areas:

- What types of emerging laws may impact your business?
- How is NSCA helping—and how should you get involved?

Understand what's at stake for your business.

Register Now

Webinar: Effectively Managing Sales and Operations to Maximum Effectiveness

Does your sales team oversell delivery capacity, resulting in frustration and loss of goodwill when projects aren't completed as promised? How often does your delivery capacity go unused (resulting in internal costs flowing to your bottom line with poor financial results)? On April 20, Josh Harris of Navigate Management Consulting and HB Communications boils down the essentials of sales and operations planning to give you a template and methodology for project-oriented business.

Register Now

FIND UPCOMING EVENTS

on our event calendar at NSCA.org.

NSCA Research Shows Positive & Troubling Trends

In the last quarter, NSCA released its 2021 *Financial Analysis of the Industry* and the newest *Electronic Systems Outlook*. Strategic integration leaders should consider both reports “mandatory reading.”

Let's be extremely clear: NSCA is optimistic about 2021. Integration companies—whether they offer AV, security, life safety, or a combination—are extremely well-positioned to solve their customers' challenges. All signs point to customers across all verticals investing in technology to position themselves to adapt to how they conduct business going forward.

We also don't have our heads in the sand—and neither should you. NSCA's 2021 *Financial Analysis of the Industry* contains robust data from 109 integration companies that you can use to benchmark and compare expenses, profits, sales, and other data against industry peers of similar size and business focus. Not all the numbers are pretty, but they are invaluable when it comes to making sure you're positioned for success.

Meanwhile, the newly released *Electronic Systems Outlook*, which leverages construction data to gauge integration prospects across verticals and product categories, doesn't reflect a vibrant construction market. There are nuances outlined in the report, however, that will help you strategize.

Download both reports to give your company a competitive advantage. Here's a small glimpse ...



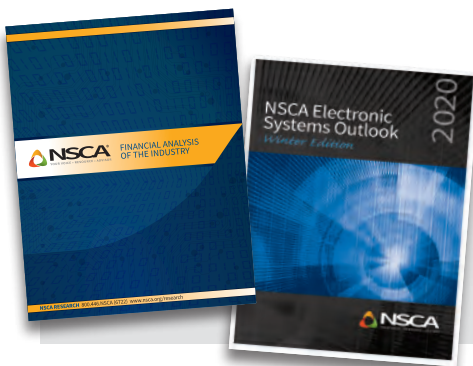
2021 *Financial Analysis of the Industry*



Electronic Systems Outlook Winter 2021

READ THE FULL REPORTS

The 2021 *Financial Analysis of the Industry* and *Electronic Systems Outlook* are both free for NSCA members to download. For more information about the report, or to join NSCA, visit www.nasca.org or call (800) 446-NSCA.



Is Your Company Culture Jabbing at Your Employees?

Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) isn't just about confronting overt racism. The subtleties may be taking more of a toll on your employees than you realize.

By Chris Turner

I have many DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) experiences related to my name: Chris Turner. When someone hears my name, it's easy to *not* associate it with someone who is Asian-American. In the past, when I submitted job résumés and went in for interviews, I could read the surprised reactions on the interviewers' faces.

Ultimately, there should not be a reaction. A reaction implies that the interviewers intentionally or unintentionally were putting me in a certain category (a category in which I did not fit).

This is just one example, but there are other professional career challenges for a person of color or with a different sexual orientation—including climbing the ladder.

Because I am Asian-American, I've had to deal with stereotypes: *Asians are meek and very quiet. Asians aren't going to conform and battle their way up the corporate ladder in what's considered a "conventional way."*

As a result, qualified Asian-Americans can be passed over.

Prior to my life in this industry, I had a job in which the leaders did not think I could succeed—but I wasn't given a reason why other than, "We don't think you're built for it." I had to prove to them that I *could*. Of course, we all have to prove ourselves in some capacity, but there are many obstacles where people of color and women have to prove themselves in ways I think others do not.

Embracing DEI Makes Good Business Sense

From a business perspective, it simply doesn't make sense to unintentionally marginalize employees.

We are coming. This industry can't be one-dimensional if it wants to serve our customers' increasingly global markets.

If you don't know how to deal with other cultures and diverse individuals, then you will not make advances with your evolving customers. Years ago, I was part of a project where we were asked to help support a customer's international locations. We found a dedicated partner and things were going really well—until there was a breakdown in communication. All parties were misinterpreting the meaning and intent of what was being said in emails. Rather than risk losing the

partner, the team—led by leadership from our service department—traveled overseas and met with the customer in person. Each party came away with a better understanding of who we all were and how we could best work together. This was a big step for us in realizing that DEI is important because of the different personalities and cultures in our everyday lives. If we embrace DEI within our own corporate structure, we will do well with customers, too.

Backtracking to the talent development aspect: If your company embraces DEI, then you open a completely different talent pool. The integration industry frequently talks about the limited ability to find the talent needed to grow our companies. This becomes less of a problem for companies that embrace DEI in their company culture and hiring.

Timing is Now

Now is the right time for corporate social responsibility. Yes, it's a challenging business market as the integration industry recovers and repositions itself to solve customers' post-pandemic challenges; however, this should not be used as an excuse.

If organizations just keep saying, "Right now, we have to focus on revenue," then it will never be dealt with. This thought process will only encourage losing existing talent and prospective talent.

I believe it is important to make strides to embrace DEI and defining what that means within your organization. Otherwise, employees will begin to look elsewhere. Diverse people might say, "They do not understand who I am and what I represent. I'm going somewhere where I am appreciated for who I am."

I am fortunate that New Era Technology understands and practices forward-thinking approaches to DEI. As an organization, I think we embrace DEI very well. We have women and people of color in management positions. Teams are comprised of salespeople, engineers, project managers, field installers, service technicians, onsite technicians, and NOC support services who represent the best of the best—not only when it comes to talent, but also diversity. New Era has been focused on figuring out how to embrace DEI and make it a part of our company's culture.

The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of New Era Technology.



ignite

sparkling interest in technology™

2.0

What is Ignite 2.0?

NSCA's Ignite 2.0 committee is focused taking Ignite's initial recruiting goals to the next level and fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within their companies—and the industry. One important aspect is for all NSCA members to be able to “see themselves” in successful roles.

Learn more about how to participate by visiting [IgniteYourCareer.org](https://igniteyourcareer.org) or emailing Tom LeBlanc at tleblanc@nsca.org.

“The integration industry frequently talks about our limited ability to find the talent we need to grow our companies. Well, that’s less of a problem for companies that embrace DEI in their company culture and hiring.”

—Chris Turner, New Era Technology and NSCA’s Ignite 2.0 Committee

Next Steps for DEI

Increasingly, large companies have a chief diversity officer to keep their organizations in check when it comes to DEI practices.

While most integration companies likely do not have the resources for this type of position, they can consider creating a committee within their workforce to look at what can be done better. This group should be involved in interviewing candidates and providing input on hiring. This committee might recognize cultural inequities, such as company recognition of certain holidays over others and LGBTQ-related issues.

The most important thing is to not be afraid to confront these issues. If you gather diverse individuals within your company and have conversations about DEI, then that is a significant first step. 🔄



| Chris Turner is a managed solutions account executive for New Era Technology.

Getting an Internal IT Migration **Right**

Back in the mid-2000s, when Gmail was first released as an invitation-only inbox, **Electronic Contracting Company** was one of the businesses invited to use G Suite as a free productivity and collaboration platform, including its email, calendar, Sheets, Slides, and Forms tools.

Over time, as new Google platforms were released, security and other features were pulled from the free versions. As a result, Electronic Contracting Company had a hard decision to make: pay to use the full-scale version of G Suite or migrate to Microsoft 365?

“We were trying to improve our culture and promote more collaborative measures,” explains Matt Thorne, executive vice president at Electronic Contracting Company. “We were hearing all these organizations talk about switching to Microsoft and how great Teams was, so we wanted to check it out.”

A group of internal users put Teams to the test to see what they thought. After comparing it to a few different options, the company decided to migrate to Microsoft.

As Thorne thought about the migration process, he remembered talking to **OfficePro** at NSCA’s **Pivot to Profit** event.

“I gave them a call, and that’s when I started to learn more about what they offer. I thought they just performed Microsoft training, but they offer so much more,” Thorne explains.

OfficePro worked with Electronic Contracting Company’s IT team to put together a migration plan. The final step—moving email addresses—was done in small groups of 20 over a weekend. Once the email migration was complete, Microsoft 365 was ready to use.

OfficePro now manages the company’s user and device licenses as well. Instead of using company-issued credit cards to pay several invoices each month—and then submitting monthly expense reports—the licenses are rolled into a single invoice. Previously, Thorne was submitting three separate expenses to accounting each month, and several other staff members were doing the same. This service has streamlined processes and saved staff valuable time.

For Electronic Contracting Company, everything within the Microsoft 365 Suite was something new to learn: Teams, SharePoint, OneDrive, etc. To make sure everyone had the specific training they needed, Thorne sat down with OfficePro to map out a plan.

“There were lots of aspects we wanted to get right,” says Thorne. “There were certain criteria I wanted to make sure was communicated because we were integrating Teams into project workflows and using it to collaborate on accounting issues, change orders, customer communications, engineering concerns, and even installation. OfficePro did a great job. They made sure all aspects of the software were covered and ensured that everyone understood how the tools work. We were able to take off running.”

As a result of deploying Microsoft 365, Thorne says internal email usage has decreased by at least 40%, increasing productivity and reducing stress. Onboarding new hires is also faster and easier. By adding them to the Teams platform, new employees have access to previous conversations and information pertaining to whatever projects they’re working on.

At the same time they were migrating to Microsoft 365, Electronic Contracting Company was also migrating its ERP system to Solutions360 and needed SharePoint to snap into the project workflow.

“We wanted to store all our configuration files, drawings, documents, etc. in one place,” Thorne explains. “The best way to do that was to store everything in SharePoint. But what we wanted wasn’t an out-of-the-box solution.”

As Thorne shared his ideas with the team at OfficePro, they mentioned the possibility of configuring SharePoint to meet the company’s needs. From there, an OfficePro developer was able to create exactly what they needed for the Solutions360/SharePoint site. In addition, they’re also building department-specific SharePoint sites for resource-sharing among HR, IT, safety, sales, LMS, and marketing.

“These projects have drastically improved communication between our employees and made project workflows smoother. Teams is a very powerful tool to use in conjunction with the Solutions360 ERP platform,” says Thorne. “Utilizing SharePoint to house customized departmental sites produced by OfficePro has been a big success as well.” 🟡

Save the Date

NSCA's Pivot to Profit 2021
September 21-22
Atlanta

(And yes, the plan is for 2021 P2P to be IN PERSON!)

NSCA.org/P2P





A SOLUTION to Recruiting Challenges

By creating and nurturing a corporate culture that embraces diversity, this AV integration firm recruits from an expanded talent pool and unlocks better solutions to critical problems.

By Christina De Bono

The power of diversity can only be tapped to the extent that an organization nurtures it. At ClearTech, we have made a conscious and continuous effort to promote diversity.

C OVID-19 has presented our industry with a threat unprecedented in our lifetimes, but there's one aspect that isn't so different from any other challenge: Whether you're facing a once-in-a-century pandemic, a technological revolution, or an economic upheaval, diversity will help protect you. More than that, it will lead you through the hardship.

Why? Because diversity is strength. The more strengths you have, the more easily you can adapt and come up with solutions to critical problems. That's why we hire and mentor brilliant young people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. As a small but fast-growing AV integrator, ClearTech can't afford to hire industry superstars; we have to cultivate them from within, and we do that by giving people a chance to show us what they're made of. The result is a workforce that doesn't necessarily look like the typical AV integrator but is just as capable as the very best because of the uniqueness and diversity of their skills and perspectives.

But here's what we all need to remember: The power of diversity can only be tapped to the extent that an organization nurtures it. At ClearTech, we have made a conscious and continuous effort to promote diversity. That means looking at more than just a person's résumé. It means taking time to listen to a new hire's "wild idea" for how to bring in new business. It means acknowledging that maybe you alone don't have all the answers. On the part of leadership, it takes patience, humility, and curiosity.

Benefits of Recognizing Talent

Today, our staff represents tremendous diversity, with the average age of a ClearTech employee at about 30. That isn't the norm in our industry—nor is the fact that our most powerful marketing mind was originally a delivery person with a knack for digital design and IT. Our most formidable operational mind? That belongs to a young woman who came to us as an account temp filling a payroll clerk position.

ClearTech was fortunate enough to nab that talent because, from Day One, we had a vision to build an organization that mirrored the diversity organizations we serve. Instead of focusing primarily on products and tech solutions, we focused on our clients' business and

life cycle needs. To really deliver for our clients, we had to see the world as it is. The demographics were changing, and we needed to reflect that.

But it wasn't enough just to hire people from diverse backgrounds. We needed to create a culture that gives all perspectives a voice and enables all our people to contribute what they do best. We vowed never to pigeonhole people. Does every new hire work out? No—but most do. We're clear about who we are, which makes it easier to attract those who are going to fit in. In return, we become a magnet not only for smart, technologically savvy people, but also those who strengthen us with their resilience, imagination, and promise.


Culture of Diversity

It was clear to me then, and it remains so today: Creating a culture that celebrates diversity not only makes ClearTech a better place for employees, but also makes us more successful as a business by enabling us to better serve our clients.

From the ingenuity of our hybrid learning solutions to the COVID-19-related upgrades we've made to our clients' training rooms, conference rooms, and emergency operation centers, the energy and nimbleness of our team have enabled remarkable accomplishments over the last several months.

Something else that diversity provides: a heightened awareness of the communities where we live and do business. When you have a workforce that reflects the world around you, you can't help but want to be a force for positive change, particularly in these challenging times.

So, this past fall, we decided to participate in the Western Service Workers Association's (WSWA) Fall Back-to-School Drive. Our team raised funds to purchase 200 high-quality backpacks and various school supplies to fill them up, and volunteers from our team coordinated with WSWA to provide contactless delivery. The participation rate among our staff was 100%.

Unity from diversity. That, too, is a powerful difference maker. 

Christina De Bono is president of Altadena, CA-based ClearTech and an NSCA board member.



"Creating a culture that celebrates diversity not only makes ClearTech a better place for employees, it makes us more successful as a business by enabling us to better serve our clients," says ClearTech CEO Christina De Bono.

Customers Driving the Shift to RECURRING R

It's no longer about hemming and hawing around the shift away from product- and project-based revenue to a recurring-revenue model. Now it's about your customers *demanding* it.

Before you turn the page, this is not another article advocating for integrators to make the shift away from product- and project-based revenue to a service business model. Well ... it is and it isn't.

Each year, in the State of the Industry survey NSCA conducts with *Commercial Integrator*, we ask integrators about their percentage of revenue that's under some sort of service contract. And, each year, we see that the needle only moves slightly—but this year was a little different.

The *Commercial Integrator*/NSCA report reflects significant interest in a recurring business model. In fact, 74.6% of respondents sold a managed services contract in the past year. The impact of the pandemic on customers' cash flow undoubtedly has contributed to a need to invest in solutions and service on a monthly vs. capital basis.

However, 73% of respondents say that 10% or less of their revenue comes from managed services contracts. There's interest, yet obstacles remain.

This article isn't about encouraging integrators to shift: It's about your customers *necessitating* that shift.

Climate is Changing for Customers

The pandemic has impacted the integration market in so many ways. One way that can be spun as positive is that it may push more customers toward investing in as-a-service contracts. Cash is tight for many customers, so they may prefer not to pay cash or use their bank line and instead choose a monthly investment.

Customers these days need “budget linearity,” says Alan Rosenkoff, director of BD & corporate marketing for Corbett Technology Solutions, Inc. (CTSI). “Often, when customers deploy new technology, their budgets are lumpy.”

Every few years, when they want to launch a new project or update an existing solution, they need to pay a large chunk of money, pay for license upgrades and software updates, deal with out-of-warranty equipment, and more. They might not have budgeted for these variables.

Through **CTSI Subscription Services**, which is a technology-as-a-service program, “customers have a consistent monthly expense associated with the infrastructure,” Rosenkoff says. “They don't have to worry about surprises. That budget linearity, the consistency of the monthly payment, and being able to budget for it long term makes it easier.”

The technology refresh timeframe by which as-a-service makes sense and benefits the customer from a total cost of ownership (TOC) standpoint is between 36 and 72 months. During that time, “they're able to manage cash flow, conserve cash, and invest in infrastructure or resources that will increase revenue vs. technology that rapidly depreciates,” Rosenkoff says.

It's not just about cash flow, however; it's also about allowing customers to be nimble and invest in technology that will make a business impact quickly—a need that has been amplified during the pandemic.

“One of the biggest drivers of CTSI Subscription Services has been accelerating technology into a space so they get immediate use of it,” he adds. “We've seen customers say they can accelerate technology that gives them real business outcomes, such as improved collaboration or security, and do it while spending on a monthly subscription.”

Rethinking ‘Technology Refresh’

Many integration customers would ideally like to do a technology refresh every three to five years based on the natural evolution of needs and solutions; however, few would call how the market changed since the pandemic a “natural evolution.” Customers realize they need to invest quickly in communication and security infrastructure to adapt their spaces for a post-pandemic reality; that doesn't mean they have the large outlay of money needed for those investments.

It's logical that many customers anxious to adapt technology in a hurry will want to do business with an integrator that offers some sort of recurring investment model. Communications Engineering Company (CEC) is an example of a firm that recently made an aggressive shift to managed services—and the timing was perfect with the company earning an Excellence in Business Award at last year's Business & Leadership Conference (BLC), which concluded days before COVID-19 restrictions swept across the country.

CEC's **Managed Systems Program (MSP)** focuses on the customer experience. Rolled out in early 2020 with a new sales compensation plan to transition away from project-based selling, it includes a built-in refresh cycle so customers can stay current with their technology.

REVENUE

The solution bundle includes a “whole product solution,” said CEC CEO Kim Lehrman during BLC. “We provide an expectation of the lifetime use of the system, how it will work with customer service, warranty repair, hardware upgrades, software upgrades, cybersecurity, and more. The buying organization can make a decision about how deep into that system they want us to be. They can add any of the menu items in terms of back-end service into that three- or five-year contract.”

Technology refresh is an option for more customers if the integrator can provide budget linearity, Rosenkoff says.

It’s rare that a customer has budgeted for a three- to five-year technology refresh—let alone a pandemic-accelerated technology refresh. “That’s where the subscription really makes sense,” he says. “When we have a conversation with a customer about subscription terms, we talk to them about when they will want to refresh, and we’ll align the term with the technology refresh. If it’s 48 months, we might recommend an initial subscription term of 48 months and, at month 49, we do a technology refresh. That has been a really significant benefit for customers.”

The bottom line: Because it makes sense for so many customers during the pandemic and beyond, it makes sense for integration companies to put themselves in a position to offer as-a-service or managed services solutions that allow for monthly vs. capital investments.

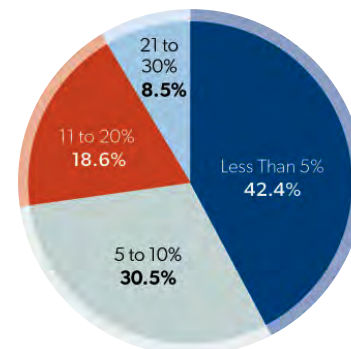
So why aren’t more doing it? Again, 73% of surveyed integration companies say that less than 1/10 of their annual revenue stems from recurring contracts. There are obstacles, of course (see graph), and nobody is saying the transition from product- and project-based to recurring revenue is easy. Both CTSI and CEC will tell you it was anything *but* easy. But the companies committed to it because they determined it to be important for long-term success.

If that doesn’t convince integrators to commit to providing customers with a recurring investment option, then maybe this will: Rosenkoff says he can’t recall losing a bid to a competing integrator that was also offering an as-a-service contract. *Not once.* 📈

WANT MORE?

NSCA members can take advantage of managed services sales training. Visit [NSCA.org](https://www.nscainc.org) and click on the “Training” tab to learn about offerings from Member Advisory Councilmember Corporate Sales Coaches.

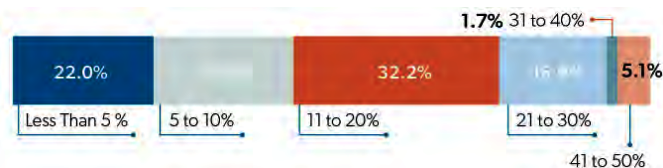
What percentage of your revenue comes through managed service contracts?



Only 27% of surveyed integration companies are earning more than 1/10 of their revenue through managed services.

Source: Commercial Integrator

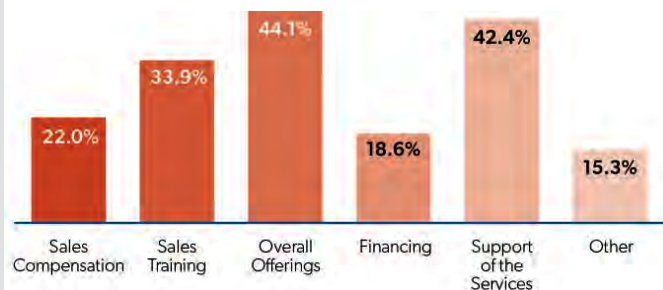
What percentage of your revenue do you expect will come through managed services contracts in 2025?



The goals aren’t all that lofty for most integration companies when it comes to how they plan to grow their service business over the next several years, according to this survey—a sign that many integrators aren’t prioritizing service revenue.

Source: Commercial Integrator

What percentage of your revenue do you expect will come through managed services contracts in 2025?



The top obstacles to shifting to more of a service model, according to survey respondents, are: overall offerings not being a good fit, company infrastructure or insufficient support of the ongoing program, and sales training. Those in need of sales training are strongly recommended to contact NSCA.

Source: Commercial Integrator

CAN YOU BE AN ENERGY INTEGRATOR?

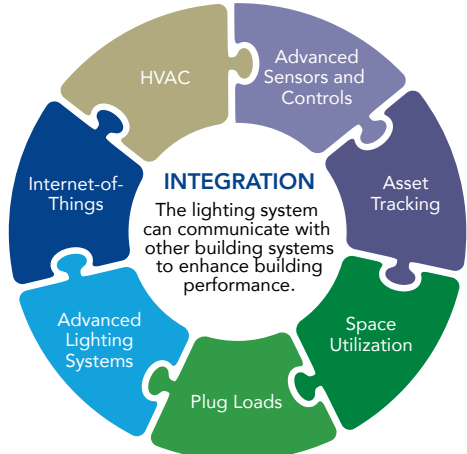
Customers benefit from efficient and cost-effective lighting solutions—and integrators are needed to make these lighting systems shine.

Better Buildings U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY **THE INTEGRATED LIGHTING CAMPAIGN**

Designed to help building managers take advantage of energy savings and other benefits of advanced lighting controls, and the integration of lighting systems with other building and business systems.

INTEGRATED LIGHTING CAMPAIGN

- Provide relevant resources to inform projects
- Promote use of innovative lighting sensors
- Encourage integration with other building systems such as HVAC and plug loads
- Document and recognize integration and innovation



KEY SECTORS

- Commercial Real Estate and Hospitality
- Higher Education
- Retail, Food Service, or Grocery
- Municipal/State Government
- Health Care
- Federal Government

ORGANIZERS

BENEFITS OF JOINING

Leadership Recognition Resources Technical Assistance

BECOME INVOLVED TODAY AT INTEGRATEDLIGHTINGCAMPAIGN.ENERGY.GOV

PNNL-SA-157682 **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

The time for integrated building systems is *now*. The traditional siloed approach to building system design leaves building owners with low-hanging fruit to snack on, but the real savings are too often left in the tree. Why do owners continue to settle for low-hanging fruit when integrators can help them capture the whole bounty? Integrating lighting with other building systems introduces new capabilities and benefits. Understanding your clients' needs and helping them appreciate these benefits relative to organizational goals can open up opportunities for you to provide more value.

For example:

- Building Performance:** Energy conservation approaches, such as integrating lighting and controls with HVAC or controllable plug loads, maximize energy savings. Demand flexibility can reduce or shift usage during peak loads, which benefits owners and operators, as well as regional utilities. These benefits can easily be quantified as energy reduction measures, which translate nicely for an organization that wants to improve the bottom line.

Building systems, including lighting, are increasingly becoming IT-based, using PoE or other low-voltage cabling solutions for power, control, and communication. To benefit from this shift, building owners need to partner with an integrator that has the knowledge and skills to install and integrate these systems.

- **Workforce Performance:** It's no secret that people are an organization's biggest asset. Supporting occupant health and well-being through adequate lighting with controllability is gaining attention as researchers uncover how light affects more than just the visual system. Access to daylight and outdoor views can be achieved through integration of lighting with automated shading, helping ensure that occupants receive beneficial exposure to daylight.
- **Workplace Analytics:** In addition to energy and people, an organization's real estate footprint is another costly investment. Great savings opportunities come along with fine-tuning this real estate. Managing various business necessities through asset tracking reduces wasted time by using real-time location services (RTLS) to track physical assets while real-time data integration facilitates wayfinding, flexible space utilization, and hoteling to help workers find vacant desks or meeting rooms.

Opportunity for Integrators

These capabilities typically require digital infrastructure, including LED lighting, digital controls, and/or IoT sensors. Building systems are increasingly becoming IT-based, using Power over Ethernet (PoE) or other low-voltage cabling solutions for power, control, and communication. To benefit from this shift, building owners need to partner with an integrator that has the knowledge and skills to install and integrate these systems.


Recently, the U.S. Department of Energy has been involved with performance verification of seven projects where lighting was integrated with HVAC. Highlights from three successful projects in Minneapolis (a university, outpatient health/fitness facility, and municipal transportation facility) demonstrate HVAC energy savings of between 30% and 73% by setting back and optimizing HVAC using granular occupancy data from the lighting system. While savings vary significantly based on the HVAC system, occupancy, and building usage, they illustrate the tremendous potential possible by integrating building systems.

However, none of the sites utilized a dedicated system integrator, which is suspected to be a major contributing factor to at least *two* projects where HVAC savings weren't realized. Many of the integration challenges encountered could have easily been rectified (and the projects may have had more successful outcomes) if an integrator had been involved.

Because of these potential energy savings, utility rebate programs are looking to develop rebates for building system integration. Qualified integrators will be needed to support these programs. Energy codes will continue to drive smart buildings and energy optimization, which can't be achieved without integration.

How can you get involved? The Integrated Lighting Campaign (ILC) is a collaborative initiative supported by the Department of Energy and other partners that aim to accelerate the advancement of lighting system integration.

To show your support and stay informed about new research outcomes, you can sign up as a supporter and share the website with clients who are interested in learning more. The campaign's website is a great source of relevant information that will bring understanding to the value propositions and new ideas surrounding integrated systems.

The ILC also hosts an annual recognition event that allows participants and supporters showcase and highlight their work. Case studies, presentation opportunities, and the ability to learn from others are just a few of the benefits that keep our partners engaged as we work toward a more integrated future. 

This article is provided by the U.S. Department of Energy's Integrated Lighting Campaign.

WANT MORE?

The Integrated Lighting Campaign (ILC) facilitates expert exchange between organizations considering integration and those already reaping the benefits. Education about the benefits of building systems integration will no doubt inspire others to consider investing in building integration and optimization. Becoming an active ILC supporter will:

- Help you better understand the needs of your clients by teaching you more about how lighting is central to advanced integration use cases.
- Bring more awareness to successful projects through recognition. Projects may be featured in the ILC newsletter, in case studies, or on social media platforms.
- Help highlight the unique skillset and level of expertise integrators bring to projects.

Visit integratedlightingcampaign.energy.gov to learn more.



How to Vet Your Budget

Does your proposed budget hold water? Here are four questions to ask.

By Eric Morris

As many integration firm owners navigate 2021, they have to ask themselves: “Does this company budget hold water? Will these assumptions and projections float ... or will they sink like a stone?”

To solve this buoyancy issue, you should seriously consider these four questions:

1. Do you have a basis of comparison for the budget?
2. Is the revenue assumption an easy swim or deadly struggle?
3. Will the gross profit assumption tread water?
4. Will the fixed cost assumptions weigh you down?

To eliminate in-house bias, have a trusted colleague or your CPA review the critical budget assumptions for reasonableness. You're not asking for a detailed analysis; you just want a “sniff test” to ensure that major budget assumptions aren't totally overreaching.

Now, let's tackle each of these four questions to determine if your 2021 budget will hold water ... or sink.

1. What is Your Basis for Comparison?

A friend recently sent me her company's budget to review. The worksheets represented meticulous calculations, logical organization, documented assumptions, and departmental projections, so she was aghast when I told her there was no way for me to coherently evaluate her budgets.

She had only the budgets—without any company history or industry comparison. Without a basis of comparison, no conclusions could be drawn about the budget's viability. The key assumptions of revenue, gross profit, and fixed costs must be evaluated in context. Without it, budgets are just wish lists that offer little guidance.

Where can you derive context? Annualized, current-year numbers are the place to start. While we don't necessarily expect the past to repeat itself, we can judge the budget's "stretch." Gain a sense of the stretch built into all critical assumptions. Some assumptions should have a degree of stretch built in so you can exceed existing results. Multiple stretch assumptions, however, can be like trying to swim with rocks tied around your neck. It's highly unlikely that you can increase revenue, improve margins, *and* cut fixed cost simultaneously.

BUDGET BUOYANCY TEST (EXAMPLE)

	South Region	East Region	North Region	TOTAL
Budget Revenues	1,000,000	2,000,000	1,400,000	4,400,000
Annualized Current Revenues	900,000	800,000	1,000,000	2,700,000
Budget > Annualized Revenues	100,000	1,200,000	400,000	1,700,000
Revenue Increase Percentage	11.1%	150%	40%	63%

2. Is Revenue Assumption an Easy Swim or Deadly Struggle?

Are you growing revenue by 10% or 60%? The first imperative is to determine how much you assume the new budget's revenue will exceed the current year's revenues. This is likely the most critical and volatile budget assumption. If you get this assumption wrong, then it usually sinks the validity of the entire budget.

Challenge the sale team's projection of future revenue. If you annualize the most recent six or three months of sales, how do they compare to the budget revenue? If that comparison is unfavorable, then you have a sales department wish list ... not a valid projection. Make sure you have a reachable objective and not a deadly swim.

BUDGET BUOYANCY TEST (EXAMPLE)

	South Region	East Region	North Region	TOTAL
Budget Gross Profit Dollars	350,000	800,000	560,000	1,710,000
Annualized Gross Profit Dollars	270,000	320,000	250,000	840,000
Budget Gross Profit Percent	35%	40%	40%	38.9%
Annualized Gross Profit Percent	30%	40%	25%	31.1%

3. Will Gross Profit Assumption Tread Water?

If the budget's gross profit percentage is higher than what you have achieved currently, you may be swimming in deep water without a life jacket.

Challenge any justification of why margins will improve: Without a specific, detailed plan to improve margins, it is unlikely they will. Remember, it is a fool's errand to do the same things and expect different results.

BUDGET BUOYANCY TEST (EXAMPLE)

	South Region	East Region	North Region	TOTAL
Budget SG&A Dollars	200,000	400,000	280,000	880,000
Annualized SG&A Dollars	250,000	180,000	150,000	580,000
Budget Increase (Decrease)	(50,000)	220,000	130,000	300,000

4. Will Fixed Cost Assumptions Weigh You Down?

Fixed costs are expenses that must be paid monthly, regardless of the level of revenue generated. If your revenue projections fall short and/or your gross profit percentages fail to materialize at budget levels, you still have to pay fixed costs in cash. This is the danger that could drown your company. Without cutting costs (usually people), your current fixed cost level will be as much or more in the future.

Make sure that future actual revenue and actual gross profit percentages achieved can be less than budgeted but still sufficient to cover current fixed costs. This is called a "safety margin." Every budget must have a built-in safety margin—or you're betting the ranch that you'll achieve revenues and margins that have, thus far, eluded you. That's a sucker bet.

BUDGET BUOYANCY TEST (EXAMPLE)

	South Region	East Region	North Region	TOTAL
Budget Profit Percentage	15%	20%	20%	19%
Annualized Profit Percentage	2%	18%	10%	10%

A Final Warning to Owners

Just when you think you've done a commendable job of reviewing your budget, watch for insidious leaks that can still sink it. In family and/or closely held companies, there is a built-in bias against telling those in power that the boat is sinking. Call it "don't-kill-the-messenger syndrome." No one in finance wants to point out that the owner or operations folks are building budgets with unrealistic assumptions.

Owners need unvarnished truth regarding budget assumptions. To eliminate in-house bias, have a trusted colleague or CPA review the critical budget assumptions for reasonableness. You're not asking for a detailed analysis; you just want a "sniff test" to ensure that major budget assumptions aren't totally overreaching.

By asking a few strategic questions, you can judge the sea worthiness of your proposed budget. For your organization to thrive, you must be committed to utilizing a valid measuring stick: the budget. Like any other tool, however, it must be used correctly to yield the desired outcome. Good luck on drafting a budget that serves you well! 🐬

Eric Morris is CFO at Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc. and a member of NSCA's Financial Leadership Council.

What's your biggest takeaway from NSCA's 2021 *Financial Analysis of the Industry*?

NSCA's membership is a community. The individuals and companies that make up NSCA share common challenges. We take pride in providing a community where you can discuss shared obstacles and successes. "On Members' Minds" is just one platform to share thoughts on the integration market.



"Mark Twain said: 'What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know. It's what we know for sure that just ain't so.' The *Financial Analysis of the Industry* sheds light on financial ratios and performance indicators that are actually being achieved within the industry. Whether this is good or bad news, it certainly offers valuable insight."

Eric Morris,
Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers, Inc.



"No. 1: The pace of recurring revenue picking up from 2018 of almost 60%, representing a growing and more profitable segment that we need to continue to invest in as customers change procurement habits. No. 2: Further control operating expenses as a percentage of sales. Tech, being on the higher end of members' reporting revenue, should expect our percentage to be lower given our fixed costs that should be spread across more dollars. We are not there yet."

Craig Lubbers
CFO, Tech Electronics, Inc.



“Gross profit seems to have trended down across the board in terms of percentiles; however, the operating income is increased slightly or remained flat. It appears to me that this peer group is dealing with market constraints and competition driving utilization/margins on jobs down somewhat, which is driving more focus and diligence around controlling SG&A costs to manage the bottom line.”

Mat Hennings
VP of Finance, CEC

“It really paints an effective visual picture of what we’ve seen within the industry: continuing downward pressure on gross profit margins, but an industry-wide shift toward increasing recurring revenue streams. Integrators who can deliver unique and compelling managed services solutions will likely find themselves succeeding where others fail.”

Christopher Mounts
CFO, AVI Systems



WANT MORE?

NSCA members can download the 2021 *Financial Analysis of the Industry* [here](#).

TEMPERATURE SCREENING BEST PRACTICE E-BOOK



INTEGRATE Temperature Screening to **ADD-VALUE** to your solutions

.... but make sure it's the right technology to protect your reputation

Read about **the Good, the Bad & the Ugly** of temperature screening



Learn more here LANDVIRALERT.COM

WE ARE NSCA



Q&A

WITH CEO LIONEL FELIX

Felix Media Solutions, Inc.
Austin, TX

felixmediasolutions.com

Executives: Lionel Felix, CEO; Lindsey Rima, CFO;
Ben Lanclos, Director of PM

Primary Focus: Commercial AV

Q: Why is your company's approach unique within the NSCA community?

We focus on design/build with a heavy emphasis on collaborative design. We spend a great deal of time sussing out the experience the client seeks rather than pushing boxes. Our design-first approach has led to much higher close rates and after-sales satisfaction.

Q: What are the biggest business challenges that lie ahead for your company? How will you overcome them?

Hardware as a service from the likes of Zoom will make the long tail of commercial AV less profitable and potentially shorten it. With some manufacturers and videoconferencing providers offering entire solutions, it certainly takes money off the table. We partner with them to resell, but I can see them forging their own direct relationships for a period of time—before they realize they have to support all those installs, which they can't realistically do.

Q: What's the most important benefit or resource provided to you by NSCA? How do you leverage it?

The research saves us countless hours of doing our own market analysis. Having well-prepared papers that just tell us what is happening, what best practices are, and where the market is heading is very valuable.

Q: Why is being part of a trade organization and industry community important?

While we may compete in the streets, we are also brothers and sisters in arms. We can learn from each other and do good for the whole community together. We can leverage our collective voices to enact change that helps us all.

Q: What is one lesson the NSCA community can learn from your company's approach to business?

Every success and failure is predicated on the customer experience from beginning to end. Make happy customers and everything else falls in line. Focus on top-line sales only, and you'll be in another job in a few years.


“Hardware as a service from the likes of Zoom will make the long tail of commercial AV less profitable and potentially shorten it. With some manufacturers and videoconferencing providers offering entire solutions, it certainly takes some money off the table.”

–Lionel Felix, CEO

Q: Who is Felix Media Solutions’ NSCA “Champion”?

It’s the CEO (me). I’m sending out articles and research, and I make sure we are looking at all of the resources and not doing redundant work.

Q: Why are your employees proud to be part of your organization?

Our employees are treated like valued team members with a level of protection afforded to them that they could not get anywhere else. Everyone has the highest level of company-sponsored health benefits, education, reimbursement for continuing education, training, safety, new tools, a safe work environment, and supporting and attentive management. They feel appreciated because they *are*. We have almost no turnover. 



Deliver the full picture.

**Cleerline SSF™ 8K UHD HDMI
Active Optical Cables**



1-866-469-2487 | www.cleerlinefiber.com

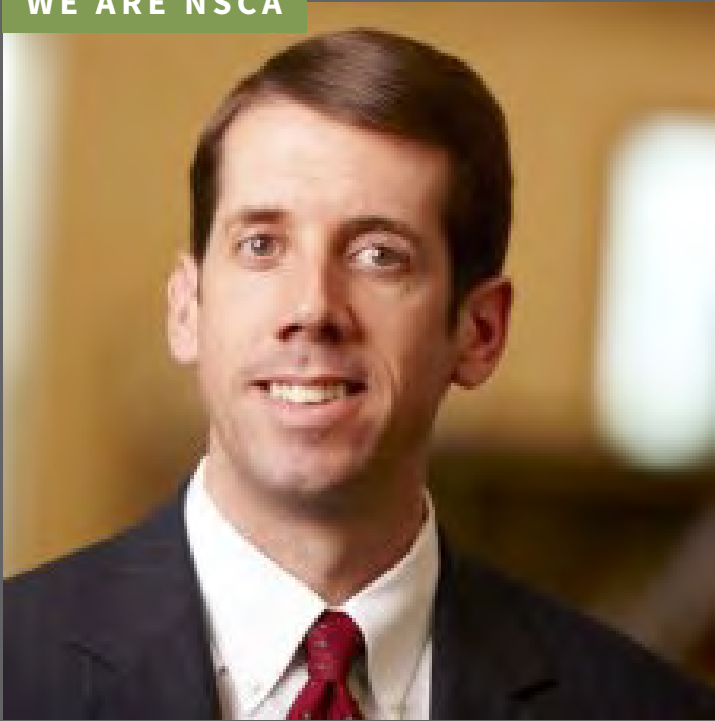
| Full **8K Ultra High Definition** signal transfer at a blazing **48 Gbps up to 40 meters**.

| Support for 4K, 5K, 8K, and 10K resolutions.

| Built with **Cleerline SSF™ Fiber Optic Technology** for increased durability.

| **High Dynamic Range and Wide Color Gamut.**

| Up to **120 fps/Hz.**



Q&A

WITH ROB KLINCK, SENIOR VP OF SALES

Primex Inc.
Lake Geneva, WI
primexinc.com

Executives: Paul Shekoski, Chief Executive Officer; Beth Luther, Chief People and Customer Experience Officer; Brian Balboni, Chief Technology Officer; Jim Barthel, Chief Financial Officer

Primary Focus: SSaaS, IoMT, Environmental Monitoring, Time Synchronization, and Mass Communication

Q: What are the biggest business challenges that lie ahead for your company? How will you overcome them?

One of our company's core values is "customer obsessed," and that is the approach we take with all our customers. It is important to Primex that we put our customers' needs at the forefront, making sure we provide the solution that is going to best fit their needs. Not only that, our team is also nimble. We can react quickly to our customers' needs and create custom solutions to fit those needs—from creating new products to creating solutions that result in recurring revenue for our partners. Bottom line: Our customers' needs come first. Their success is our success.

Q: What are the biggest business challenges that lie ahead for your company?

The biggest challenges we face—and have faced since the onset of COVID-19—is getting in to meet with our customers in person given strict visitation guidelines in healthcare and education. We also know our customers are busy addressing needs for the new normal, so we understand that they need to put their own customers and staff first—just as we put *them* first. We have adapted to remote contact with our customers very well through lunch-and-learn sessions, webinars, simple video chats, and more.

“We do not approach each business opportunity the same. We tailor our approach to what will be best for our customers and our partners. We have to be agile.”

—Rob Klinck,
Primex



As a leader in the Internet of Medical Things, Primex's software-based solutions provide the tools facilities need to stay relevant, informed, and connected.

Q: What are the biggest business challenges that lie ahead for your dealers?

With everything going on with the pandemic, our partners are having the same difficulties in reaching customers in person and gaining their share of attention. We can help dealers overcome these challenges because we offer solutions that are relevant across multiple industries, which can help them expand into new markets. As a leader in the Internet of Medical Things, our software-based solutions provide the tools facilities need to stay relevant, informed, and connected. In addition, we have pricing models that don't require customers to expend high capital in these tough economic times, and we offer marketing assistance to our dealers to guide expansion beyond their current customer base.

Q: What's the most important benefit or resource provided to you by NSCA? How do you leverage it?

Building new relationships and networking with like businesses is invaluable to any company, and we feel that NSCA is the right platform to build these bridges: to be able to share stories, compare goals, and collaborate on what success looks like. The industry knowledge and industry trends that NSCA shares and publishes serve as great educational forums for Primex.

Q: Why is being part of a trade organization and industry community important?

This past year has certainly brought new challenges to manufacturers and distribution companies. It is important to have support and encouragement of others going through similar challenges. Knowing that you are not alone, and that we are working together, can provide the best solutions to our customers. NSCA provides resources and tools to help us better navigate this pandemic.

Q: What is one lesson the NSCA community can learn from your company's approach to business?

One approach Primex embraces that will likely resonate with the NSCA community is that we focus on each individual customer/partner relationship and offer flexible, customer-specific solutions. We do not approach each business opportunity in the same way. We tailor our approach to what will be best for our customers and our partners. We have to be agile and have flexibility to adapt on a dime, and we do that every day. Primex is an entrepreneurial organization in the way we think and move forward with solutions. You have to stay ahead of the curve and focus on each unique opportunity, especially in this state of the industry we call the "new normal."

Q: Who is Primex's NSCA "Champion"?

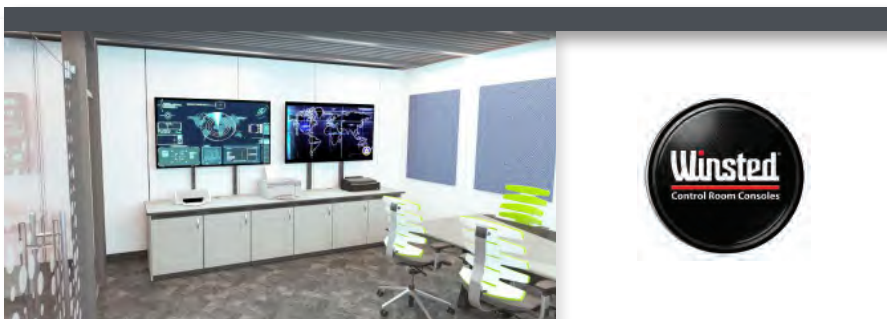
We would like to explore more ways to get involved with NSCA. We have multiple division leaders who directly engage in NSCA opportunities. We also plan to have many Primex employees with different functional responsibilities participate in NSCA programs.

Q: Why are your employees proud to be part of your organization?

As a family-owned company, one of our main core values is work-life balance; it emphasizes to our employees the importance of staying healthy and making sure to spend time with your family and friends. The leaders in our organization stand behind that. Company culture is important to us, and the employees agree. We have been employee-validated and certified "A Great Place to Work" each year since 2016 and have also been recognized as Milwaukee's Best and Brightest Companies to Work For® every year since 2017. 🌱

The Latest from NSCA's Solution Provider Members

Unfiltered content provided directly from NSCA's manufacturer and solution provider members to keep integrators updated.



Winsted

Meet Winsted's Paramount Technology Credenzas

Winsted's Paramount Technology Credenzas are designed to organize and protect your electronics. Paramount is an elegant, functional solution that integrates nicely into any boardroom, conference room, control room or any other high-tech space. These versatile credenzas are modular, reconfigurable and expandable to meet your changing technology needs today and tomorrow. The standard one, two and three bay credenzas can be combined to create larger configurations.

Paramount Technology Credenzas Feature:

- High-Pressure Laminate Top Panel with Durable Rubber Edge
- Optional Versa-Trak Monitor Mounting System
- Front and Rear 14U Tapped Rack Rails in Each Bay
- Optional 11U Pullout/Swivel Rack
- Vented Base Allows for Optional 3" Casters and 120mm Fans
- Top Includes Six 50mm Fans and Cable Management Throughout
- Rear Panel Included - Optional Locking Front Doors Available
- Black Laminated Side Panels or Optional Steel Side Panels

winsted.com

Techlink

Learn More about Techlink

Techlink is a full-service installation partner with offices throughout the United States. By combining superior project management, full client integration, and professional field technicians, we excel in assisting companies with their complex installation and field service projects. Specializing in digital signage, telecom, networking equipment, wireless integration, kiosk and IoT technologies, our team of project managers utilize our proprietary cloud-based software to seamlessly integrate our partners' installation needs with our field technicians. Founded by techs in 2008, Techlink has been delivering consistent, cost-effective installs nation-wide for 13 years and has been featured in the Inc 5000's fastest growing companies list for the last 5 years.

techlinksvc.net



Belden

Do Your Part to Support the Industry

Belden supports the work and mission of the Connected Technologies Industry Consortium as we monitor legislation that could negatively impact power-limited systems integrators. We all play a vital role in this industry ... and we all need to act as eyes and ears on the lookout for changes that may impact permitting, ordinances, licensure, regulations or code compliance in our local area.

To do this, it's important to stay engaged with trade associations like NSCA. Attend local town hall meetings and know your legislative leaders. Remember: Although it's important for you to know your legislators, it's even more important that they know who you are and what you do. Make sure you provide input and perspective on how regulations may impact the adoption of technology.

Learn more [here](#).

Fiber Same-Day Shipping Service

Sometimes projects can't wait on materials. There are timelines to beat, clients to keep happy, last-minute changes or things you overlook.

That's why Belden launched a same-day service for fiber cable and connectivity solutions. There are no minimum or maximum orders; get exactly what you want—when and where you want it.

- ✓ Place an order of eligible products with your preferred Belden distributor, specifying same-day shipping
- ✓ Specify shipping method and provide a shipping account number (UPS, FedEx, etc.)
- ✓ Your order ships that same day
- ✓ Cutoff times apply; contact your preferred Belden distributor for details

Questions? Call 800-BELDEN1!

Shure

Meet Ecosystem Product Bundles

We are pleased to announce the release of our Ecosystem Product Bundles. Ecosystem Bundles are conveniently packaged to provide complete systems suited for different scenarios and room sizes. Available at a discount compared to the purchase of standalone products, these bundles also offer a significant cost benefit.

Bundles include the following components in different variations and quantities:

- Microflex® Advance™ Microphones (MXA910, MXA710, or MXA310)
- IntelliMix® DSPs (IntelliMix Room or P300)
- Microflex™ MXN5-C Networked Loudspeaker
- HuddlyIQ Camera and Accessories (select bundles only)

Select bundles are also fully certified for Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Visit shure.com/ecosystem to learn more.

BrightSign

Digital Signage Cloud-Connected Network Management

BrightSign's BSN.cloud is a new cloud-connected network management platform for digital signage. BSN.cloud Control Cloud is a free subscription with every BrightSign player and enables real-time control of players using a Chrome browser, Mac, or PC.

You can view and monitor real-time player health, access player diagnostics and controls, and perform remote reboots and OS updates. You can even view remote snapshots to see what's playing on-screen at any time, from anywhere. In addition, you can create and publish presentations to Control Cloud connected players using BrightAuthor:connected or your choice of dozens of leading CMS providers.

Try it today!



Sennheiser

Sennheiser TeamConnect Ceiling 2 – Now with TruVoicelift

The Sennheiser TeamConnect Ceiling 2, with its patented automatic dynamic beamforming technology, was already a leader in conference room audio technology. Now, with the addition of TruVoicelift and advanced zone control, TeamConnect Ceiling 2 is the best solution for both conferencing and in-room audio for classrooms, lecture halls, boardrooms and more.

What Is TruVoicelift?

Unlike other brands, Sennheiser believes that there's more to voicelift than just another application on a long list. Our activatable and configurable algorithm behind TruVoicelift, in combination with the most flexible beamform and advanced zone control, distinguish the most powerful beamforming microphone on the market.

Features

TruVoicelift is Sennheiser's interpretation of the voicelift function. TruVoicelift allows the customer to significantly increase speech amplification on-site in the meeting room and gives the option to get significantly louder than other solution.

With 5 advanced exclusion zones, the customer has 100% flexibility and can precisely define the position of noise sources to be ignored by the beam tracking (vertically and horizontally) in a new, visually powerful 3D optic via Sennheiser Control Cockpit.

100% control by setting a particular area of a room as priority zone so that whenever someone in this zone is talking, they are given priority over any others that are talking in the room.

Learn More

Learn more about TruVoicelift at www.truvoicelift.com.

For more information on TeamConnect Ceiling 2, as well as Wireless technology, Campus-wide audio and other topics, see our [new series of online seminars](#).

Kramer

How to Support the Hybrid Classroom

“As students and teachers return to the classroom, many are being forced to embrace an environment unlike any they've experienced in the past. The hybrid classroom is a product of the COVID-19 pandemic and exists because of reduced physical class sizes. Hybrid refers to a teacher and a portion of the class in the physical classroom, while the remainder of students are joining the class virtually. This new teaching style is challenging, but new technology from Kramer can help teachers feel right at home. Kramer is introducing two new hybrid-classroom solutions – one based on a typical Zoom Room, and a second more software-agnostic approach based on the VIA Campus2.”

—Matt Kopin, Kramer Product Manager

True-collaboration.com

Roland

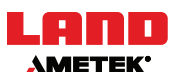
Tips for Hybrid Livestreaming

Help clients stay connected. To start the conversation, here are five tips to share on hybrid livestreaming

1. Keep it simple to start.
2. Distorted and unclear microphones are one of the top complaints from the online audience.
3. Record the program locally just in case the streaming platform has issues, or the internet connection fails.
4. Online audiences want to see the presenter and their content at the same time. Video technology with picture in picture help creates this.
5. To perfect the online viewer experience, read the livestream comments.

Have questions? Connect with us at

ProAVHelp@Roland.com



VIRALERT 3

SAFE | EASY | ACCURATE

AMETEK Land

Technology Ideal for Integration

News of vaccines gives us all cause to celebrate.

To protect and prevent a reoccurrence, there is now an opportunity to build back stronger. The damage from COVID-19 to health and economy is unprecedented, but it is unlikely this will be the last infectious respiratory disease to threaten our wellbeing.

Integrating temperature screening into everyday life can help increase resilience until the vaccine controls COVID-19, and to help identify and control future outbreaks.

To offer value, the technology needs to be highly accurate or risk creating a false sense of security.

It is therefore critical that this technology comes from experts in temperature measurement.

Who are AMETEK Land?

We are experts in accurate temperature measurement. After more than 70 years leading the market in non-contact temperature measurement innovation, we are trusted by the



major global players in industries including steel, glass, and oil and gas. They know, we know how to measure the temperature of their critical systems, accurately, and at a safe distance.

Why AMETEK Land?

We know how to overcome the major challenges of human temperature screening. Land have been developing temperature technology since the SARS epidemic in 2003. We patented 'in-scene' temperature calibration; pioneering the technology & techniques that are now the gold standard.

AUTOMATED - non-contact, automatic and screens from a safe distance
 ACCURATE - 'Gold standard' for screening, protect your reputation and brand value
 INTEGRATE TO DIFFERENTIATE - enhance your solutions with world-class technology

ametek-land.com



Ascom

Ascom Looking to Build Dealer Base

Ascom, a global solutions provider focused on healthcare and mobile workflow solutions, is seeking to sign up new IT solutions-based resellers that can demonstrate a proven track record of successful healthcare technology integration deployments. Ascom's focus is to provide mission-critical, real-time solutions with proven outcomes for highly mobile, ad hoc, and time-sensitive environments. Ascom provides its resellers with various sales tools such as detailed Market Planners as well as an ROI calculator to help demonstrate the value that Ascom's unique solutions portfolio and software capabilities provide.

Ascom's global headquarters is in Switzerland with its North American office in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. The company operates businesses in 18 countries and employs approximately 1,300 professionals worldwide. Visit www.ascom.us and follow [@AscomAmericas](https://twitter.com/AscomAmericas) on Twitter and [Ascom Americas](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ascom-americas) on LinkedIn for the latest news.

For more information on becoming a certified Ascom Partner, contact Mark Teder at 919-535-6129 or mark.teder@ascom.com.

Minrray

Understanding Minrray Camera Solutions

Minrray is solving camera needs for a wide variety of applications - from conference rooms and remote offices to classroom and distance learning. With a device for every viewing angle, zoom length and interface requirement, BTX is here to help you spec the right cameras into your projects today!

Watch BTX's live demo of Minrray's impressive UV100T auto-tracking camera [here](#).



Solutions360

Q360 Forecasting Dashboards

Traditionally, dashboards have been designed to give you a quick visual of KPI's that have occurred. This backwards analysis is then used for making business decisions affecting the future. There is an inherent gap in that model that introduces risk in decision making. Q360 gives you dashboards that show you the future.

Q360 is a unified application that consolidates your data into one platform. This allows you to leverage that information to look forward, to forecast and predict. Taking what we have done, we can take that information along with what is planned and give you a very accurate picture of where you are going.

Dashboards being fed by day-to-day and planned business activity ensures they are always up to date and changes in your business will be reflected in your view of the future.

Where are you going?

- **Cashflow** forecasting using project billing and material planning dates, service contract invoicing, collections performance, and projected fixed costs this dashboard shows you your cashflow for up to two years out.
- **Labor Capacity** forecasting that factors in your labor categories and actual staff availability in each role overlaid project labor plans shows you over and under labor capacity over time.
- **Project Backlog** forecasting shows you your backlog burn rate, factor this in with sales bookings and you can see your ability to deliver.

Bring all these views into one, real-time dashboard with interactivity and you have the big levers you need to navigate your business through challenging times.

solutions360.com

Synnex

What is Synnex VISUALSolv?

Demand for robust, immersive experiences in commercial, institutional, and public spaces is driving the need for cohesive technology solutions in digital signage, pro AV, and physical security. SYNnex VISUALSolv unites the industry's top AV, IT, and CE technologies to build the cross-functional solutions our integrator partners need.

Join us for our VISUALSolv Solutions virtual day on March 16, where we will dive into the solutions that are empowering safe and secure public spaces.

synnexcorp.com/us/visualsolv


AtlasIED

Inside AtlasIED's Singlewire's InformaCast Software

When emergencies occur, every second counts. To provide NSCA's integrators with an enhanced portfolio of mass communication technology, AtlasIED now offers Singlewire's InformaCast software, an ideal complement to the award-winning IPX family of IP endpoints. AtlasIED's comprehensive mass communication offering delivers audible and visual alerts, both on-premise and off-premise to ensure that critical information reaches the appropriate audience quickly and reliably. Both IPX and InformaCast integrate seamlessly with existing VoIP and other traditional analog and digital networks, enabling integrators to easily implement a complete notification system within schools, healthcare facilities, corporate and industrial environments.

As distributor of the Singlewire InformaCast software, AtlasIED offers integrators and resellers the convenience of purchasing a complete life safety solution from a single source. Moreover, AtlasIED's Engineered Solutions & Services (ESS) department is available to assist integrators with the design and implementation of InformaCast and IPX for a comprehensive UC environment.

atlasied.com



**IN STOCK PRODUCT
FOR FAST-TRACK INSTALLATIONS**

ALMO

Almo

Introducing Almo Quick Ship – Products Guaranteed in Stock for Fast-Track Installation
You have the project. Almo has the product. Introducing the Almo Quick Ship Certified Product Program.

By continuously working with our manufacturer partners, Almo enables our integrators to remain as responsive as possible to customer requests and complete jobs in a timely manner. We've made a significant inventory commitment to have high-demand Quick-Ship products in stock and ready to go as soon as they are purchased, removing the hassle of long lead times and concerns about availability and backorders.

Partner with Almo and our Quick-Ship Certified Partners for product you need, when you need it.

go.almoproav.com/quick-ship

Spectrum Industries

**Designer Approved - Integrator Inspired -
Instructor Preferred**

Spectrum Industries is a U.S.-based industry leader specializing in the manufacturing of audio visual, Esports, and training furniture.

Spectrum's integrated audio-visual lecterns and instructor stations are widely recognized as being superior in design, functionality, quality, and aesthetics. Spectrum is the largest manufacturer of standard lecterns for the college and university environment. We have a lectern for every application, project timeline, and budget.

Additionally, Spectrum can design, fabricate, and deliver completely customized solutions. Building products for Education, Government, Enterprise, and Healthcare environments since 1968.

Spectrum, Quality Solutions by Design!

For more information contact Spectrum at:

Spectrum Industries, Inc.
925 First Avenue
P.O. Box 400
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin 54729

715-723-6750 or 800-235-1262
715-738-2309 Fax or 800-335-0473

spectrum@spectrumfurniture.com

spectrumfurniture.com



Primex

Help Customers Improve Efficiency, Standardize Operations, Protect Against Risks, Meet Compliance Goals

Our OneVue portfolio includes solutions that eliminate manual tasks to boost data accuracy and staff productivity, while also ensuring facilities stay compliant and accredited. We are an innovative technology leader, providing impactful solutions available to our partners through the Primex Partner Program. Recently, with the increased visibility and roll-out of the COVID-19 Vaccine, Primex has been highlighted as a lead company ready to help pharmacies meet the storage requirements of such a crucial vaccine. Our **OneVue Sense™ Temperature Sensor** can monitor storage units as cold as -328 °F (-200 °C), meeting the various storage requirements of the different vaccine manufacturers. In addition, our OneVue software provides an Asset Summary Report that eliminates manual logging and can help keep your vaccine and temperature logs in one place, making it easy to find during audits, while also meeting compliance regulations set by the CDC and other governing bodies.

Primex OneVue is a comprehensive portfolio offering an array of **environmental monitors** in addition to temperature, including differential pressure and temperature humidity sensors that can assist in the care and treatment of critical patients. In addition, the OneVue platform offers **synchronized time** and **mass communications** solutions to keep everyone in your facility safe, in sync and informed, especially in critical situations.

As Primex continues to invest in product research and emerging technologies to improve efficiency, eliminate distractions, and provide a comprehensive data trail to help facilities meet compliance requirements, we are looking to strengthen our strategic alliances.

Join us on our journey!

ClearOne

Get Trained, Earn AVIXA Units

Master ClearOne products with ClearOne Certification Training Webinars - AND get AVIXA CTS, CTS-D, CTS-I credits at the same time! Get ahead of the pack and stay on top of through in 2021!

Sign up for these 2 instructor-led webinars:

- Pro Audio Certification - In-depth training for design, configuration, and implementation of ClearOne's Pro Audio Conferencing solutions—including the CONVERGE Pro 2 platform and the new BMA 360. **SIGN UP NOW!**
- Pro AV Certification- In-depth training for design, configuration, and implementation of ClearOne's Audio Video Conferencing solutions—including the COLLABORATE® Versa™ Series product portfolio. **SIGN UP NOW!**

Jeron

Inside Jeron's Nurse Call Systems

Jeron Electronic Systems, Inc. has Nurse Call alerting and communication systems ready to ship throughout North America including Canada.

Isolation Room Communications

For staff-to-patient communications in isolation, the new isolation station provides direct communication without needing to enter the patient's room. From outside of the room, staff can communicate directly with their patient inside the room; saving gowning up time and the cost of PPE.

Healthcare facilities are welcome to virtually visit Jeron's Provider Technology Center, where they can experience the best-in-class technology of Provider Nurse Call solutions. To request a virtual presentation visit [here](#).



Cleerline SSF

Major Savings with Cleerline SSF™ Fiber Optic Technology

Some installation conditions are more challenging than others. In a new case study from Cleerline SSF™, learn how Security 101 was able to overcome an adverse environment and gain major savings in time and labor by using Cleerline SSF™ fiber optic cable.

For the project, Security 101 was tasked with upgrading analog cameras to IP cameras within a 10-block housing authority. Sending PoE over the longest distance required fiber optic cable, which can easily handle high bandwidth over extended spans.

Security 101 chose to install Cleerline SSF™ fiber. Cleerline SSF™ fiber's unique construction makes it stronger and easier to handle than traditional fibers. These qualities were vital for this installation, which featured what Security 101 Lead Technician Frank Boutot called "... the worst conditions I've ever pulled cable in."

The cable they chose, SSF™ Rugged Micro Distribution, was able to withstand the less-than-delicate handling necessitated by the conditions. Most importantly, Security 101 was also able to easily terminate the Cleerline cable onsite rather than call in a fiber-specific contractor.

Installation Details:

- Project: Replace analog cameras with IP cameras
- Challenge: Extend PoE
- Fiber Type: Cleerline SSF™ Single Mode Rugged Micro Distribution

All in all, using Cleerline SSF™ translated into a **50% savings in time and labor**. Frank Boutot noted, "We are now independent of fiber terminators. We don't have to worry about that anymore. We just do it ourselves, simple."

Read the full case study [here](#).

Daktronics

Daktronics offers 'No Pay for 90 Days' Financing Program

Daktronics US-made direct-view LED solutions transform any blank wall space into an engaging and informative digital platform. With historically low interest rates, deferred payment options and affordable monthly payment plans, there's never been a better time to invest in digital signage. Take control of your audio visual integration project and let direct-view LED signage enhance your customer's experience.

With our program, payments start 90 days after the display is fully installed and operational.

Learn more about financing [here](#).

Learn more about Daktronics direct-view LED solutions [here](#).

Biamp

Biamp Announces New Products and Bundles

Recently Biamp announced a plethora of new products, covering a wide gamut of applications.

TesiraFORTÉ X Series: Next generation conferencing DSPs that combine the functionality of an existing TesiraFORTÉ with the capabilities of TesiraCONNECT TC-5D and Tesira EX-UBT.

Devio SCX Series: Advanced conferencing hubs that bring the simplicity and speed of Devio to larger meeting spaces.

Qt X Series: Sound masking processors that support both direct-field and in-plenum functionality.

NPX Series: Convenience paging stations for use in Qt X and Tesira systems.

Desono EX Series: Premium performance indoor/outdoor surface mount loudspeakers.

Get more information.



Premier Mounts

Two Market Leaders Join Forces, Create Even Stronger Presence

Exciting and major changes are happening at Premier Mounts, a leader of superior mounting solutions in the audiovisual industry for more than 45 years. The Corona, California based company has been acquired by Gamber-Johnson, a supplier of equally high-quality rugged mounting systems for fleet vehicles, public safety vehicles, forklifts, semi-trucks and other mobility applications.

The additional resources and industry knowledge from Gamber-Johnson will move to strengthen and expand new opportunities even further for Premier Mounts industry leading static mounting solutions. Premier Mounts will become a Gamber-Johnson brand with its main office functions remaining in Southern California, operating as one of Gamber-Johnson's Quick Response Office Cells which is part of Gamber-Johnson's responsive organizational structure promoting quick decision making and responsive customer service. Manufacturing, warehousing, and corporate oversight will occur at a newly renovated manufacturing space in Central Wisconsin.

What does this mean for you? The acquisition will spark further growth and take Premier Mounts product design and quality, innovation and ease of install to the next level. Premier Mounts will be able to deliver products to existing and future customers much faster for both stock and custom projects while still delivering the same high-quality products you have come to expect. Our goal is to save you more time and money when using Premier and make buying a mount easier than ever before.

premiermounts.com

Dynacord

Step Into the SONICUE Ecosystem

From fully customizable **SONICUE sound system software** to the 96 kHz resolution offered by the new **MXE5 matrix mix engine** and **IPX series amplifiers**, Dynacord's SONICUE software/hardware ecosystem provides a unique combination of features for the highest audio quality, energy efficiency and system protection.

- Superior SNR and THD specifications, and the industry's lowest latency
- Power density options of up to **20 kW from a single amplifier**
- **OMNEO IP architecture**, incorporating Dante audio, AES70 control and more
- **Eco Rail technology** – a patent-pending technology which can reduce power consumption by up to 50 percent
- **Ghost Power** – problem-solving audio technology for power outages
- **Variable Load Drive (VLD)** – patented technology offers flexibility both for low- and high-impedance applications, with parallel and parallel/bridged power drive modes
- SONICUE provides an API, supports Crestron® integration and interoperability with the Q-SYS™ platform
- **NEW – SONICUE 1.2** with system logic allows easy creation of advanced tasks for comprehensive system supervision, monitoring and control
- **NEW – Presets for loudspeakers from leading third-party manufacturers** – engineered by Dynacord to reproduce the original manufacturer settings, field-tested by professionals to verify accuracy

dynacord.com

HELLO NSCA SOLUTION PROVIDERS!

Hello NSCA Solution Providers! Want to communicate directly with NSCA member companies or optimize your platform? Contact NSCA Channel Partner Manager Max Johnson at mjohnson@nsca.org or **319.861.8629**.



Da-Lite

Maximizing Multipurpose Spaces: Optimize Building Spaces for AV Performance

Looking for inspiration to convert underutilized building spaces to accommodate large groups for events such as town hall, staff or team meetings? These spaces are rapidly being optimized for AV performance to play larger roles for gathering areas. This aids in social distancing practices and helps to keep people safe. Large projection screens – portable and permanent installations – allow visual content to be viewed from anywhere in the room while ensuring a great AV experience for all.



For K-12 venues such as libraries or cafeteriums, portable screens can be deployed quickly for easy setup and teardown. See our **Fast-Fold Deluxe** and **Heavy Duty Fast-Fold Deluxe** Screen Systems. Or maybe you'd rather a screen that's concealed in the ceiling when not in use, such as the **Tensioned Advantage Screen Series**. For universities, student unions and atriums can be used for displaying information in large scale. In addition to portable solutions and traditional ceiling recessed projection screens, perhaps the goal is to preserve the architectural detail and elegance in a space. The **Wireline Advantage Electric Screen Series** is designed for large venues and uses thin steel cables up to 29' to lower to the screen to an appropriate viewing height.

Choosing the product is only part of the equation. Get the most out of your projector with high-resolution surfaces that feature a smooth surface free of microscopic peaks and valleys. This ensures every pixel of 4K, 8K and even 16K resolution (yeah, we're ready for that!) remain completely intact and visible to the viewer.

For more ideas, all our favorite product and screen surface pairings can be found **here**.



VISIT [SHURE.COM/EDUCATION](https://www.shure.com/education) TO LEARN MORE

Preparing for **UNEXPECTED WORKPLACE EVENTS**

We've all had experience with unexpected change over the past year. Here are four distinct scenarios—and how you can prepare your business to navigate change successfully.

By Dannie Diego, Insperity

Change is inevitable. And managing workplace change is an everyday responsibility for business owners and managers.

Sometimes change is predictable or planned well in advance, such as moving to a new office, staff reorganization, or a change in senior leadership.

But what about those times when change catches you by surprise—and not in a good way? How can you anticipate the unknown and protect your team, your budget, your business, and your clients?

Change may be inevitable, but the damage inflicted by unexpected events doesn't have to be.

As challenging as it can be to prepare for life's "what ifs," the cost of failing to anticipate and manage change can be high. Without a plan for managing unexpected change in your workplace, crises can turn into catastrophes. The results can be dire:

- Revenue loss up to bankruptcy
- Diminished reputation or relationship with employees or customers
- Inability to maintain regular operations

Change may be inevitable, but the damage inflicted by unexpected events doesn't have to be. Here are four distinct scenarios of unexpected change—and how you can prepare your business to navigate them successfully.

1. Office Damage

When events such as fire, floods, tornados, hail, or acts of property vandalism happen, the damage left behind can bring your business to a screeching halt.

Before disaster strikes, develop a disaster-readiness plan that addresses these critical points:

- Emergency preparedness (notification systems, evacuation routes, meeting points, safety protocols, and designated leaders)
- Facilitation of employees' temporary working arrangements
- Communication with employees and customers about the status of your business

Natural disasters and criminal property damage can be financially crippling; keeping your insurance up to date can help you rebuild your office with minimal financial stress and disruption to regular operations.

A "business interruption" add-on to your insurance policy may be able to reimburse you for lost income. This could be the difference between staying in business or facing bankruptcy.

2. Loss of Key Client

Losing a valued client—especially when it's to work with a competitor—can be devastating. Here's how you can work to prevent this:

- Coach your team members to deliver outstanding customer service.
- Maintain strong relationships with clients. Let them know how appreciated and valued they are.
- Network continually with new prospective clients.

Business relationships naturally evolve over time and nothing is permanent. Sometimes things happen due to circumstances beyond your control.

But, if you become complacent with your existing client roster, you'll be in trouble when change inevitably happens. Always be on the lookout for new opportunities so the financial health of your business isn't dependent on a few clients.

3. Data Breach or Cybersecurity Issue

Cybercrime is an increasingly common issue for businesses of all sizes—not just large corporations. How do you protect the employee and customer while safeguarding valuable intellectual property?

Think of all the sensitive information your business has—from Social Security numbers to credit card information and trademarked or patented products. If this sensitive information fell into the wrong hands, then it could expose your business to significant liability and potential financial losses. It can also do lasting harm to your brand identity and reputation.

It's helpful to develop a data protection policy not only to minimize risks, but also to serve as a guide on what to do if a data breach occurs. Also, consider hiring an IT consultant who can assess your systems and, if necessary, enhance your security barriers and protocols.

You can also secure cyber liability insurance in the event you are sued, are penalized, or lose business due to cyber crime.


4. Change in Laws or Regulations

As difficult as it may be to keep up with a complex, ever-evolving legal landscape, governments have the power to completely upend how you do business.

Legislative and regulatory changes are typically months in the making. But, if you're busy running a business, it can be challenging to maintain awareness about in-progress federal or state legislation. This task becomes even more complex and time consuming if you do business in multiple cities or states.

Try to stay well-versed in the latest employment and labor laws and regulations impacting your business. You may want to connect with experts in areas of potential change and consider hiring a lobbying firm to advocate on your behalf for favorable legislative outcomes. Having a team around you that shares your mission and vision may make you feel much less alone when change comes calling.

Summing It Up

There are endless unforeseen hazards that could impact your business. While it's impossible to plan for every scenario, there are steps you can take to lessen the impact of sudden change. 

Dannie Diego is a senior strategic alliances manager with Insperty, a trusted advisor to America's best businesses for more than 34 years. Insperty is an NSCA Business Accelerator.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Need a helping hand as you navigate HR concerns in these chaotic times? Contact Insperty at alliance@insperty.com to connect with a Business Performance Advisor or visit insperty.com/nsca for more information.



The Post-Pandemic Role of Integrators

Not all products that proliferated during COVID-19 are here to stay. Integrators will play a large role in helping determine true necessities for safe spaces.

By Matt Barnette

Many of us imagined that, by early 2021, life would be back to normal, and we would be living in post-COVID-19 times. But, as time has passed, we have become more trepidatious about *when* we will return to spaces and gatherings. Though we must be cautious with our estimates, there is light at the end of the tunnel. We will be returning to congregated settings eventually. Likewise, many end-users have seen short-term needs arise to secure spaces during this transitional period.

Once we are past the worst of the pandemic, things probably won't go back to "normal" as we used to know them. Offices, restaurants, hotels, and event venues will have to make changes that last far beyond COVID-19. End-users are already coming to PSA and USAV integrators to ask about technologies to secure buildings for a post-pandemic return of patrons and workers.

Abe Schwab with Care Security Systems notes that his team has seen business pick up for cameras being used in new ways: COVID-19 wards in hospitals to limit human contact, contact tracing based on video footage, and measuring capacity of spaces. Other PSA integrators have increased security for end-users who now have buildings sitting vacant—such as schools and offices—due to stay-at-home orders.

How Integrators Are Pivoting

Security and AV integrators are seeing more overlap than ever before. Imagine this scenario: A person walks into an office in New York City and the RFID card in his pocket allows entry and access to turnstiles without touching anything. He is thermal scanned for temperature and waits for the green light to be admitted. Once cleared, he looks at the digital sign to view current capacity on each floor. Upon entering the space, he sees another digital sign with data about air quality, capacity, etc. This use of security and AV helps with comfort levels when returning to public spaces.

Even furniture is an important consideration. Among other new business opportunities caused by the pandemic, Red Thread has already taken on projects to install Steelcase products that help with social distancing. Jay Kowalsky of Red Thread commented that he never thought he would be tasked with worrying about air quality, but this is an important new consideration in securing spaces and putting minds at ease.

On a recent USAV townhall, integrators shared a new demand for ultraviolet products for sanitization, QR codes for contactless check-in, HEPA filters, and more, as well as video capabilities to display information about safety and cleanliness to offer peace of mind.



Not all products that proliferated during COVID-19 are here to stay. Integrators will play a large role in helping determine true necessities for safe spaces.

Not all products that proliferated during COVID-19 are here to stay, though; integrators will play a large role in helping determine true necessities for safe spaces. PSA added many pandemic-related offerings to the line card over the last year. Aside from thermal cameras, the reality is that many haven't sold the way we anticipated they might.

Very few PSA integrators tried to actively market pandemic-related offerings. Those that did pursue new products typically did so due based on end-user demand. Some integrators explain that, instead of chasing trendy products that materialized in the past year, they are doubling down on traditional business offerings.

Ultimately, adaptability is the top attribute of PSA and USAV integrators that are seeing the most success in this new environment. End-users call for fewer truck rolls and stepped-up health and safety checks for technicians who must be onsite.

Some who previously shunned cloud-based technologies are now giving them more serious consideration. Whether it be in the form of shifting offerings or the ways in which integrators conduct business, be sure you're prepared with necessary changes for success in this new normal. 🔥

*Matt Barnette is CEO of PSA Security Network.
Learn more at psasecurity.com.*

WANT MORE?

PSA TEC 2021 is virtual and live on May 3-6 in Denver.
Learn more at psatec.com.



Too Many Business Owners

Make This Mistake

Business owners think they're doing the right thing ... but, by making this critical mistake, they're killing their business valuation. Here's how to fix it. *By Zack Gibson*

Most owners we talk to would do *anything* for their business, but it rarely occurs to them that their willingness to do so is drastically killing their company's valuation.

Hundreds of middle-market companies (many which are NSCA members) have completed **CoPilot**, our online market readiness assessment, and learned quite a bit about common business valuation and marketability risks.

In addition, during COVID-19, we developed a buyer survey (for private equity investors and strategic buyers) to assess which business risks were of most concern.

Here's what we uncovered:

The No. 1 company risk (reflected in over 95% of CoPilot assessments) is that **the business is too dependent on the owner**. This risk manifests itself in the owner being too involved in sales or operations, having too heavy a hand in customer or vendor relationships, or simply not having a deep enough bench of management talent.

From buyers, we found that dependence on an owner is also one of the most common risks identified as one that would limit their interest in acquiring a company or significantly impact their view on valuation.

Is Your Business at Risk?

How Dependent is Your Business on You?

Answer “yes” or “no” to these questions to find out...

1. Do you spend more than 40 hours per week on the business?
2. If you left the business and did not check in for six months, would the business be worse off?
3. Would your management team be challenged to operate the daily operations of the business without your involvement?
4. If you left the business, would your top five customers pause to find out who they would be dealing with or terminate their relationship with the company?

If you answered “yes” to one or more of these questions, then your business may be too dependent on you as an owner.

Why is Owner Dependence So Prevalent?

First, within small companies, the owner is going to be deeply involved in almost every aspect of the business.

This is driven by necessity in some cases (can't afford additional management personnel) and/or by owner preference (the owner believes that no one could do a particular task as well as he or she does). Second, until a business matures to a certain level, it is probably not realistic to expect the owner to extract themselves from the business in a meaningful way.

Most investors will feel understandable trepidation about writing a big check to acquire a company if the departing owner is intimately involved with the current operations of the business.

Why is Owner Dependence a Risk Factor?

We have asked many **past clients** why owner dependence is a risk factor. The No. 1 regret they have after going through the selling process is that they didn't hire their key management team sooner.

These business owners have learned how valuable good management talent can be for a growing business, and they learned how much better their lives could be if they could simply delegate tasks that they did not necessarily enjoy, were not very good at, or were distracting them from adding value to the business in more meaningful ways.

Most investors feel understandable trepidation about writing a big check to acquire a company if the departing owner is intimately involved with the current operations of the business. After all, they are investing in the future earnings of the company—if one of the most important drivers behind the earnings, company culture, and business growth departs the business, an investor is likely to view the business as significantly less valuable.

Furthermore, owner dependence places a ceiling on scalability and growth. These businesses will struggle to create advancement opportunities for talented employees, and the single point of failure will place a governor on the rate at which the business can expand and create incremental value.

How to Fix It

Given that this risk is so prevalent and is of such concern to acquirers, how can you proactively address it?

1. **Identify Current Dependency:** We have an exercise we use with clients called the 80/20 Rule where we ask owners to track where they spend their time on a daily basis, and then identify activities that are most impactful for the business and where they have a comparative advantage. We have found this exercise to be incredibly illuminating to help a business owner better understand where they *actually* spend their time and identify tasks that are easily delegable to others who are likely able to do them better than the owner.
2. **Develop a Hiring Plan:** Next, we develop a recruiting and hiring plan for key members of the management team. Even though the owner might not execute on this plan immediately, giving thought to what skills, experiences, cultural attributes, and other elements will be critical to these hires will help owners start to identify potential candidates when the hire becomes financially feasible.
3. **Determine ROI:** Finally, we work with the owner to understand what these new hires will mean financially for the business. Yes, they will require some initial investment but, if done right, they will also enable faster growth and give the owner more time to spend on the things he or she enjoys (whether that's more time on innovation, strategic initiatives, or simply more time with friends and family).

If you currently have a management team and answered “yes” to one or more of the questions above, then one good way to begin making your business less dependent on you is to spend fewer hours at the office (COVID-19 may have provided a head start here!).

Begin slowly by not working evenings or weekends, and, unless there is an urgent matter, do not reply immediately during off-hours if employees call or email. Have the conversation with each manager and discuss your plan. Empower them to promote themselves to the leaders you need them to be (and be understanding when mistakes are made as people learn). Once they get the plan, your top managers will start making more decisions independently.

The risk of a business being too dependent on the owner is very common, but an intentional plan can help you mitigate problems early to enable fast growth, more value creation, and a better life for you as an owner. 📌

As an executive VP of Class VI Partners, Zack Gibson focuses on the sale or financing of mid-market clients across a broad range of industries. He has worked with over 50 clients on transactions at Class VI and has experience managing and supporting a variety of client engagements, including pre-transaction preparedness services, majority and minority recapitalizations, leveraged and management buyouts, strategic acquisitions, and capital formation transactions.

TEST-DRIVE COPILOT

NSCA members can try Class VI's online market readiness assessment: the CoPilot program. [Learn more here.](#)



Why the SolarWinds Breach Hits Close to Home



By Rob Simopoulos

The high-profile SolarWinds hack is particularly relevant to NSCA members because it reminds us how cyber incidents can impact systems integrators and customers

It's still too early to know all the details of the **SolarWinds hack**, but what's been reported so far is that adversaries gained access to the company's development environment and altered Orion software code with the goal of providing a back door into the software users' systems.

By changing the code in this software (Orion), it has been estimated that thousands of users may have been targeted in the sophisticated supply chain attack; many may have been impacted. We will learn more as the investigation continues, but this is a strong reminder that cyberattacks are a potent and growing security threat. Adversaries are becoming more sophisticated in order to achieve their goals.

This attack showcases that cyber incidents don't impact only the company experiencing the breach—they have a **one-to-many impact** affecting vendors, customers, and partners. It's with this one-to-many scenario that you must remember: You have a need and responsibility to protect yourself with the ultimate goal of protecting other businesses as well.

Why Cybercriminals Could Target Integrators

What a systems integration firm does as a business is incredible: Connecting and integrating numerous disparate systems to achieve harmonious technology. But with this type of work comes significant cyber risk. We can't ignore the fact that integrators are a prime target for cyber criminals.

Integrators have a unique level of authorized access, which makes them prime targets for cybercriminals.

After the breach at SolarWinds, the entire world is looking at other firms and wondering how easily it could happen to them. We must view the systems integration industry in the same way.

Integrators have a unique level of authorized access, which makes you prime targets for cybercriminals:

- Systems integrators store sensitive information about their clients, including network topology and device layout diagrams, device passwords, floor plans to facilities, and MAC and IP addresses.
- With the growth of managed services, remote access to customer networks and systems has become commonplace. This practice makes managed service providers a target of cybersecurity adversaries; gaining access to remote management tools can give them a pivot point to many other organizations.
- Computers are the technician's tool of the trade; they move them between customer networks, plugging them in to program systems and devices. During a normal workday, a service technician could plug in to many different customer networks using the same computer, potentially putting each organization at risk if that device is infected.
- Many customer engagements are on a project basis, brought in and organized through general contractors. Once the technology is deployed, the integrator has no further responsibility. This quite often leaves systems unpatched and unmaintained in the customer's environment, potentially leaving vulnerable devices running and holes for attacks to occur.
- Systems integration projects come with high-dollar value, which makes them a target for business email compromise. Cybercriminals work to gain access to the finance person's email and, once accessed, the attacker can launch payment change requests toward their customers (and potentially have payments sent to them rather than to the integrator). With payment terms starting at 30 days, there is a lengthy time between these changes and collections processes, which can allow the criminal to be successful in their exploit without detection until much later.

These unique practices make you a tempting target for cybercriminals, especially knowing that a breach of one company (a systems integrator) could impact many others (customers, partners, and/or vendors).

Cybersecurity for Systems Integrators Requires Industry Evolution


The systems integration industry is amazing! I started in the industry at the age of 18 and have been part of it ever since, starting with analog systems and witnessing the change to digital and intelligent systems.

It's an industry that constantly improves, and I've seen how those who move *with* the advancements reap the benefits while those who do not are often left behind.

In my opinion, cybersecurity is the next step in the process of continuous improvement. It's the next essential digital pivot that systems integrators need to make. It's not a matter of consideration (to do it or not to do it), but a matter of evolving with the industry.

It's happening right here ... right now:

- Your customers have begun to select integrators based on cybersecurity posture.
- Vendor reviews and assessments now include a cybersecurity vetting process as a customer assesses to ensure providers have proper cybersecurity controls in place to protect them.
- Not advancing your cybersecurity posture will leave you failing these reviews and ultimately not winning the customer.
- Companies with strong cybersecurity posture and practices will enjoy growth; the others who don't make improvements will fade away.

Your customer provides you great power as they provide you with authorized access to their systems and information. Along with that privilege comes great responsibility: responsibility to do what's right and work to protect that privilege. Organizations will always be breached, even some with advanced cybersecurity controls in place. But, in a concerted effort, integrators can make it more difficult for adversaries to use the industry we know and love as a gateway into their trusting customers' systems. 

Rob Simopoulos is cofounder of Defendify, an NSCA Business Accelerator that provides cybersecurity consultation and solutions.

WANT MORE?

Defendify offers NSCA members the Defendify Essentials Package: 3 free cybersecurity tools to help you know where you stand, where you might have gaps, and what's going on. [Learn more here.](#)

DEFENDIFY

“My husband and I are avid travelers, whether it’s wanting to see more of the world or feeding our scuba diving addiction in places such as Bonaire or Maui.”

—Amy Blackburn, Mood Media



Meet an NSCA Community Member

Amy Blackburn

Director of U.S. Channel Sales Development
Mood Media
Frankfort, KY

Twitter and/or Instagram Handle:
@theamyblackburn

Q: Describe the unique capabilities or perspective you bring to your role.

This was a new role Mood created, and I feel it is a great fit for me. I’m able to bring my experience from an equipment standpoint, but I also specialize in experiential services (recurring billing) that bring our clients’ businesses to life, including digital signage, music, messaging, and scent. Having worked 13+ years for a small, family-owned AV company with success—and now almost two years with Mood, a global company—I’ve partnered with clients of various sizes. Are we designing a single business or an enterprise level account with equipment and all the services to create a complete experience?

LEARN MORE

Find more NSCA member profiles at [NSCA.org](https://www.nscas.org)

Always remember that people, including your client base, are your biggest asset. Hire slow and fire fast.

Q: What do you like about the integration market?

I love how integration connects the world through senses across all market segments. It brings our world to life. When implemented correctly, integration helps create the most remarkable experiences: facilitating learning, allowing people to make new connections, removing distance barriers, creating lasting memories, and so much more. Simply put, it helps connect people to others and to the world around them. I love the fact it's constantly evolving and improving in its delivery.

Q: What challenges exist for companies in the integration market?

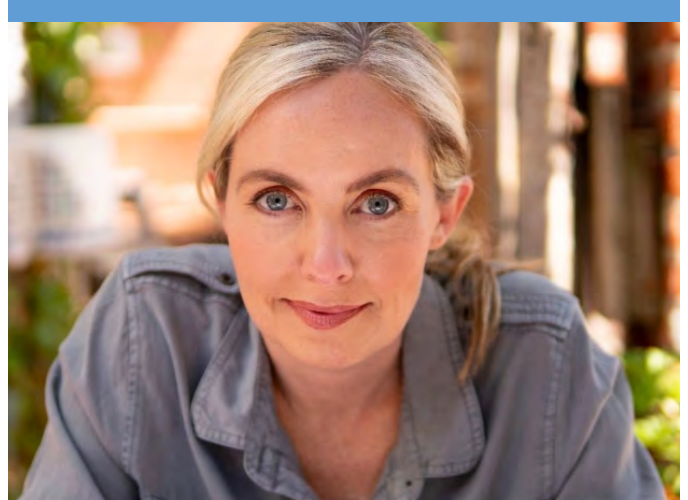
The pandemic drastically changed our world. Sales strategy for many has been turned upside down. For example, if you were dominant in the restaurant market, then you may be struggling unless you also served other markets or were able to easily adapt your offerings to fit consumers' new needs. Companies that had financial instability or low sales prior to the pandemic are likely finding it difficult to survive. Companies that were healthy and used to pivoting are likely struggling—but surviving. Offer quality, relevant products and great service consistently; you'll always win.

Q: What do you value about being an NSCA member?

NSCA has been a consistent resource for our everchanging world. Whether it's increasing my education in our industry, building my network of allies, or staying up to date on what's new in our world, NSCA is a single source for in-depth information covering everything I need. They're constantly setting the standard for what partnership means in this business.

Q: Which NSCA resource do you find most valuable and why?

Just one? We wouldn't have any of the valuable resources without the amazing people who keep this great organization going and those who contribute to it. The people alone make the NSCA experience exceptional. I've met amazing people who have been very influential in my success. The resources shared, connections made, and opportunities created have been invaluable. What I have learned from the people I've met has positively influenced my career and will continue to impact my future. Beyond the professional networking, this community has created an unbelievable wealth of online resources available to members. It's those online resources that really helped me shape my business plan when I worked in the affiliate world.



Q: If you could give one piece of advice to your NSCA colleagues, what would that be?

Build and maintain a dynamic learning culture and surround yourself with people who aren't afraid to speak up, share honest feedback, and offer ideas. This goes for your clients as well. If you ask, then they will share what you do well and where you may have opportunities to improve. By actively seeking out internal and external feedback, you'll know what you need to do. Always remember that people, including your client base, are your biggest asset. Hire slow and fire fast. This will help you build and maintain the right culture and stay relevant.

Q: What do you love to do in your free time?

If I'm not trying to catch up on emails in my spare time, you could likely catch me streaming the latest FBI/police crime drama movie or series while on the treadmill. My husband and I are also avid travelers, whether it's wanting to see more of the world or feeding our scuba diving addiction in places such as Bonaire or Maui. We try taking a family trip with our boys at least once a year. On our last family trip, we traveled to London, where I visited our Mood London office.

Q: What's one thing about you that will surprise people who only know you professionally?

In my spare time, I've been taking classes and dabbling in acting over the last couple of years. In that time, I've been hired for a few background, supporting, and lead roles. The furthest I've traveled for a role outside of Kentucky was to New Mexico. The latest role I completed was for a training video created to teach diversity to one Kentucky county's education system. ♡



SYNNEX
VISUALSolv[™]

Exceptional Design and Support.

That's the VISUALSolv Experience.

Demand for robust, immersive experiences is driving the need for cohesive technology solutions. SYNNEX VISUALSolv unites the industry's top AV, IT, and CE technologies to build the cross-functional solutions our partners need. With comprehensive capabilities covering everything from pre-sales design to integration, installation, and post-sale support, our experience advisors enable you to expand your reach.

Ready to get started?



DIGITAL SIGNAGE

With comprehensive capabilities and industry expertise, we help our partners deliver the full solution.



PRO AV

Through a range of assessment, design, installation, training, and technical support services, our experience advisors turn complex projects into simple, marketable solutions.



PHYSICAL SECURITY

We unite the industry's top surveillance, access control, cloud, and secure network infrastructure to build the cross-functional solutions the market needs.



visualsolv@synnex.com | 800-456-4822