

# Integrate



THE OFFICIAL TRADE JOURNAL OF NSCA | WINTER 2020

## Stepping Up

The pandemic has created a myriad of new business challenges for your customers. NSCA members share insight on how they're stepping up to solve them. **PAGE 8**

**2021 Business & Leadership Conference:** Stepping Up When It Counts is the theme for the "most important BLC ever." **PAGE 18**

Call Yourself an "Integrator" **PAGE 2**

2020 Pivot to Profit: Critical Takeaways **PAGE 12**

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# We Are ‘Integrators’: How Many of Us Are There?



Many years ago, NSCA led an effort to determine how many systems contractors/integrators are in North America.

Directed by our industry advisory board and the late John Stiernberg of Stiernberg Consulting, we set out to discover how many companies work with communications, life safety, security, network infrastructure, AV, and other low-voltage technologies as defined by the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) **MasterFormat standards**, Divisions 27 and 28.

The driving force behind this effort was the U.S. Department of Labor: This data is important for the occupation classifications that serve as the foundation for prevailing wage and workers' compensation rates.

## Why “Integrator”?

Over the past few years, there has been much industry debate about what we call ourselves.

Plenty of companies define themselves as “systems integrators” or a company that performs the work of an “integrator.” The term “integrator” was recently chosen by the Connected Technologies Industry Consortium as the preferred descriptor for the company and individual performing this type of work, so “integrator” was used as the basis of our SOC filing.

Companies can choose to use a descriptor before the word “integrator” to further describe what they do:

- *Security integrator*
- *AV integrator*
- *Life safety integrator*

“Integrator” would then replace the EST designation.

## How Many Were There?

At one point, we determined that there were over 12,000 technology contracting companies (5,500 referred to themselves as systems integrators in North America). Those that didn't identify as integrators worked as a single-system provider, with fire alarm and structured cabling being the largest groups identified.

On average, these 12,000 companies had an employment level of 28 staff members. We profiled the 50 largest North American cities and discovered how many companies performed the scope of work identified by MasterFormat Divisions 27 and 28.

Then we determined that, on average, one systems integrator is required for every increase in population of 50,000.

## Sound about right?

Manufacturer reps were involved, and we did deep dives into 18 cities to prove our theory and determine accuracy. It came out surprisingly close. But that was several years ago ...

**How Many Are There Now?**

Once again, we have a need to determine how many people work in our industry. A major driver today is the fact that business opportunities are under attack by legislation aimed at limiting “low-voltage” integrators’ right to work on Power over Ethernet (PoE) systems.

We assume there are fewer companies with larger employment levels (the average is now over 40) due to the dramatic merger and acquisition activity over the last few years. But does that mean there more players than we think?

We also have a more diverse product mix, with companies crossing over into multiple disciplines. IT companies are doing huge numbers in AV and security. Fire alarm companies are doing paging and emergency communications. Should alarm monitoring companies, cable TV, and internet service providers be considered integrators? They certainly carry the same licenses or exemptions.

We still have more questions than answers. In 2021, NSCA—along with the Connected Technologies Industry Consortium—is working to change that.

*Chuck R. Wilson*

**Chuck Wilson, Executive Director**  
NSCA  
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The term “integrator” was recently chosen by the Connected Technologies Industry Consortium as the preferred descriptor for the company and individual performing work.

Integrate	IN THIS EDITION
4	State of the Industry
6	An Against-the-Odds Success Story
8	Stepping Up: Solving New Customer Challenges
12	Lessons from 2020 Pivot to Profit
14	Inside the Launch of a Network Operations Center
18	Stepping Up: 23rd Annual BLC Preview
20	On Members’ Minds
22	We Are NSCA: Kramer North America
24	We Are NSCA: PIVIUM
26	NSCA Member Updates
36	So ... All I Have to Do is Hire Subs to Be Profitable?
38	Why Leading with a Monthly Payment Provides Value in Any Economic State
40	The Escalating Value of an Integrator
42	I Am NSCA: New Era’s Chris Turner



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### State of the Industry Webinar

Jan. 20, 2021

Every year, *Commercial Integrator* and NSCA conduct a **State of the Industry Survey**, polling integrators and NSCA members about everything going on in the world of integration. This survey gives us helpful information we can use to inform you about trends, new technology, growing vertical markets, and more.

With COVID-19 still affecting the industry in various ways, the State of the Industry 2021 may be the most important to date. Many integrators have felt the effects of COVID-19, and it has certainly been a difficult time for the industry; however, we've also found integrators moving in new and exciting directions with technology to combat COVID-19 and keep business steady through the uncertainty of 2020.

Join us on Jan. 20, 2021, at 2pm EET to learn more about the survey findings and what they mean to the industry. Jonathan Blackwood, editorial director of *Commercial Integrator*, joins NSCA Executive Director Chuck Wilson and NSCA Board Member Tim Hennen, chief technology officer at IVCi, to discuss specific statistics from the survey and what they represent.

We'll discuss:

- New technology opportunities for integrators
- Metrics on revenue differences between 2019 and 2020
- The impact of COVID-19 on the integration industry, and how integrators have handled the impact
- Vertical market trends in the past year
- Managed services, employee recruitment/retainment, and much more!

Recovery from COVID-19 is on the horizon, and integrators are poised to be at the center of evolving workplace technology, installing communication and collaboration solutions and ensuring that they work for your customers' specific needs.

**Take the survey now!**  
**Register for the webinar now**

### Integrators: Enter 2021 Stepping Up Awards

We have a *great* opportunity for integrators to share their 2021 success stories (*we know* they're out there amid all the chaos of this past year!). There are no entry fees, and winners will be recognized at the virtual Business & Leadership Conference on Feb. 24-25 – as well as featured here in *Integrate*.

Apply in one of five categories:

**Customer Experience** (finding ways to be there for customers when they need them most)

**Employee Engagement** (implementing solutions for keeping sprawling, uniquely-challenged workforces productive and positive)

**Community Outreach** (going beyond keeping the doors open and taking steps to help those in need)

**Agility** (recognizing a rapidly changing market, recognizing how to serve customers' evolving needs and adapting)

**Achievement** (against odds in a brutal market, case studies in business growth and measured success over the past year)

**Enter Now**

### Manufacturers: Enter 2021 Excellence in Product Innovation Awards

Nominations are being accepted for the 2021 Excellence in Product Innovation Awards! Any manufacturer that produces products for installation by integrators in the commercial space is eligible for this award. Industry manufacturers may nominate their own products; integrators may also submit nominations for products that have had a significant effect on installations.

One winner will be named in each of the following categories, along with one overall Grand Prize Winner:

1. Ease of Customization
2. New Revenue Potential
3. Recurring Revenue Potential
4. Retrofit/Installer-Friendly
5. Technology Platform
6. Trail-Blazing Innovation

Entries are being accepted through **Jan. 15, 2021**. Winners will be announced during NSCA's virtual Business & Leadership Conference on Feb. 24-25!

**Enter Now**

**PLUS ...**

**23rd Annual Business & Leadership Conference** – see page 18 to learn more.  
**UPDATED Financial Analysis of the Industry Report** – coming soon

# Do Prospective Candidates Want to Work for You?

As the industry reboots, many integration companies will be hiring in 2021. It's time to look at the benefits you're offering to see if they attract top candidates.

The job market in 2020 wasn't exactly robust – inside or outside the integration industry. Most integration companies we talk to are focused on repositioning for success in the coming year. This likely means expanding workforces, even though many integrators experienced workforce reductions in 2020.

Put yourself in the shoes of the prospect. You obviously want to hire the candidate who can make the most positive impact on your organization, so it's important

to sell your company to those individuals. Is your company culture the right fit? Will you provide opportunities for training and advancement? These are important considerations for desirable job candidates.

Another obvious factor is compensation and benefits. In a competitive job market, you need to make sure you're offering compelling packages to employees. Otherwise, you'll be disadvantaged when it comes to landing top talent. NSCA's recent Compensation & Benefits Report comes in particularly handy as you prepare to amp up your talent in 2021. 🔥



## Are Your Benefits Competitive?

BENEFIT	AVAILABLE TO ALL/ SOME FT EMPLOYEES	AVAILABLE TO ALL/ SOME PT EMPLOYEES
Health Insurance	84.7%	10.0%
Dental Insurance	76.1%	8.6%
Life Insurance	69.0%	8.6%
Vision Plan	69.3%	7.6%
Short-Term Disability	63.6%	8.1%
Long-Term Disability	61.6%	7.6%
Annual Bonus (Non-Sales)	74.1%	10.8%
Sign-On Bonus	20.3%	2.5%
Retirement Plan/Pension (Any Type)	72.7%	14.8%

| Source: Compensation & Benefits Report

## READ THE FULL REPORT

The NSCA Compensation & Benefits Report is free for NSCA members to download. For more information about the report, or to join NSCA, visit [www.nasca.org](http://www.nasca.org) or call 800.446.NSCA.



# Faces in the NSCA Community: **Joe Perez**

By emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in your hiring and company culture, you're more likely to benefit from great contributors and leaders like ClearTech Media CTO Joe Perez.



*Joe Perez, CTO of ClearTech, is an NSCA Ignite 2.0 Committee member.*

## **W**hat does it take to make it in this industry? Grit? Determination? Creativity?

Joe Perez had all those qualities as he progressed in his career, but it was simple curiosity that fueled his entry to the technology industry. "I spent a lot of time as a teenager taking apart cassette players and ColecoVision consoles," he says. "I didn't think of myself as particularly tech savvy. I just wanted to understand how things worked."



*ClearTech's Christina DeBono and Joe Perez take pride in their diverse, female-led integration company.*

Despite a lack of formal technology training (he focused on Art Studies at LA Mission College), that spirit of discovery led to his first professional position in 1995 with an entertainment technology company that developed 3D simulation rides for amusement parks.

It was an eye-opening experience. "What I discovered — back in the technological dark ages — is that this company didn't want much more from me than manual labor. They actually had me pushing buggies around a mocked-up warehouse, moving them up and down to create the simulation."

Perez eventually transitioned to a technician role, but his ambitions grew much faster than the advancement opportunities offered by his employer. "Was it because I didn't have formal technology training? Was it because I was a minority?" he asks. "All I knew for sure was that it was time to move on."

His next position — at a new Burbank, CA, branch of a large AV company that served the entertainment industry — marked formal entry to the audiovisual sector, but it wasn't an easy beginning. Turmoil in the managerial ranks led to a revolving door of bosses. Amid the chaos, he became acting technical services director with the enthusiastic support of his coworkers. Not long after he took charge, the company shuttered its doors.

So he continued to work for other technology companies, but nothing quite felt right. "I wondered if I was disadvantaged as a minority. I certainly felt unable to compete on an even playing field with people who had family or business connections with my employers. Occasionally, I was even tempted to leave the industry. But I loved technology and wanted to stick with it."



**“I wondered if I was disadvantaged as a minority. I certainly felt unable to compete on an even playing field with people who had family or business connections with my employers. Occasionally, I was even tempted to leave the industry.”**

—Joe Perez, ClearTech Media

## 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) in 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 make DEI part of your company DNA—and why it's essential for your business—during a **23rd annual Business & Leadership Conference keynote**

He knew he was more than a skilled laborer; Perez wanted to lead. “My greatest job satisfaction up until then had come from situations where I was able to guide others, develop strategies, and grow the business. I had the ability to not only understand technical details, but also see the big picture.”

He started his own business as a technology consultant — and then fate provided a nudge. While running his consulting company, he ran into former coworker Christina De Bono. She, too, had started her own company and needed help strengthening its technical services. A conversation or two later, she offered him a one-year consulting job to build a technical department team.

The moment his one-year contract expired, Perez and De Bono teamed up as equity partners. He became director of technical services for ClearTech, where he now serves as chief technology officer.

ClearTech offers the opportunity to not only be part of something, but also build it from scratch: a company that lets them exercise their talents to the fullest while creating a culture that rewards passion, vision, and hard work, whether you're an admin or engineer. Background isn't a hindrance to advancement.

Perez still faces challenges — and expects that to continue. “A woman- and minority-led company will definitely be at a disadvantage in certain situations,” he says, “but I truly believe I'll start to see less of it because I'm beginning to see things change. In fact, we're creating that change ourselves.”

Learn more: [IgniteYourCareer.org](https://igniteyourcareer.org) 

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# Potential Responses to Emerging Customer Challenges

**NSCA members share insight on customers' newly evolving challenges — and how you can help solve them**

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has recalibrated many customers' priorities when it comes to their technology needs. In other words: They face new challenges. Which means integrators need new ways to solve them.

We reached out to several integration firms to gather insight on the challenges customers are experiencing ... and how their own businesses are reacting.



## Customer Challenge: Space Configuration and Social Distancing

Prior to COVID-19, you couldn't take 10 steps through an industry tradeshow floor without seeing huddle room solutions focused on small-group meetings. Those days are gone. It's no longer about huddling; it's about social distancing.

This challenge extends beyond corporate meeting rooms, impacting every type of customer. For example: Marijuana shops don't have space to allow enough customers inside, leading to outside lines, points out SIGNET Electronics Senior Client Executive Becky Rogers. She says the same goes for long-term medical care facilities as they struggle to restrict access to patients while adhering to fire code.

### Potential Solution: Capacity Counting

Rogers suggests capacity-counting technology to ensure compliance with occupancy levels and maintain social distances.

It's no longer about huddling;  
it's about social distancing.



## Customer Challenge: Cohesive Collaboration

Organizations that shifted into work-from-home (WFH) structures can communicate and collaborate via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other platforms; however, that doesn't mean they can communicate and collaborate well enough to create cohesiveness to live up to their standards.

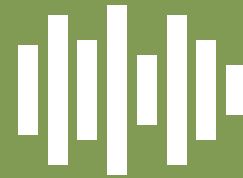
For example: New Era Technology has a prominent customer that develops accredited license examinations for the medical field. During the pandemic, it ran into roadblocks as the company developed and distributed its testing material, explains New Era Technology Account Executive Rich Diperstein. With employees working from home, the normal dynamic of working together in a collaborative space is out the window. They can't hold typical onsite meetings with various medical experts to aid in the exam development. Plus, it's hard to distribute the exams because its platform is compromised due to the pandemic.

### Potential Solution: Conferencing and Collaboration Tools

The customer's current conferencing solution is cumbersome and difficult to navigate, especially by employees who aren't familiar with using this type of service, Diperstein explains. New Era is working with its customer on better-suited conferencing and collaboration solutions.

Some meetings and events still require onsite interaction, of course, so New Era is reworking the current AV systems in large meeting rooms to accommodate smaller groups of people who can spread out to maintain social distancing. Although the spaces will incorporate touchless interactivity and wireless video conferencing, new challenges emerge when users are so spread out. Diperstein says the rooms are being upgraded with ceiling microphones in a mix-minus configuration to offer voice lift. "This enables users to hear each other at a comfortable speaking volume."

Reworking current AV systems  
in large meeting rooms  
to accommodate smaller groups.



## Customer Challenge: Onsite Communication

Remember when you would walk into an office and be pleasantly surprised when the company had a digital sign to welcome you and let you know which conference room to use? Now, with the need to keep people appropriately spaced out and remind them of health protocols, digital signage takes on a more critical role.

### Potential Solution: Using Digital Signage in New Ways

"We're seeing customers leverage digital signage for communication purposes," says IVCi CTO Timothy Hennen. He describes an elevator display that promotes health and safety but with company culture flair. It reminds employees to wash their hands, wear a mask, and stay home if they're sick. It also includes messaging about keeping workspaces clean and upcoming cleaning schedules. "We deployed this digital signage solution a few years ago and set it up to update their content to leverage messaging they need to support their business," he says. "This is a good example of a responsible digital signage solution and a customer who leverages their technology properly."

Digital signage takes on a  
more critical role for many customers.

WASH YOUR HANDS

### Customer Challenge: Unwillingness to Work with Contractors

Right now, many customers don't want anyone physically on their property if they don't have to be there.

#### Potential Solution: Remote Services

During the pandemic, SIGNET Electronics launched its Remote Smart network operations center (NOC) and a sales/business strategy around locking almost all customers into remote service contracts. It's easier said than done (SIGNET had been working on this long before the pandemic). But it provides the company with revenue infusion and boosts customer engagement at a time when many other integrators are in a less enviable position. See page 14 for more on SIGNET's Remote Smart program.)

Some customers don't want you physically on their property.



### Customer Challenge: Safely Returning to Work

Customers are searching for solutions that allow them to feel good about safely returning to work.



### Potential Solution: Health Monitoring

Consider providing solutions for health monitoring at office entrances. Red Thread launched RapidEntry, which leverages a thermal camera with calibrator technology to screen temperatures as people enter a building.

Meanwhile, IVCI deployed several thermal cameras to allow customers to check temperatures of people entering their workspaces.


VIRALERT, an AMETEK company, offers a solution designed to identify potential coronavirus carriers by screening visitors for elevated temperatures.

In general, says IVCI's Hennen, customers struggle with creating their own return-to-work plans—and integrators can play a role in helping. "We are addressing technology, environment, stakeholders—IT, HR, reception, security, facilities—and making sure they have a solid plan," he says. This may include creating processes for self-checking, space monitoring, green-light procedures, red-light procedures, and more. "We have worked with customers to put appropriate solutions and processes in place to assure they leverage their investment to accomplish their objectives."

### Customer Challenge: Justifying Spending

Even as customers return to some sense of normalcy, many will be reeling from financial hits. Their accountants are tightening up budgets and limiting spending. In other words, your customer contact has to really want the solution to be willing to put their reputation at risk by making a budget request.

#### Potential Solution: Proving ROI

Make it easy for them to make their case. Integrators need to up their game when it comes to discussing ROI on a proposed project, says SIGNET Electronics Inc. Senior Client Executive Mark Roy. This, in turn, "will help project stakeholders provide an objective business justification case for a project's expense," he says. "Relying on subjective product or solution features and functionalities is unlikely to secure approval while this crisis continues." 



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# 2020 Pivot to Profit Virtual: Valuable Takeaways

These P2Pv sessions offered substantive next steps to help your company pivot toward a successful 2021—and you can still watch them!

Planning NSCA's 2020 Pivot to Profit Virtual (2020 P2Pv) took place during the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic. Very new business challenges for NSCA members were raw as we spent the summer developing sessions and educational content for the event, which took place in mid-September.

We consistently advised members to spend their time on revenue-generating activities, so our two-day conference had to follow our own advice: to help integrators improve revenue.

The sessions we delivered helped integrators arm themselves with strategies for 2021. If you missed out, don't worry—you can still participate. (That's the beauty of a virtual event, right?!) Visit [nsc.org/p2p](https://nsc.org/p2p) to view archived sessions.

Let's explore some of the event's biggest business takeaways:

## Finding New Opportunities with Today's Technologies

Led by NSCA's Emerging Technologies Committee, this session didn't cover pie-in-the-sky technologies. Instead, the panelists focused on currently available solutions that aren't always part of traditional integrator offerings. But maybe they should be.

### We tapped into:

- How surveillance and network data on buying habits, traffic flow, and behavior patterns can provide value to customers
- The critical importance of monitoring employee workflow and movement
- Whether integrators can incorporate machines and technology that think and crunch data like humans into their offerings
- Technologies like AI, VR, machine learning, and predictability tools

"I think the conversation helped integrators because we pushed the boundaries of the traditional integrator role," says moderator Tim Hennen, CTO of IVCi and chair of NSCA's **Emerging Technologies Committee**. "There are new opportunities specifically for integrators to break out of their traditional disciplines and be leaders for workplace technology."

Hennen challenges security integrators to look at opportunities to provide health and safety solutions by "integrating AI, occupancy tracking, and other solutions rooted in tech with feature sets that push their system's importance beyond traditional stakeholders."

He challenges AV integrators to look at the opportunity to rethink the workplace and "move beyond integrating complicated closed systems and look at how they can impact end-users' workplace experiences by leveraging IoT devices and enhanced integrations."

Watch all these on-demand sessions in their entirety to learn more. Visit [nsc.org/p2p\\_2020](https://nsc.org/p2p_2020).

**PIVOT TO PROFIT**

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## A World of Connected Devices . . . and Threats It Presents

The conversation around cybersecurity changed in 2020. The year “brought a unique market and competitive landscape that will require systems integrators to find creative ways to earn business,” points out moderator Rob Simopoulos, CEO of Defendify.

It goes without saying that, in 2020, cybersecurity is no longer an option or luxury for systems integrators, but rather a requirement in business operations. For well-equipped integrators, however, cybersecurity can also present a business opportunity.

“Sure, cybersecurity can be looked at as an expense line on the P&L, but I recommend it be utilized as a revenue-generating tool as well,” Simopoulos says. “Customers want to do business with cybersecurity-savvy integrators: ones they know will protect the sensitive data they provide and deploy cyber-hardened solutions at their facilities. Systems integrators should use their internal cybersecurity programs as market differentiators.” He adds that, by making this part of the sales process, integrators “will surely earn more business.”

## Cash is King! CFO Perspectives on Understanding Liquidity and Cash Flow in Managed Services

“We’ve always known about the importance of recurring revenue, but current times have magnified that importance,” says moderator Brad Dempsey, CEO of Solutions360. “In this session, we heard from three financial experts in our industry who have successfully built solid bases of recurring revenue.”

### He adds these key takeaways:

1. Examples of financing models for the contracts need to be built into your plan. There are plenty of options.
2. You may need new team members to create or expand your recurring portfolio.
3. Put serious consideration into how you will compensate sales staff before you roll out a plan.

## Priorities for Surviving and Thriving

As integration company leaders react to significant market changes amid COVID-19, it’s important to concentrate efforts on the right objectives. Easier said than done, right? Recognizing those objectives in the moment isn’t always easy.

This session focuses on identifying 10 priorities that integration company leaders should have as they battle through the pandemic and beyond. Panelist Laurie MacKeigan, president of Halifax, Nova Scotia-based Backman Vidcom, points out that cross-training employees to have all tasks covered in the event of staff reduction is important. Meanwhile, Bruce Kaufmann, president and CEO at Gaithersburg, MD-based Human Circuit, emphasizes that integration firm leaders owe it to employees to consider worst-case scenarios. 📍

## Quick Takes on 2020 P2Pv Sessions

### The Leadership Challenge During the Most Unpredictable Time Ever

“Mike Staver set the stage in a way that helped the other presenters become more transparent and open in sharing their stories and advice. My big takeaway was for us to focus on the fundamental elements of adding value on every interaction with clients, finding solutions that help them with their financial concerns, the improved health and safety of their teams, and improving their sense of freedom and belonging through improved connectivity.”

–Chuck Wilson, NSCA Executive Director

### Preservation of Culture and Team

“It’s time to drink our own Kool-Aid! Not only does the customer experience have to reflect our culture and core values, but, even more important now than ever, the employee experience must translate positively. As business leaders, our presence and vulnerability have to be punctuated and expressed while we drive extreme clarity throughout the organization.”

–Josh Shanahan, SVT President & CEO

### 2020 Legislative and Regulatory Challenges with Emerging Technology

“You can see the direct impact of our advocacy and government affairs efforts during this session. It answered questions we get from integrators on trends in state and federal regulations and licensure, and it illustrated the need for using the term ‘integrator’ to describe what we do (see page 3). The key takeaway message: If you’re not at the table, you’re likely on the menu.”

–Chuck Wilson, NSCA Executive Director

### Customer Experience Linked to Innovation and Advanced Service Models

“The unexpected COVID-19 pandemic has awakened a new awareness for establishing emergency preparedness, business delivery redesign, budget transpositions, and the need to re-establish a strong foundation of proper communication and planning measures. Regardless of industry origin, it is imperative to collaborate with customers and manufacturers on an ongoing basis.”

–Hannah Mey, Hoefler Wysocki Associate Vice President, Senior Technology Specialist

### Planning for the Future: Insights from the Emerging Technologies Committee

“Technology plays an important role in understanding customers’ pain points, how spaces are being used, keeping people safe, connecting people, facilitating productivity, and driving revenue. IoT and analytics provide the insights needed to adapt to changing conditions and create the opportunity for ongoing engagement and for recurring revenue. Understanding this space and aligning with key solution partners is key to thriving in the future.”

–Kelly Harlin, NEC Analytics Platform Strategist



# Inside the Launch of a Remote Monitoring Center

With a dedicated network operations center and remote monitoring business plan, SIGNET Electronic Systems Inc. explains how it went all in on remote approaches to deliver solutions to clients' technology pain points.

*By Bradford S. Caron*

Remote Smart is what SIGNET Electronic Systems Inc. has named its new network operations center (NOC) offering. Our NOC is a fully surveilled, dedicated facility with restricted access via facial recognition technology, complete with isolated HVAC and generator backup. In other words, while it's based in our corporate headquarters in Norwell, MA, the general office population does not have regular access to it.

Fully staffed with subject-matter experts who understand our clients' technologies, our Remote Smart monitoring team provides remote monitoring and as-needed troubleshooting to vital communication and security technologies—often proactively addressing technology issues prior to their development into system failures.

Proactive monitoring and analysis anticipates and preempts technology incidents, which is key to ensuring that clients' critical systems are continually operational. By identifying trends and patterns within the network and technology system data that are likely causes of degradations or failures, our engineers prevent incidents and downtime.

There are two versions of our approach: Remote Response Services (reactive support) and Proactive Monitoring Services (proactive support). When Remote Response Services clients have an issue, we remotely troubleshoot and try to repair or diagnose as much as possible before we dispatch a truck and certified technician. With Proactive Monitoring Services, we know in advance that the client is experiencing technology issues and take the needed steps to address them before they become a major disruption.



## Impact on Clients

Utilizing remote technology enables us to assess and address our clients' technology issues ASAP, which they definitely appreciate.

In the past, when a client had an issue, our technicians may have been busy; we'd roll a truck the next day to get it fixed 24 hours later. Now we can fix something an hour after the call comes in, or, in many cases, we fix it before it becomes an issue.

During the pandemic, the value of a remote network operations center has been amplified. Not only are we providing better, more proactive, and documented service, but we're also staying out of client facilities when it's a burden for us to be there.

Because SIGNET is locally owned and operated—with 75 service trucks—we have the ability to dispatch a technician to a site if needed. When an issue warrants an onsite presence, our seamless escalation process ensures that Remote Smart operates in lockstep with our service division.

## Inside the Planning Stage

The key to our success was understanding our clients' needs, vetting a technology platform, and, most importantly, creating standards: It's about setting policies and procedures that everybody in the company must follow in a consistent manner. When launching a program like this, it's important to do the heavy lifting upfront.

Consider a \$100,000 IP video solution with multiple servers and many IP endpoints: Getting that system properly documented before the equipment goes out the door requires a tremendous amount of discipline on our part.

With our NOC in place, we do spend more time on documentation on the front end, but it saves us time in the long run. Once the system is deployed with the documentation in place, it can be properly supported by NOC personnel. That was a significant learning curve on our part.

## Impact on Revenue

Remote Smart is a SKU in our estimating package. As we sell new systems, we provide the option of selecting the Remote Response Services or Proactive Monitoring Services bundle, which has an immediate and significant impact on our top-line revenue. More significantly, the impact continues on a recurring-revenue basis.

After launching Remote Smart in June (as of October), we have saved more than 100 truck rolls in servicing our clients under warranty, which has been significant.

This change has made a positive impact of our company from revenue and client solutions standpoints. To roll out something like this requires listening to your clients, creating solutions based on their needs, and adapting policies, procedures, and discipline accordingly. Finding the right experts and managers are the hard parts—the technology is the easy part. 🔄



*Bradford S. Caron is president of Norwell, MA-based SIGNET Electronic Systems Inc. and an NSCA board member.*





# The Right Way

## TO DO

*Success doesn't happen by accident; profitable companies create strategic plans and execute them accordingly. NSCA can help by providing in-person or virtual strategic planning.*

# STRATEGIC PLANNING

“Company culture is lacking.”  
“People are operating in silos, causing mistakes and miscommunication.”  
“It’s difficult to get everyone on the same page after a merger.”  
“Several executives have retired in the past year.”  
“Our business isn’t hitting its goals, and we’re not seeing the results we want.”



NSCA's strategic planning sessions don't end with the in-person or virtual discussion. Since execution is where many companies veer off course, NSCA's Chuck Wilson checks in periodically, asking for updates and answering questions.

In times like these, NSCA is here to help—with custom-built strategic planning sessions (in person or virtual) led by NSCA Executive Director Chuck Wilson. Success doesn't happen by accident; profitable companies create strategic plans and execute them accordingly.

For one organization, it was the naming of a new president that prompted the call for help. "There are so many aspects to transitioning a business," the NSCA member explains. "We had people who could handle the legal and financial aspects, but we needed help with the culture, leadership, and strategic planning for our company's future." After attending a Business & Leadership Conference and talking to other integrators that experienced NSCA's strategic planning process, they decided to try it.

The incoming president wanted to run the company a little differently: Instead of making top-down decisions, he wanted to empower workers to make their own decisions. To do this, he needed to make sure employees were set up to operate as a team.

The company also wanted guidance on combining processes and procedures after a recent merger. The newly acquired company offered managed services (bringing a small client base with it), and staff members wanted to strategically integrate these new products, services, and customers.


For an integrator on the other side of the country, it was the experience of operating in the red for four years that drove the need for strategic planning. After setting a strategy in motion, the company is now seeing a profit, better employee attraction and retention rates (thanks to a new compensation and benefits program), and improved cash flow after changing down-payment requirements.

Yet another NSCA member sought assistance as they watched business trend downward after four decades of good results. A thorough review of financials during the planning session uncovered the reason for financial losses: low technician utilization and a lack of understanding the true costs of doing business. After making procedural changes, the company improved its technician utilization rate.

"Chuck gave us fantastic and helpful information," says an NSCA member after his first strategic planning session. "It was the right approach. He warned us that it wouldn't be easy to readjust our thinking, but we're working on it and meeting regularly. We've had struggles with forcing ourselves to refocus on working on the business instead of working in the business, but now we're making an effort to do it with NSCA's help."

Because execution is where many companies veer off course, NSCA holds members accountable for their strategic plans by checking in periodically, asking for updates, and answering questions along the way.

"NSCA believes in what they're doing, but they also truly want to help," adds the NSCA member. "Their goal is to support you as you figure this out. We've got our strategic initiatives in place, we made a plan with Chuck's help, and we have a timeline for it. Now it's time to execute."

Are you hoping for a similar success story of your own? **We're ready to help.** 

## How It Works

1. We set aside time for your strategic planning session (one or two days, virtual or in person).
2. We send a questionnaire for each member of the leadership team to complete, asking about current roles, company strengths, challenges and deficiencies, and goals for strategic-planning outcomes (answers remain anonymous).
3. You use our assessment tool to rank company performance in specific categories.
4. NSCA uses the information from completed questionnaires and assessments to develop a personalized direction for your strategic planning session.
5. We work with you to determine strengths and weaknesses—and how you can make the most of assets and opportunities.

## IS YOUR SERVICE OFFERING COMPLETE?

Our CXSeries enables you to offer proactive managed services for AV/IT & UC spaces at work and in the home



PROACTIVE SUPPORT



SELF HEALING



IOT MONITORING



DEVICE MONITORING



STREAMLINE SUPPORT

Contact us at [sales@cxdetect.net](mailto:sales@cxdetect.net) or [cxunify.com](http://cxunify.com) for a FREE, no-obligation consultation



# THE MOST IMPORTANT

## Business & Leadership Conference Ever

“Stepping Up When It Counts” is the theme for the 23rd annual Business & Leadership Conference, which takes place virtually Feb. 24-25.

Register for 2021 BLC at [www.nasca.org/blc](http://www.nasca.org/blc).



To say that the 23rd annual NSCA Business & Leadership Conference (BLC) will be “the most important BLC ever” is an ambitious claim. It’s accurate, though, says NSCA Executive Director Chuck Wilson.

“There’s *no doubt* that this is our most important BLC ever,” he says.

The integration industry, after being hit hard—along with so many others during 2020—is more than ready to get back to profitability in 2021. Despite the gloom and doom so omnipresent these days, there is much reason for optimism.

Sure . . . some factors are out of our control: pandemics, vaccine developments, drawn-out outcomes of presidential elections, you name it. Don’t dwell on those. Instead, focus on factors within your control. For integrators, this includes hard work, nimbleness, and the ability to recognize how your company’s expertise and offerings can solve your customers’ challenges.

The theme for the 23rd annual BLC is “Stepping Up When It Counts” for a simple reason: The decisions you make now will have immeasurable impact. Put yourself in the driver’s seat in 2021 by helping your customers take command of their biggest business challenges. According to the International Facilities Management Association (IFMA)’s report, “The Expert’s Assessment: The Workplace Post-COVID-19,” technology integrators are well positioned to be key customer partners in 2021. Consider:

- 54% of subject-matter experts expect that budgets for investments in efficiency improvements will increase over the coming years
- 74% expect investments in AI technologies in the workplace to increase

Meanwhile, the Society for Human Resource Management offers the following:

- 54% of HR leaders cite poor technology and IT infrastructure as barriers to effective remote or cross-office communication
- 72% of businesses are reconfiguring worksites to accommodate social distancing while 52% are implementing solutions to improve the remote work experience

It’s also within your control to make leadership decisions that position your company to be exactly where your customers need you to be in 2021. The 23rd annual BLC will give you the guidance you need to embrace these opportunities.

“We know what our role is – to be a trusted advisor to member companies and to help them run their businesses better,” says Wilson. “We’ve consulted with countless company leaders and watched integration companies battle through 2020. This year’s BLC content is laser-focused on helping them be successful in 2021. We take this very seriously.”

### What You’ll Learn

The two-day, mid-week, virtual event takes place Feb. 24-25, 2021. BLC is the industry’s most notable platform for executive-level education and discussion. The event attracts hundreds of executives annually to learn from other leaders and hear about new ways to embrace technology and motivate employees.

### REGISTER NOW

**NSCA Members:** \$495 each **Non-NSCA Members:** \$899

Call 800-446-6722 to ask about same-company group discounts and bundled pricing.

To register, visit [www.nasca.org/blc](http://www.nasca.org/blc).

As always, NSCA and our integrator-led Events Committee identified pain points to address at BLC and built substantive content sessions around critical objectives, including:

### The Need for Agility

Let's be clear: This BLC is not about COVID-19. But we recognize how vitally important it is for businesses to be nimble in the current market. A leading agile innovation expert, Pamela Meyer, PhD, delivers a powerful keynote and breakout session on agile and effective leadership.

- **Reliable Indicators and Dashboards:** Reading the tea leaves isn't an option as we enter uncharted ground in 2021. You need trustworthy analysis before making key investments or backing off spending. NSCA Chief Economist Dr. Chris Kuehl is back to deliver his industry-specific market perspectives (and trademark wit).
- **Leadership Infrastructure:** It takes a well-built company to weather tough times. This session challenges the way you think about you finance, legal, and HR leadership. Learn to rebuild for sustained success. (This might be the most important session this year.)
- **Processes, Workflows, & Outcomes:** These days, it's all about prioritizing high-value tasks. Through clear, consistent processes, NSCA companies can achieve more. A workshop led by EOC implementer Jill Young will help you get your operations and processes on track.
- **Innovating Your Own Solutions:** Why depend on manufacturers to innovate? Many integrators with their backs against the wall due to the pandemic came out swinging by recognizing new customer challenges and solving them. Futurist Brian Solis leads a discussion on how to drive breakthrough innovation.
- **Trusted Advice:** From an outlook by Executive Director Chuck Wilson on legislative challenges in 2021 to a closing keynote on how smaller companies can battle against big brands, BLC content is 100% channel-specific and aimed at helping you succeed.

“We take this very seriously.”


–NSCA Executive Director Chuck Wilson, on developing content for BLC

### NSCA Will Do It Right

While this 23rd annual BLC is the first to be conducted in a virtual setting, NSCA conducted its 2020 Pivot to Profit virtually in September. Although we'd all prefer to network in person, NSCA received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the content and attendee experience. BLC—now our second virtual conference—will be even stronger.

“We've all been on more than our share of virtual events. NSCA knows that and makes sure the sessions are worth attendees' valuable time,” says Shedan Maghzi, corporate strategic advisor for Avidex and an NSCA board member. “I attended NSCA's 2020 Pivot to Profit Virtual in the fall and the content was extremely strong. It was the best virtual event experience I've had.”

“We have important business and leadership objectives right now,” says Mike Boettcher, CEO-PA at New Era Technology and NSCA president. “I agree that this one-time virtual BLC is actually the most important ever.”

If you're reading this, you're a member of the NSCA community. We're in this together. We won't be able to stand shoulder to shoulder and share a drink at the 23rd annual BLC. But, together, we're learning how to seize opportunities there for the taking in 2021. Our collective leadership will drive our success. Join us for the 2021 BLC. 



NSCA Chief Economist Dr. Chris Kuehl returns to BLC to offer much-needed, reliable market projections.



## The 2021 BLC Lineup **Confirmed BLC 2021 keynotes and speakers for the two-day, mid-week event include:**

- **Economic Outlook 2021 for Integrators** by Dr. Chris Kuehl
- **Making the Agility Shift: Creating Agile and Effective Leaders, Teams, and Organizations** by Pamela Meyer, PhD
- **Business Benefits of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** presented by the Ignite 2.0 Committee
- **Digital Transformation and Innovation** by Brian Solis
- **Making Strategy Happen** by Michael Canic
- **Becoming No. 1 in a Crowded Market – What Big Brands Know** by Gerry O'Brion

For continually updated session descriptions, including the lineup of breakout/workshop sessions, visit [nsca.org/blc](https://nsca.org/blc).

# People joke that 2020 can't end soon enough, but what is one valuable takeaway that your company will carry forward to improve business in 2021?

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.



"Without a doubt, I think we all hope 2020 will come to an end. From COVID-19 to the election, this was a year that will be studied in history and economic books for years to come. One takeaway from this year is that we, as an organization, learned to be agile. The needs of our customers have changed: the way we call on them, the way we communicate, and the way we understand their needs. Office space is changing, security needs are evolving, and the demands of healthcare are forever altered. As an organization, we need to be agile and adapt to our customers' changing needs."

Daniel Schmidtendorff  
Communication Company



"There are many takeaways from the 2020 experience. How we communicated with our employees was a winner. From the beginning, the executive channel was open and transparent. We held two townhall meetings using video that all invited employees attended. When there were significant changes in conditions, each regional office would email relevant information concerning their area. These heartfelt communications solidified an already strong culture. How we communicate with employees will be a big part of our culture going forward."

Dan Hiatt  
Lone Star Communications



“It’s very easy when you’re making money to move away aimlessly from your mission, but our goals have been renewed since experiencing this pandemic. We’ll restart cultivating our relationship with current clients and manufacturers while simultaneously bonding ourselves to specific courses of action. Our mission is to provide the highest level of customer service with friendliness and empower our clients to achieve their goals as well. I still cannot wait until we’re on the other side of this crisis and for 2020 to be in the rearview mirror!”

Angie Toussaint Billingsly  
KMT Digital Technology Services



“This is the third recession I’ve been through in Las Vegas, each of which amplified two core practices Embassy employs. First, meet the customer where they are. In Q2, we quickly transitioned to—and enjoyed some success with—thermal cameras and tablets and, although those specific products probably have a limited

appeal moving forward, they did introduce us to a whole new set of contacts to whom we can market our traditional services. And, second, diversify smartly. We added surveillance to our portfolio based on the lessons from 2009/2010. We don’t lead with it because its margins are lower than AVL in our market, but we offer it, and it’s a nice complement for some of our clients. This time around, I created a new tradeshow called cavlo, a pro AVL show on the West Coast to help replace all the canceled shows for manufacturers, get Vegas back in business, and introduce a new slate of end-users to Embassy’s offerings as a consulting/integration firm.”

Mike Brown-Cestero  
Embassy Holdings

**BELDEN**  
SENDING ALL THE RIGHT SIGNALS

# Free Fusion Splicer Rental

with the Purchase of FX Fusion Splice-On Connectors\*

Belden has made it even easier to use its FX Fusion Splice-On Connectors. When purchasing a new splicer isn’t an option, free\* splicer rentals are now available with the purchase of Belden’s FX Fusion Splice-On Connectors.

- What’s Included? • FX Fusion Splicer  
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\*See terms & conditions for more information on purchase requirements and rental time frame.



# Q&A

## WITH CEO CLINT HOFFMAN

Kramer North America  
Clinton, NJ

kramerav.com

**Executive:** Clint Hoffman, CEO

**Primary Focus:** AV manufacturer

“We believe that, if all things are somewhat equal with regard to the product you offer vs. your competitors, people buy from people they like and trust.”

–Clint Hoffman, CEO,  
Kramer North America

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

Adjusting to the new normal as a result of the historic pandemic we are all facing. Business is naturally down; finding ways to maximize revenue and cash flow is the challenge we face every day now until we can emerge from these difficult times.

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

Exactly the same as the challenge we are facing: revenue and cash flow in these uncertain and highly unusual times.

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

The yearly Pivot to Profit, Business & Leadership Conference, and webinars from economist Dr. Chris Kuehl. We use these events to meet with our channel partners and learn valuable business techniques. Dr. Kuehl helps us plan our business more accurately.



*Kramer North America headquarters in Clinton, NJ*


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

Besides the valuable information from events and webinars, like those from Dr. Kuehl, the networking is so incredibly valuable.

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

We "make it personal." We believe that, if all things are somewhat equal with regard to the product you offer vs. your competitors, people buy from people they like and trust. We are in the relationship-selling business. We strive every day to ensure the customer journey with us is the best it can be.

**Q:** Who is Kramer North America's NSCA "Champion"?

That would be me, with some help from Director of Marketing and Sales Administration Jamie Best. We maximize our participation at NSCA events, and we support NSCA in every way we can. 

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

"The core of the Kramer workplace lies in a culture of trust that unites upper management and the staff in a common vision for success, with opportunities for upward mobility and education and training to further cultivate employee knowledge and strengths. Kramer wholeheartedly trusts its staff, giving them the freedom to work independently to deliver the best possible results with minimal micro-management."

–Jamie Best, Director of Marketing and Sales Administration,  
Kramer North America





# Q&A

## WITH PRINCIPAL MATT CHITWOOD

PIVIUM  
Phoenix, AZ

Pivium.com

**Executives:** Matt Chitwood, Principal;  
Will Gray, Director of Customer Experience;  
Jeanna Garrett, Director of Operations/Accounting;  
Jim Taggart, Director of Business Development

**Primary Focus:** AV design, AV integration, life safety

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

Throughout much of our 25-year history, we have relied upon a rich network of subcontracting partners to execute our field work. The industry is divided on this approach; we have been successful in building an internal project management group that has developed relationships with firms that are our eyes and ears in the field and the face of PIVIUM. This approach gives us the ability to expand and contract with business cycles, as well as with the cyclical nature of real estate development across the United States. Most importantly, it gives us the ability to provide a consistent level of service to several national customers with thousands of locations, no matter where.

**“In 2015, I decided to establish an external advisory board. The seven-member board can't fire me, but I treat their counsel as if they could.”**

—Matt Chitwood, Principal, PIVIUM

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

In 2019, we re-branded and re-named, which was part of an overall pivot in strategic direction. Execution of this continued focus is our largest internal threat. Externally, pandemic-related shifts are unpredictable but, at the same time, also present opportunity. Watching and understanding design trends that change as a result of how 2020 unfolded is interesting and challenging. We plan our organizational change very carefully and, by sticking to our strategic plan, we will continue to be successful.

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

It's nice to have a go-to place for industry comparisons and research. We tap into that continually throughout the year. Collectively, the relationships we have made throughout the years at various events are irreplaceable. I check in with friends/acquaintances/business relationships I have formed through NSCA every single week. I recently saw someone (on my first trip since pandemic) who planted the seed which ultimately led to our re-brand in 2019. That conversation was during a Business & Leadership Conference (BLC) golf rain delay years ago in Dallas. At this year's BLC, I met a great, bright mind, and he and I have been kicking the bull and sharing ideas during one-on-one Zoom happy hours.

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

Iron sharpens iron. Being able to have real conversations with others in similar positions in good times and bad is important. It's just as important in business as it is in personal relationships! You can share your mistakes with others and learn from theirs. When riding through a rough time, you need encouragement from those who have been down the same road as you. From another angle: Working with a trade organization that understands "the business" and has your back and will advocate for you in a dog-eat-dog world is critical. We sit in the middle of an evolving and attractive technology space that is relevant to every vertical market, geography, and demographic.

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

In 2015, I decided to establish an external advisory board. The seven-member board can't fire me, but I treat their counsel as if they could. My leadership team and I have blind spots and recognize that, the more we can surround ourselves with brilliant individuals, the better off we will be. The advisory board provides a fresh, objective perspective. Despite the additional work and accountability from this external group, I sleep much better at night.



*Principal Matt Chitwood says PIVIUM strives for a flexible, family-friendly (and obviously fun) company culture.*



**Q:** Who is PIVIUM'S NSCA "Champion"?

Much of the time, this is me. We have had three or four team members attend various events, but, with the nature of my working on the business, I am usually the one digging into what NSCA has to offer.

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

We do our best to provide a flexible, family-friendly work environment. This is part of our heritage as a family-owned business. Additionally, we are extremely careful in our hiring process and hire first for fit and then for experience/skills. This assures that the chemistry of our team remains balanced. 🟡

# The Latest from NSCA's Solution Provider Members

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



## AMETEK Land VIRALERT 3

### An Integrated Solution for Security and Safety

The latest developments in human temperature scanning systems offer a fresh opportunity for integrators to combine protection against COVID-19 infection with other gateway and security systems. AMETEK Land's VIRALERT 3 is a compact, real-time infrared screening system that's safe, accurate, and easy to use.

Working alongside other precautionary measures like social distancing, hand hygiene, and face masks, the accurate, compact VIRALERT 3 screens visitors at entry for elevated body temperatures.

Handheld thermometers might provide a cost-effective option, but they are not as accurate—and produce more false positives and negatives—and compromise social distancing. Crucially, as far as integration into gateway systems is concerned, they require an operator and cannot provide automated operation.

VIRALERT 3, on the other hand, can operate in a fully automatic way—or be overseen by an operator working at a safe distance if required—and meets all requirements currently set out by the FDA and similar authorities.

Developed over 10 years by our world-leading temperature monitoring experts, the VIRALERT 3 is already in use at commercial, educational, and leisure facilities around the world, screening visitors at points of entry.

The automated operation and rapid, two-second measurement time make it ideal for integration into new and existing security door systems.

As it is highly compact, and uses both an infrared and visual camera, it is easy to adapt to add the capability to integrate with door access and time and attendance systems.

It means visitors can access the area in the same way they always have, with the same security checks, but with the added precaution that they are scanned for signs of elevated temperature, which can indicate a fever—a symptom of COVID-19 infection—at the same time.

[landviralert.com](http://landviralert.com)

## Rauland

### Tackling Pandemic-Related Challenges

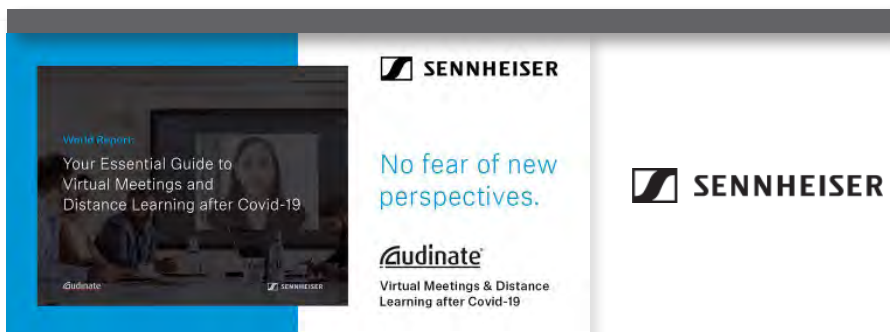
Schools are reopened and the stakes are high to keep students and faculty safe. Rauland has an updated platform with a robust set of features and integrations to help in those efforts. Cleaning and sanitization communication and tracking, flexible student scheduling to reduce the number of students in the hallways, temperature screening, and overall announcement solutions to help remind everyone of their need to adhere to the changes in policy and practice.

#### Learn more.

The second wave is beginning to affect hospital census, and communication systems need to be personal as well as allow for safe distancing. Responder Enterprise Mobile App enables staff to talk with their patients and reduce unnecessary entry into the room while still delivering personalized care. Rauland EveryWear empowers staff to move as needed throughout the building—all the while feeding contact tracing reports so, if there is a need to investigate an infectious person, the data is there.

#### Learn more.





## Sennheiser

### Sennheiser Presents Future of Virtual Meetings & Distance Learning

Our world is in transition: businesses and higher education institutions worldwide currently find themselves walking a unique tightrope. While the COVID-19 pandemic rages in some regions and has calmed down in others, organizations everywhere are seeking to resume some form of “business as usual.” To give some orientation in the latest shift of remote communication norms and standards, Sennheiser has published, in cooperation with Audinate, a report on the future of virtual meetings and distance learning after COVID-19.

Sensible remote conferencing and distance learning practices—with support from state-of-the-art business communications tools such as the Sennheiser TeamConnect Ceiling 2—are essential to help ensure future success. The COVID-19 World Report takes a look at the situation in companies and education institutions around the globe and explores the possibilities that blended learning and remote conferencing offer in times of social distancing.

Contact-free microphone solutions and remote collaboration workflows are becoming commonplace in corporate and educational campuses across the world. At Sennheiser, we’re addressing these specific needs with products such as: TeamConnect Ceiling 2, the industry-leading, Zoom Compatible, MS Teams and Barco ClickShare Certified ceiling mic, MobileConnect and Multi-Channel Receiver for SpeechLine Digital Wireless.

**Download the free report** and contact Sennheiser to learn more about the latest in business communication tools.



## Ingram Micro

### Learn about Ingram Micro

Ingram Micro’s Pro AV division is a premier provider of professional audio/video products and solutions. Our dedicated team has decades of industry experience and numerous certifications to ensure you are getting the best service, no matter the size of the opportunity. Backed by value-added services like custom financial solutions, design and configuration services and express warehousing, we support our partners throughout the sales cycle to ensure their success.

Ingram Micro Pro AV is continuously expanding its line card to ensure our partners have access to the latest technologies from vendors across multiple verticals and is leading the charge in visitor and occupancy management and direct view LED solutions. For assistance with your next opportunity, contact [proav@ingrammicro.com](mailto:proav@ingrammicro.com).

## Solutions360

### Inside an Episode of Solutions360 Podcast ClearTalk

*When all is said and done, a lot more gets said than done. What is the antidote to this? Ruthless consistency!*

This is a glimpse at the inaugural episode of ClearTalk, the new Solutions360 Podcast. On this episode of ClearTalk, our CEO Brad Dempsey is joined by Michael Canic to discuss the launch of his new book, *Ruthless Consistency: How Committed Leaders Execute Strategy, Implement Change, and Build Organizations That Win*.

The underlying premise of *Ruthless Consistency* is that leaders, despite good intentions, are not as committed as they need to be.

“We think we’re committed, right?” Canic asks. “We say, ‘Yes, I’m committed. I want this to happen.’ But commitment is really evidenced by all your decisions and all your actions. When tested, what we often find is those decisions and actions are not ruthlessly consistent with our intentions. This is the underlying premise of the book.”

“When you are going through major change in an organization, and you expect it, and you know what’s coming, it makes it much easier to deal with that change,” says Canic. “It is when you don’t anticipate change, that people start to panic. But we should to be comfortable being uncomfortable. At the same time, you should be uncomfortable if you get too comfortable, because you are probably not anticipating what’s lurking beyond the corner.”

*This book is highly recommended by Solutions360 for leaders who want to implement change successfully in their integration business.*

Watch/listen to the entire podcast and learn more about the book [here](#).



## Winsted

### Protect Electronics with Winsted Paramount 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](http://winsted.com)

## Shure

### Learn More about Shure Network Audio Solutions

Shure provides networked audio solutions for environments of all types, from small meeting rooms to large conference spaces, with unmatched ease of deployment, less complexity, and remote management. With an award-winning portfolio that provides the complete audio signal chain from microphone to DSP to loudspeaker, exclusive ecosystem product bundles for streamlined ordering and commissioning are now available.

Shure's product bundles for conferencing are not only an easy way to fully equip any sized room with end-to-end audio, they now are being offered at a discounted rate! Visit [shure.com/ecosystem](http://shure.com/ecosystem) to learn more about the ways you can save.

[shure.com](http://shure.com)

## Daktronics

### Daktronics Launches New Generation of LED Video Walls

Daktronics is excited to introduce the newest generation of direct view LED video walls. The NPN-6200 and 6400 series are packed with incredible features, and we are introducing a new LED type that gives our LED displays a huge leap in performance. Lighter, slimmer, faster—integrators' time on site can be cut in half. They're 15% lighter for better handling and less structural considerations.

#### They include:

- Cable-less modules
- Enhanced mechanical features
- Simplified signal flow
- Wide range of pixel pitches—0.7mm to 3.8mm, with many stops in between

Access product launch recording:  
[daktronics.com/innovate](http://daktronics.com/innovate)

Get started: [partner.daktronics.com](http://partner.daktronics.com)

## Jeron

### Now Shipping: Jeron Electronic Systems, Inc.'s Nurse Call System

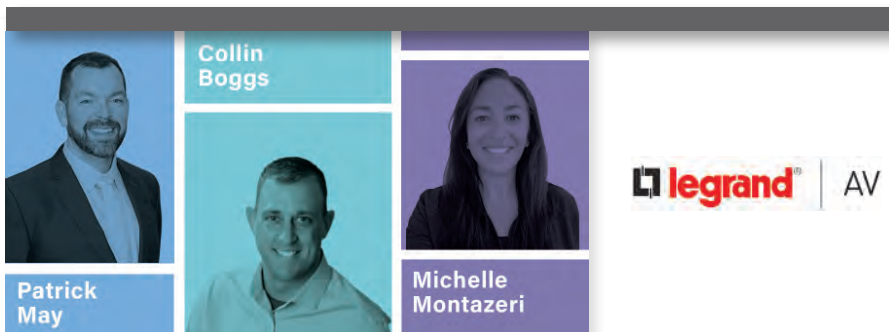
Jeron Electronic Systems, Inc. has nurse call alerting and communication systems ready to ship throughout North America, including Canada and Mexico.

#### 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:  
[jeron.com/visit-jeron](http://jeron.com/visit-jeron).



Legrand | AV

**Legrand | AV's Digital Signage Solutions Team Makes Design a Breeze**

As we all adjust to new standards of gathering, digital signage has proven to be a vital solution to convey dynamic messaging. Prior to this pandemic, digital signage was often seen as a solution focused solely on the customer experience; now it's become an integral part of operations, expanding its role to include the realms of safety procedures, traffic direction, customer ordering, and more.

Legrand | AV's infrastructure and portfolio of brands has allowed us to quickly react to the market's overall changing needs, as well as the specific needs of your clients. Our team is here to help you integrate digital signage with an extensive network of partners and tools.

When you work with us, you gain access to our complimentary consulting services which includes expert introductions to our esteemed manufacture partners, the AV Design community, and access to the best infrastructure portfolio in the market. This results in a solution that not only works but delivers an amazing AV experience that only we can provide.

As a facet of Legrand | AV's infrastructure capabilities, we have digital signage offerings that cover every sales channel. With a focus on project objectives from inception to implementation, combined with our strong commercial architect and consultant relationships, we offer a unique combination of skillsets to assist in meeting all customer objectives.

Our team is at the forefront of digital signage solutions, and we're excited to help you get started. Be sure to visit [legrandav.com](http://legrandav.com) and **meet the team** to ask any questions you might have about your digital signage solutions.

**Explore our Digital Signage Solutions Today!**

Lencore

**Soundmasking is Nothing but Opportunity!**

Extend your reach and deliver a superior customer experience while putting money in your pocket. Lencore offers superior products in the industry, and we continue to innovate! Join our network of Integrators, and together we can provide speech privacy, productivity and, most importantly, comfort to the workspace.

**Lencore and soundmasking offer:**

- Market worldwide is \$34 Billion
- Out-of-the-box solution for projects under 12,000 square feet
- Solutions that meet the market demands for safety (UL 2572 standards to interface with a fire alarm panel and shut off in an emergency)
- Pre-wired, pre-tested, simple to install and effective solutions which deliver privacy, productivity and comfort for your clients

Partner with a leading sound masking manufacturer.

[info.lencore.com/sound-environment](http://info.lencore.com/sound-environment)

IntelliSee

**NSCA Community, Meet IntelliSee**

IntelliSee™, a new AI risk mitigation platform, hired Maureen Pajerski (formerly of Rauland-Borg) as Chief Commercial Officer to bring IntelliSee's new technology to market through its growing network of channel partners.

IntelliSee is currently beta testing in several environments, including the University of Iowa and in the CEC (Communications Engineering Company) technology lab.

Jan Bringman, Key & Access Services for the University of Iowa Department of Public Safety, explains: "Detecting threats and mitigating risks was the first thing that drew us to IntelliSee. Having a tool that helps us better detect threats like an active shooter or a trespasser, identify exactly where the threat is, and integrate automatically with our response systems is critical. Cost savings, reduced manpower exhaustion in special events, and other benefits were all key draws for our team."

IntelliSee uses AI to autonomously monitor existing surveillance cameras in real time. Expanding on technology built by the University of Iowa's Technology Institute for the U.S. Department of Defense, the IntelliSee platform can detect—and instantly alert—threats ranging from slip and fall risks to drawn weapons and more.



Maureen Pajerski, IntelliSee Chief Commercial Officer

Randy Montelius, CEC's VP of Technology, says, "We are excited to test out the IntelliSee product in our technology lab [Lab 46]. The analytics that the product provides are very relevant to our customer base."

IntelliSee is on track to be in market in Q1 2021.

Learn more about IntelliSee and becoming a channel partner **here**.



### Belden

#### Updates from Belden

Belden would like NSCA members to know about the following opportunities:

#### Rent a Fusion Splicer at No Cost

Splice-on connectors help your installers get more jobs done right in less time, combining the benefits of fusion splicing with the simplicity of field-installable connectors.

Here are six reasons to consider Belden's FiberExpress Fusion Splice-On Connectors:

1. No stripping and cleaning required on the connector fiber stub
2. No crimping, polishing or adhesives needed for termination
3. No long training sessions
4. No excess slack management
5. Fewer accessories
6. No guesswork

Need training on fusion splicing? Belden is offering free training and demos of our Fusion Splicer—and our free rental program makes it even easier to get started. [Learn more here.](#)

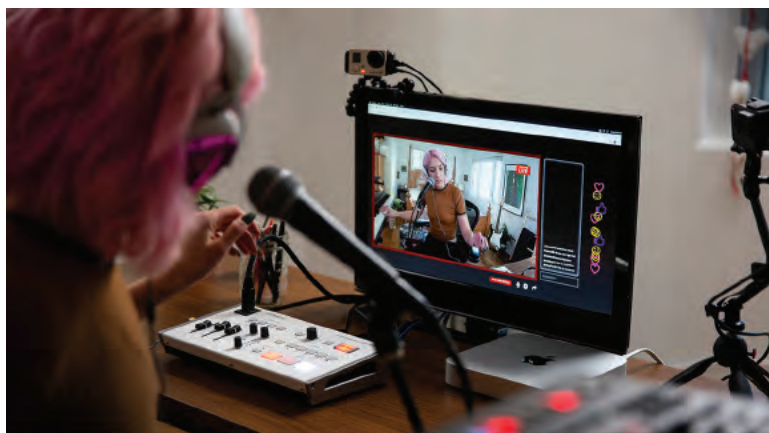
#### Is PoE Safe? The Answer is Yes!

PoE has been around since 2003. Back then, the amount of power supplied through a cable was about 15W. Today, that number is approaching 100W.

Due to this increase in wattage, we've also seen a major increase in proposed legislation regarding PoE. If interpreted incorrectly, this legislation could require an electrical license to plug in PoE ports or pull/install PoE cable.

For the most part, the purpose behind this legislation is safety; however, assuming that PoE is dangerous is incorrect. PoE is built to be inherently safe.

To provide even more reassurance, we conducted our own controlled (and extreme) experiment. The conditions we created wouldn't be possible in real life. The results prove: If we follow codes and standards, then there are no safety risks. Learn more about our experiment [here.](#)



**STAY CONNECTED**  
ROLAND LIVE STREAMING



**Roland**  
Professional AV

### Roland

#### Roland Launches 5 Exclusive Livestreaming Solution Bundles

Help customers stay connected no matter where they are or who they serve. Roland empowers organizations to maximize creative possibilities in various markets including house of worship, education, training rooms, corporate meetings, live performance production, videography, traditional sports, and esports.

Supporting these markets are five exclusive live streaming solution bundles featuring the new UVC-01 and popular V-series switchers; V-02HD, V-1HD, V-1HD+, V-8HD, and V-60HD.

To learn more about how these solutions fit into your customer offerings or becoming an authorized Roland Professional AV dealer contact [ProAVHelp@Roland.com](mailto:ProAVHelp@Roland.com).

Learn more about **Roland live streaming**

Live streaming bundles [press release](#)



## Primex

### Inside Primex's Solutions

Primex delivers solutions to help organizations improve efficiency, standardize operations, minimize risks, and meet compliance goals.

Our OneVue technology portfolio includes solutions that eliminate manual tasks to boost data accuracy and staff productivity while ensuring facilities stay compliant and accredited. As an innovative technology leader, we provide impactful solutions to our partners through the **Primex Partner Program**.

**You are not alone when you are part of our Partner Program. With a reputation that speaks for itself, we will provide all of the necessary resources and tools for success:**

- Attractive pricing structure to help increase your profits while also promoting long-term sales
- Dedicated Primex sales and technical support to ensure customers are receiving best-in-class service
- Quality marketing and lead-generation initiatives to boost your sales pipeline
- Comprehensive training and educational resources to ensure you have product knowledge and expertise

Selling to over 16,000 customers worldwide, we continue to lead the way by investing in product research and emerging technologies to improve efficiency, eliminate distractions, and provide a comprehensive data trail to meet compliance and safety requirements.

Join us in our webinar on January 15, 2021, at 11:00 am CTS, to learn about the Primex OneVue products and how our solutions can complement your existing portfolio and bring additional revenue to your organization.

**Register today.**

**[primexinc.com](http://primexinc.com)**

## Kramer

### Corona Tag - Social Distancing Monitoring Device

Corona Tag is an innovative device designed to monitor social distancing in the workplace, school, or public venues. It eliminates the need for a wide shut-down in case of infection. Based on HSL technology, Bluetooth signals measure the distance and exposure time between tags without revealing or saving personal information. The device is fully independent, does not rely on cell phones or other connections, and does not require charging. Corona Tag is ideal for corporate offices, workplaces and factories, schools and universities, government facilities— anywhere people are gathering in person.

**Learn more.**

## BTX

### BTX Offers Auto-Tracking Camera Demo

BTX recently tested the Minrray UV100T auto-tracking camera and filmed the results. Watch the video (below) and notice the quick target acquisition and smooth, natural tracking as the speaker moves around the front of the room.

The Minrray UV100 series is a dedicated, intelligent auto-tracking camera with cutting-edge technology in the field of education informatization. UV100 series is built-in with a high-speed processor, advanced image processing, and analysis algorithms to track lecturers and students accurately and quickly, which is in line with the requirements of lecturer capture and remote interactive teaching.

**Watch the video here.**

## Liberty AV

### Liberty AV Debuts Series of Managed Service Offerings to the AV Industry Starting With Two Premier Packages

CXDetect, our cloud-based SaaS platform, was strategically created for the AV/UC space, providing self-healing, analytics, and management for multiple vendor-related UC software and hardware devices at the same time from one dashboard.

CXSupport+, our Managed Service Provider offering, takes you one step further by bridging the gap between software and an experienced AV call center, combining the best of both worlds.

The solution you choose depends primarily on your needs. Both are designed to enable you, as the Integrator, to strengthen and scale your service offerings.

Learn more at

**<https://www.cxunify.com/cxsupport>**



## Legrand | AV

### Explore Emerging Trends in the AV Industry with Legrand | AV's New Look Book

When presented with challenges, the public is quick to adapt. That theory has been tested and proven in the past few months, especially in the workplace and at schools, where people have proven to be more resilient than ever.

A majority of the workforce is telecommuting and meeting via video conferencing. Students of all ages are learning online, and AV technology has paved the way in helping individuals get through it all. The challenges of 2020 have resulted in several emerging trends: connecting virtually, installation efficiencies, remote management and AV-assisted social distancing.

Legrand | AV is here to guide you through this shift with our new Trends Look Book, available for download [here](#). This book examines how these four emerging trends can be applied to remote conferencing, hybrid learning, remote teams, and digital signage.

#### Learn how:

- *Video Conferencing is Shifting from Luxury to Necessity in the Meeting Room.*
- *Hybrid Classrooms Are Here to Stay.*
- *Digital Signage is the New Means for Mass, Real-Time Information.*
- *A Distributed Workforce Now Thrives on Virtual Collaboration.*

#### Download the Look Book Now!

Whether it's digital signage, video conferencing, live streaming, hybrid learning – Legrand | AV is committed to making the AV experience even better with solutions that keep people connected. At Legrand | AV, we're committed to enabling amazing AV experiences through our leading brands. We don't just make products. We innovate across key categories and trends to ensure a connected world. Explore more AV solutions at [legrandav.com](http://legrandav.com).

## Xilica

### Xilica Brings Lua Scripting to Solaro DSPs

Xilica has added Lua scripting language for its Solaro Series DSPs, allowing integrators to program their own custom drivers for most third-party products with control strings. With Lua control modules now available within Xilica's new Designer 4.1 software interface, integrators can omit traditional control systems from small- to medium-sized projects, and utilize an existing open-architecture Xilica Solaro DSP for system command.

While Xilica's library of pre-designed integrations allow for quicker deployment, a new Lua Device Driver Builder function allows programmers to create custom functionality specific to their product and application. When integration with enterprise-level control systems is required, Xilica Designer 4.1 users can leverage modules for AMX, Crestron, and Control4 automation platforms.

[xilica.com/products/xilicadesigner/](http://xilica.com/products/xilicadesigner/)

## AVer

### AVer Teams with Microsoft

This year, AVer Information, an award-winning provider of hardware solutions, announced a collaboration with Microsoft and our CAM540, CAM520 PRO conference cameras. Meanwhile, our VB342+ soundbar became certified for Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business. AVer is one of the only hardware manufacturers with products certified for Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, Zoom, BlueJeans, RingCentral, and Google. In 2021, we will continue to improve relationships with all our partners, introduce new partners, and expand our meeting room offerings with the launch of a vast array of innovative, never before seen products you won't want to miss.

[averusa.com/business/microsoft](http://averusa.com/business/microsoft)





## Almo

### Start AV Outsourcing Today!

We are all adapting to an inevitably changed world with new procedures, processes and business practices. But how can integrators evolve while staying productive and profitable – even during a pandemic?

#### SERVICES.

#### Now is the time to leverage AV Services for Integrators sourced through Almo.

Almo Professional A/V offers a wide range of white-labeled services integrators can brand as their own. Capitalize on the technical resources, design and expertise as well as the opportunity to earn recurring revenue long after the installation is complete. Integrators can now extend their current business model without the need to add, train or manage internal staff.

#### Almo AV Services

- Business and Connectivity Communications
- Contract Labor and Project Support
- Control Systems and DSP Programming
- Digital Signage Services
- Drafting and Engineering
- Service and Repair Plans

Additionally, **Almo AV-as-a-Service** Financial Solutions give integrators a competitive advantage to pursue larger, long-term installations and provide customers with the latest technology, job site labor services and recycling/replacement options. Through Almo's AVaaS, the biggest benefit is managed cash flow and the ability to get paid up front while offering the end user one monthly payment. This financing helps accelerate buying decisions, improve schedule replacement and more.

NSCA members can learn the ins and outs of these service offerings through Almo's national fleet of **Service Development Managers (SDMs)**. SDMs offer design and technical insight on Almo's complete line of services and they work in conjunction with the Almo sales team to ensure integrators receive everything they need for successful installations.

[almoproav.com](http://almoproav.com)

# Now is the time.

## SEE HOW TEAMING WITH ALMO CAN GIVE YOUR BUSINESS AN EDGE

Contract Labor • Onsite and Remote DSP Programming • CAD & Engineering  
 Digital Signage Services • Connectivity Services • Service & Warranty Plans  
 Financial Solutions • and More

### AV SERVICES FOR INTEGRATORS



PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

## Cleerline Technology Group

### An Introduction to Cleerline SSF™

Cleerline Technology Group provides end-to-end solutions for every fiber optic installation. Whether your installation is in a commercial environment or a residential dwelling, Cleerline has the fiber optic components you need. From our unique fiber optic cable to connectors, termination tools, enclosures, and more, Cleerline is Fiber Optics Redefined.

Cleerline SSF™ Stronger, Safer, Faster-to-terminate optical fiber uses an innovative Glass, Glass, Polymer design. The integral SSF™ polymer coating dramatically improves the bend insensitivity and strength of the glass, allowing fiber termination in as little as one minute.

#### STRONGER

SSF™ fiber is up to 200 times stronger than traditional fiber, with up to 10,000 times the bend capacity compared to other bend insensitive fibers on the market.

#### SAFER

The increased flexibility of SSF™ makes it safer to handle and less prone to breakage. SSF™ polymer coating prevents glass from puncturing the skin and protects the optical fibers from dust and contamination.

#### FASTER

SSF™ polymer coating makes it possible to terminate SSF™ fiber in as little as one minute. The simplified SSF™ termination process requires far less training than traditional fiber, translating into further time savings.

Our experienced technicians are ready to help you speed up your projects with Cleerline SSF™ technology. Contact us today!

[clrtec.com](http://clrtec.com)

## Christie

### NEW! All-in-One, Compact and Quiet Christie Griffyn 4K32-RGB Laser Projector

The **Griffyn 4K32-RGB pure laser projector** is a technological marvel that combines Christie's superior electronics and proprietary RGB laser illumination to achieve capabilities and reliability that will surprise you.

At 34,000 lumens and under 46dB at full brightness, it's our first projector that offers new TruLife+ electronics for unrestricted connectivity and digital convergence for easy picture-perfect alignment.

Griffyn continues the Christie® tradition of delivering unmatched purpose-built projection technology for live events, where there's no time for downtime.

[christiedigital.com](http://christiedigital.com)

## Biamp

### What's New at Biamp?

Biamp would like NSCA members to know about the following solutions:

#### Conference Room Bundles

Biamp has combined its best-in-class audio products into a set of easy to buy and deploy complete room solutions. Each package comes complete with all equipment and accessories needed to build out a UC-equipped meeting room quickly and efficiently, no matter which platform you or your customer is using. Learn more at [bia.mp/bundles](http://bia.mp/bundles).

#### Cable-Free Collaboration

Now shipping, **Modena wireless presentation systems** provide truly wireless two-way interactions with a room's AV equipment. Every laptop and personal device can both share screens with the room display and receive content, resulting in more focused meetings. By eliminating wired connections, Modena brings out the best in BYOD.

[biamp.com](http://biamp.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](mailto:mjohnson@nsca.org) or 319.861.8629.



## Premier Mounts

### Premier Mounts Is Looking Forward to an Exciting 2021

While we are still under some lingering restrictions from COVID-19, we aim to position ourselves as a key partner for NSCA members who are looking to maximize their impact when installing digital displays of all shapes and sizes.

With Q4 approaching conclusion, we are eager to share that we have increased our membership status with NSCA to become better aligned with supporting channel members. Whether people are existing customers or looking to implement our solution offerings, our team is ready to assist in getting you crucial information you need for your next project.

Our direct-view LED video wall mounting solution, Convergent, has been an integral foundation for some of the largest video walls across the country. Our engineers have taken our award-winning line and continued to manufacture hand-in-hand with the top display brands in the commercial audiovisual industry. Our commitment to continued innovation has allowed us to lead the way in supplying an optimal framework for projects that require elite level of precision and detail.

With large-format displays making a charge to lead digital workplace and classroom transformations, our team also thought ahead and launched a wall mount and mobile cart for interactive displays 90 inches or more. Our LMLVF wall mount and LFC mobile cart eliminate the time needed to install and service so your clients can stay efficient and effective.

To learn more about Premier Mounts, please visit our website [PremierMounts.com](http://PremierMounts.com) where we provide regular updates.

## AtlasIED

### Learn About AtlasIED GLOBALCOM™ EDU

AtlasIED solutions have been installed in educational buildings, outdoor areas, and throughout campuses for decades. With a focus on student and staff safety, our GLOBALCOM™ EDU is a mission critical hardware and software ecosystem for campus or district-wide mass communications.

Using fully configured software, IPX endpoints, and analog loudspeakers, GLOBALCOM™ EDU offers audio and visual (ADA compliant) alerts that result in improved daily communications and reliable critical alerts when needed. GLOBALCOM™ EDU is an entire network-based ecosystem of unified communication technologies that sets a new standard in interoperability.

An entire school or district's paging, intercom, audio, video, digital signage, and emergency notification systems can communicate together under one solution—and can even tie into existing VoIP or legacy systems.

**Learn more.**

## AV Design Labs

### Announcing Rendering Services

AV Design Labs added Rendering services using Sketchup, REVIT and 3DS MAX to their existing portfolio of audio visual drafting, engineering and programming services.

“This lines up with our vision of creating an ecosystem of different services accessible to Pro-AV Integrators under our subscription plan,” says Sunil Botadra.

With some software products under development, AV Design Labs is poised to combine their services with these products to offer a comprehensive solution to making engineering and drafting more scaleable allowing Integrators to do more with less resources. To know more, please reach out to [info@avdesignlabs.com](mailto:info@avdesignlabs.com).



A new family of DSPs and accessories that make ease-of-installation, intuitive programming and user experience simply...**Out Of This World!**

#### SOME UNIQUE FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Ease and flexibility of programming
- Simple and intuitive design reduces user training time
- Touchless app-less mobile control
- Embedded message player
- Control and audio up to 1000ft
- Ambient noise compensation with built in learning



[www.atlasied.com](http://www.atlasied.com)

**In Stock and Shipping Today!**



# So . . . All I Have to Do is Hire Subs to Be Profitable?

How do you handle routine seasonal variability, peak demand, and one-time opportunities? *By Joel Harris*



**M**ost integrators I work with have a hired, permanent staff—whether business is up or down. With the seasonal nature of the business, this means you're carrying the weight of fixed costs through periods of variable revenue.

But you don't have to make a permanent hire every time you have an incremental unit of work that needs to be done to satisfy customer demand.

## WANT MORE?

This is an excerpt from Navigate's blog series by Joel Harris, *Understanding Variable Costs is Wildly Important for Your Integration Business*. Find the blogs on Navigate Management Consulting's [website](#).

**NAVIGATE**  
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

## There are two sets of actions that need to be completed before successfully outsourcing labor.

The first category, which is the most difficult and time consuming, is building your internal competency to leverage outsourced labor.

- Implement this approach as a key, company-wide strategic initiative (it will not be successful if it's viewed as just an "operations tool")
- Know and define your standards of performance (set expectations)
- Train your operations managers and project managers on how to manage subcontractors or temps to the standards of performance (manage to and deliver on expectations)
- Add project manager hours to manage subcontractors (compared to internal labor)

**Using truly variable costs as a replacement for fixed costs requires commitment from the entire organization to succeed.**

- As much as possible, transfer risk to the subcontractor by gaining fixed quotes with negotiated contractual terms for the performance of the work (if you are unable to write a scope of work that can be quoted as a fixed price, you are not prepared to use a subcontractor to increase your profitability)
- Develop internal control process for subcontractors (for example, no verbal POs, invoices must have supporting detail, responsible party must authorize payment of PO and be accountable for spend, etc.)
- Acknowledge the resistance you will face with this approach and deal with it through effective leadership (in your company's own cultural style)
- Never blame your subcontractors for the project performance when talking to your customers (your customers didn't hire them... you did!)

The second category is building an outsource partner network that meets your business objectives.

- Know which labor disciplines you can supplement with subcontractors or temps (it's never your core value proposition or differentiation from the competition)
- Build a process to qualify subcontractors (and their processes and people)
- Leverage your subcontractors for small wins before committing to them for large projects
- Develop long-term relationships so you get their best employees for your projects, not the leftovers
- Never be afraid to terminate a subcontractor for poor performance; they earn the right to the next job based on their performance on the previous one
- Always treat your subcontractors the way you want your customers to treat you: If you see subs as a resource to be squeezed and nickel-and-dimed to death, left holding the bag for your mistakes, then you will never build the type of long-term relationships that make a subcontractor network successful as a long-term strategic approach to enhancing profitability

You must intentionally set yourself up for success by investing the time and resources to implement this strategy.

Using truly variable costs as a replacement for fixed costs requires commitment from the entire organization to succeed. I recommend implementing this approach over time as incremental improvement rather than an all-or-nothing approach.

And, finally, remember the end objective: to increase profitability. Commit to that principle when making decisions to use or not use permanent hires (fixed cost labor) vs. subcontractors or temps (variable cost labor). 🚩


*Joel Harris is COO of North Haven, CT-based integration company HB Communications.*

### HB Communications Mini Case Study:

*In my first year at HB, I convinced our general managers that we would not be making permanent hires to meet our summer demand. Instead, we were going to use a mix of subcontractors and temp workers.*

*We brought in 10 to 12 temp workers—interns from colleges or people who had just graduated from local tech schools—with the agreement that we would let them go at the end of the summer when revenue began to decline. There is a benefit to not having to fire a temp employee. When you establish the agreement upfront, there's no surprise when they're let go.*

*We put a plan in place and said, "This is how we're going to hire them. This is how we're going to train them. This is the signal to know when it's time to let them go." Of course, by the end of the summer, we had experienced some natural attrition and those positions needed to be filled. We already had a pool of 10 to 12 candidates to select from for our next set of employees.*



WHY LEADING  
WITH A MONTHLY  
PAYMENT PROVIDES  
— VALUE —  
IN ANY ECONOMIC STATE

A case for optimizing your sales message by being front and center about the customers' opportunity to pay on a monthly basis *By Jim Hocking*

**W**orking in technology for the last 16 years has given me an in-depth understanding of how monthly payment options impact end-users in need of new technology.

The current economic implications unfortunately include severe uncertainty and hesitation around utilizing cash flow. Let's discuss how monthly payment options fit into today's current circumstances for you and your customer (pandemic or not!).

### Why Choose Monthly Payment in "Good" Times

Consider today's trending method of consumption: Many services and products guide you to a monthly payment option. The iPhone is one of many examples. Rather than commit to a large, upfront expense, Apple provides a convenient, affordable monthly payment option spread out over multiple years. When the time comes to upgrade to the newest iPhone, it's a rinse-and-repeat process—just like financing.

Along with convenience is another highly attractive benefit: Your customer has the opportunity to routinely upgrade to a new, more secure, and more advanced technology stack, potentially resulting in a competitive advantage and happier employee base. What does this mean for you, the technology solution provider? With customers thriving on modern, fresh, and supportable technology, your team can spend less time on service calls and more time sharing the value of an affordable technology solution!



With a customer base thriving on modern, fresh, and supportable technology, your team can spend less time on service calls and more time sharing the value of an affordable technology solution.

### Adjusting to the New “Normal”

A lot of the businesses you call on may be temporarily or indefinitely closed—and many are adjusting to the work-from-home dynamic. For remote workers, there’s a critical need for necessary equipment, network connectivity, and protection to work safely and efficiently.

With the recent declaration of an economic recession, many customers’ uncertainty is skyrocketing, while sales and revenue—along with cash flow—are trending downward. Cash conservation is more important than ever as projects are being put on hold and workforces are adjusting to accommodate current implications. There are outliers, of course, but this is a trend among many small businesses across industries.

### How to Be the Hero Amid Crisis

Network performance and security are more important than ever as the majority of organizations are working from home and striving to continue business as usual. Your job is to provide the necessary technology needed within your customer’s budget—which is where monthly payments come in.

If your customer’s current objective is to conserve cash to continue business operations with minimal revenue flowing in, this likely means their capital budget is being cut or put on hold, potentially including your IT project proposal. By offering a full technology solution at an affordable monthly payment, you give your customer the ability to grow operational efficiency to better prepare for the future ahead.

Once a client is accustomed to digesting technology on a monthly basis, future refreshes are predictable and seamless.

### What Can the Monthly Payment Include?

Our goal is to keep it simple for integrators so you can keep it simple for your customers. We can finance your standard, full IT experience, including hardware, software, and professional services. For any recurring monthly managed services, we can bill and collect as well!


### Best Practices to Move Projects Forward

With many projects on hold due to financial constraints and social distancing guidelines, there are still actions you can take to empower customers to move forward.

Proactively bring up monthly payment options. I often hear customers say they hadn’t considered financing because it was never mentioned in conversation.

Another suggestion is to lead with the monthly payment option. Rather than offer it as a secondary route, save them the challenge of making a cash option work. Monthly payments won’t require them to rearrange their business budget or make sacrifices not needed. For example, say: “Once you get accustomed to the monthly model, you’re going to have that predictability for years to come and won’t have to overcome the capital budget obstacle. Plus, your technology will stay up to date and supportable.”

### Let’s Take Charge of Your Customer’s Next IT Project

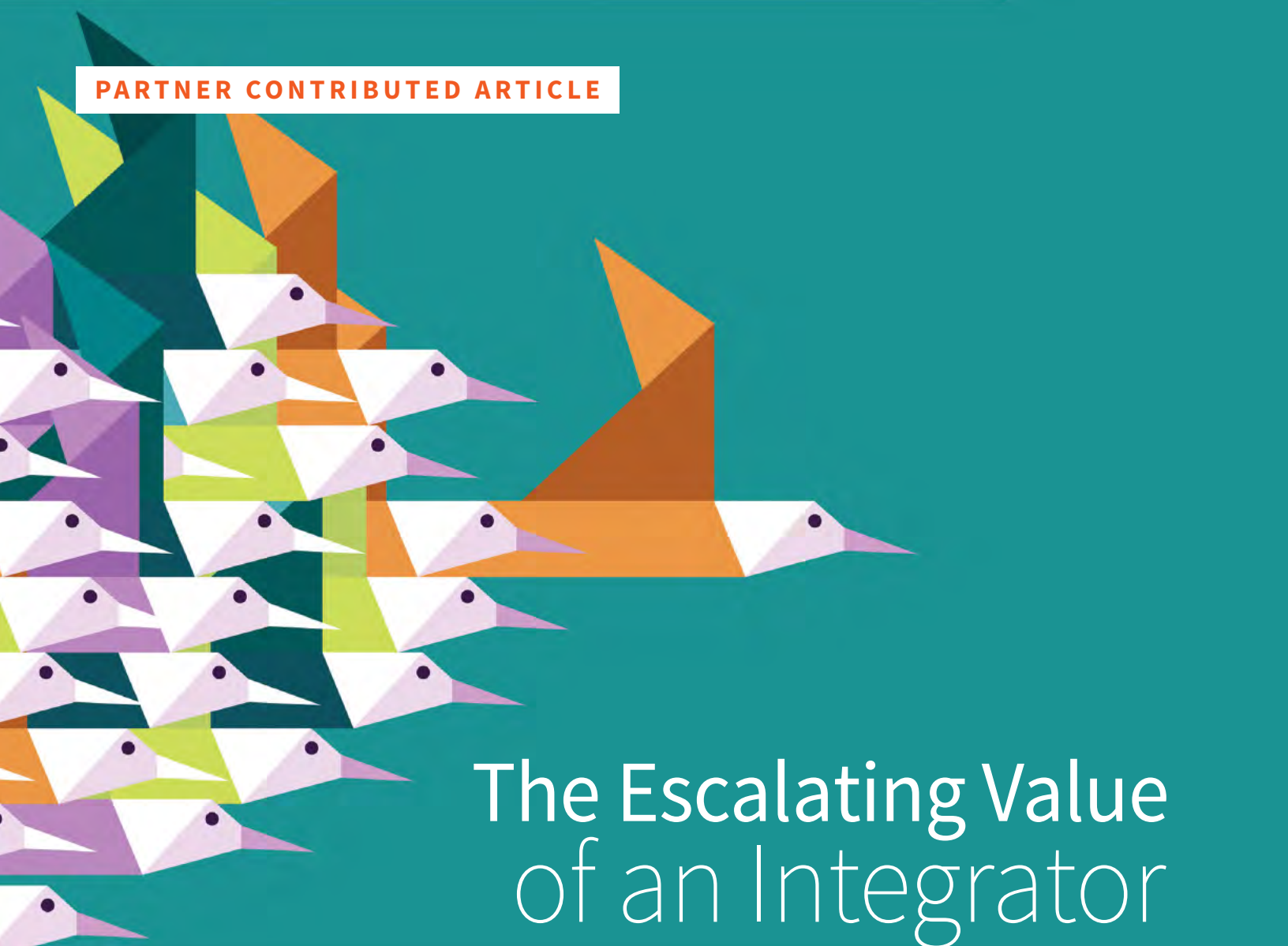
Be the technology solution provider that says to your customer: “We recognize the financial constraints you may be experiencing. We want to make sure you’re aware of the variety of financial solutions we offer to enable you to maximize your cash flow, protect your business, and allow you to allocate your financial resources where they are needed most.” 

*Jim Hocking started his career with GreatAmerica in 2011 and is currently the director of strategic accounts for the Connected Technology Group. Prior to being in this role, Jim served GreatAmerica in sales and sales mentorship roles in the Office Equipment Group and was the director of sales for the Collabrance division.*

## WANT MORE?

Download this PDF to add to your toolbelt, and contact us if you have questions or need additional information about financing during uncertain times.





# The Escalating Value of an Integrator

During the pandemic, the value of an integrator has never been clearer—but integration companies need communications strategies to let customers know how they can help

By Tim Alevizos

**“We don’t want to be a ‘hang ‘n banger.’” “Sometimes it feels like we’re just order-takers.” “The commoditization of AV is killing us.”**

You know the value of your expertise: It’s real and irreplaceable. But, in recent years, many have struggled with customers failing to recognize their integrator’s unique strengths. The easy availability of information and products online has fueled a commoditization mindset. In larger organizations, the IT department has clamored to take over AV, further complicating integrators’ efforts to win a seat at the strategy table.

But something changed in the current climate: Integrators are less at risk of becoming order-takers because, in a pandemic, their customers aren’t sure what orders to give. Amid the most sweeping pivot the industry has ever seen, prospective customers need integrator expertise and strategic thinking more than ever.

Yet, even before COVID-19, opportunities were emerging for integrators to assert themselves. “AV can be a hot potato,” says Steve Grace, founder of AVH Technology Partners. “IT says, ‘We can handle it’ and soon they discover—from acoustics to lighting—it’s much more complicated beyond technology.”

The strains of trying to transform a communications infrastructure at breakneck speed makes the integrator’s advantage even greater. With companies scrambling to master remote communication, “the IT people who think they know everything suddenly want to hand it over to an AV expert,” says Grace.

# Integrators are less at risk of becoming order-takers because, in a pandemic, their customers aren't sure what orders to give.

No one would say that COVID-19 has been a blessing, but chaos and confusion always create opportunities. Chief among them for integrators: the chance to provide leadership most every organization is clamoring for—leadership that IT, HR, architects, and designers cannot provide alone.

## The Pandemic Is a Call to Action for Integrators

Georgia-based Automated Systems Design (ASD) quickly established its expertise related to COVID-19 by tailoring low-voltage solutions to address specific concerns surrounding the pandemic and detailing them on its website.

More broadly, ASD took into account the many ways COVID-19 and other forces changed clients' cultures and behaviors. "We approach each project holistically, focusing on how to integrate technologies into a living, breathing ecosystem based on the new uses of that space," says ASD Director of Engineering Samuel Lum. To that end, ASD proactively partners with customer stakeholders like IT and HR; it also takes the lead in connecting with architects, general contractors, and design engineers.

"Leadership is the key word," says Christina De Bono, president of California-based ClearTech Media. "Clients have had to completely pivot their business models almost overnight, and we have huge value to contribute."

Fairly early in the pandemic, ClearTech saw a message on Pepperdine University's website about investing in hybrid classrooms. "Immediately, we got to work developing an economical, portable, self-contained hybrid solution we called EduFLEX," says De Bono. "Before they came to us with a problem, we offered them an answer. Within a short amount of time, Pepperdine contracted with us to convert nearly 200 spaces across four campuses for hybrid learning."

## Communicate How You Can Help

Keeping your ear to the ground and understanding customer pain points and business needs is just part of a strategy savvy. The other component: Communicating your expertise through a mix of strategic and tactical actions by positioning yourself as an expert, proactively offering solutions, and backing up your bravado with relevant content.

That includes case studies that clearly lay out the problems you've confronted and solutions you've provided. For example, as prospective clients adopt new ways of working and decide who they'll partner with for the transformation, they'll want to know whether you've created these kinds of integrations (or are aware of them). Case studies make the argument that you're the partner they need.

If you don't have a blog, start one and post regularly about your insights and achievements, stressing your ability to identify essential issues (business and technical) and devise solutions to address them. Think about creating white papers or e-books. If you don't have internal resources, hire a freelancer to create one for you. Use it as a lead magnet. Send it to media outlets (which are perpetually content starved) and your customer mailing list. Make yourself available as a panelist for webinars and e-symposia. An added benefit: This content will spike your SEO.

What's most important is the information—and the attitude—you put out there. In uncertain times, people long to be led. With the pandemic forcing a total rethinking of communication infrastructure, this is your opportunity to reclaim the mantle of leadership. ▲

*Tim Alevizos is a partner at NSCA Member Advisory Councilmember Supervox Agency, a full-service marketing resource with extensive experience in serving the needs of integrators and manufacturers.*

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Convince customers that you're the partner who will help them thrive in a rapidly changing world. Contact Supervox here.





“It is important to honor those who built this industry while also recognizing the need to change and find an equitable balance when it comes to the workforce and how we deal with race, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation.”

–Chris Turner,  
New Era Technology



## Meet an NSCA Community Member

**Chris Turner**  
Managed Solutions Account Executive  
New Era Technology  
West Chester, PA  
Twitter: @newera\_chris

### LEARN MORE

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

#### Q: What unique capabilities and perspectives do you bring to your role?

In my first industry role as an onsite AV/VC coordinator for one of New Era Technology's largest customers, I provided daily meeting support and equipment troubleshooting for the campus-wide system and users. This experience gave me an understanding of what technicians face in the field, as well as the customer perspective and expectations from AV/VC systems and post-install service. All of this allowed me to shape our approach to managed services in the AV/VC space.

#### Q: What do you like about the integration market?

The integration market has some of the most creative minds of any industry. We strive to work together whenever a new challenge presents itself. An example is the transition from hardware-based videoconferencing to soft codecs. Other industries would fold, but not the integration market! We faced the challenge and modified room systems to bridge the gap between hardware and software.

A few companies, like New Era Technology, took the opportunity to enhance service offerings to include managed services that embrace software-based video by offering to monitor and bridge calls, manage accounts, and become producers and moderators for high-level events.

### Q: What challenges do you recognize for companies in the integration market?

From a technical perspective, we've been talking about the convergence of AV and IT. It's here now, and it has become even more apparent with the move to remote work due to COVID-19. Social distancing requires us to rethink room systems, support, and maintenance. Remote work has encouraged our organization to think forward and provide a solution that offers secure communication, regardless of the application. New Era Technology has done this and continues to provide these services to our customers.

Like many other industries, the integration market has reached a day of reckoning in terms of diversity from a cultural perspective. It's important to honor those who built this industry while also recognizing the need to change and find an equitable balance when it comes to the workforce and how we deal with race, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation. How do we ensure that there is representation while making sure everyone feels welcome and appreciated for what they bring to the table and who they are?

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

NSCA is one of those hidden gems. The member organizations have similar values in their approaches to business and culture. There is no ego within the membership. We are a network devoted to support and success for all. Additionally, the thought leaders of each organization come together to share ideas and work toward futureproofing so everyone succeeds.

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

Pivot to Profit! I attended the first Pivot to Profit event in 2016 and greatly appreciated the knowledge shared by the vendors and partners. At that time, it gave me peace of mind in knowing that, as an organization, New Era Technology had already put the foundation in place for this way of thinking. It also challenged us to do more and do better.

We have continued to participate and expand our knowledge through the years while also solidifying our partnerships with other member organizations, particularly ClearTech Media, which we've worked with on numerous opportunities and services.

Although Ignite 2.0 is in its infancy, we continue to focus our mission and grow. It will become an invaluable resource for all NSCA members.

### Q: Why do you and your company find it important to participate in NSCA's Ignite 2.0 Committee?

New Era Technology has been connected to NSCA for many years. The CEO of our Pennsylvania location, NSCA President Michael Boettcher, reached out to see if I would participate on NSCA's Ignite 2.0 Committee, which focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion. I was honored that he asked and, without hesitation, agreed to be part of this group.

As an Asian-American, I can find nothing but positive benefits for this committee. As mentioned previously, our industry needs this. It's important to focus on the lack of diversity, equity, and equality in the industry—not only from the daily workforce but also within management and C-level structures. I think this is beneficial for day-to-day work operations and how we interact with the rest of the world. The days of existing in silos and regions are long over, and the industry needs to find ways to show everyone that we recognize this and are doing what we can to better ourselves.

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

Every day, ask yourself: "What did I do today to better myself?" This does not apply only to work, but also to your personal life. Are you allowing yourself to have uncomfortable conversations about how you view equity and diversity in the world? Are you allowing yourself to have uncomfortable conversations about where you stand in today's ever-changing technological world? How does it impact your day-to-day life in the workplace and your social settings? What are you doing to better yourself? Asking these questions can only be beneficial.

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

There are so many hobbies to choose from, but I will focus on two. I love spending time with my family, which makes me even more proud to be part of Ignite 2.0! As I mentioned before, I am an Asian-American, but I am an Asian-American who was adopted with his twin brother by an amazing Irish family in Wilmington, DE. My parents have two biological children and also adopted another girl from Korea right before they adopted us. We grew up a melting pot of five.

My wife is Caucasian, and we adopted two biracial (black and Caucasian) daughters from the Delaware foster system. We are pretty diverse!

I also enjoy directing theater. My minor was in theater, and I spent many years acting and directing throughout Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York. I direct at a local community theater in Wilmington and run the Drama Program at a local public high school, where we live by the motto of ensuring a welcoming place for a diverse group of students. That is where my heart is. If I win the lottery someday, I will retire and do that for the rest of my life. There is nothing more satisfying than watching students grow not only as actors, but also as people. We give them a place to come and feel accepted—no matter what. We have worked with autistic students, students who've come out to their parents, and others who have transitioned ... and all of them have been welcomed and treated with kindness and respect. That's all I have ever wanted.

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

I lived in Los Angeles for three years to pursue acting. I did a lot of background "extra" work on TV shows and movies. I was a "featured extra" in *Letters from Iwo Jima*. You can see me in a few of the scenes. I even got a "nice work" from Mr. Clint Eastwood at one point, so that was nice.

I supplemented that income and time as a contractor for Disney. I never really "got" people's love of Disney until I worked there. They really do make magic! 🎨

# STEPPING UP

## When It Counts



### Business & Leadership

# CONFERENCE

Let's put the gloom and doom behind us. Put yourself in the driver's seat for 2021. NSCA's integrator-led Events Committee identified pain points to be addressed at BLC and built substantive content sessions around critical objectives, including:

- Need for Agility
- Reliable Indicators and Dashboards
- Leadership Infrastructure
- Processes, Workflows, & Outcomes
- Innovating Your Own Solutions
- Trusted Advice

**“There's no doubt that this is our most important BLC ever.”**

–Chuck Wilson, NSCA Executive Director



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