

Commitment to continuous learning and development leads to success

To gain a better insight into how young professionals in the electronics industry have turned challenges into opportunities and ensured continued success, The Representor interviewed Hunter Starr, CSP, Territory Manager for Performance Technical Sales.

Starr shared key challenges he encountered after three-and-a-half years in the electronics industry and steps that he has taken to establish a successful career. Here is what he had to say.

Please tell us a little about yourself and what made you choose this industry as your current career path?

I was born and raised in Raleigh, N.C. Growing up, my father was a long-time manufacturers’ rep who would eventually start his own firm. I went to East Carolina University and graduated with a B.S. in business administration. During the Summer while I was still in school, I would help out with the family business and that was my first introduction to the rep industry. Upon graduation, I went to work for an Employee Benefits Brokerage firm in Durham, N.C. After three years and being promoted within the company, I decided that it was time for a new challenge and went to work for Performance Technical Sales as a territory manager.

I have always been fascinated by how things work and helping others. Being able to support local customers on the innovative products that they are designing is really exciting to me.

As a young professional, what are some of the main challenges you encountered as you embarked on your career journey?

Time management and identifying the RIGHT contacts and decision-makers in potential new accounts.

What are some steps that you have taken to overcome these challenges and to ensure that you can establish and nurture a successful career?

1. Reading books like *New Sales. Simplified* by Mike Weinberg has been really helpful. I was introduced to the idea of “Time Blocking” which has helped me stay accountable to some of the “Non-Revenue Generating

Activities” that I struggled with to complete previously. Also, “Owning Your Calendar.” I found that every now and then, I would get pulled into my email first thing in the morning, and then I would look up and it would be already lunchtime. While on some days you need to play catch-up, I found that I was becoming more reactionary to customer needs than being proactive. I switched my Outlook settings to show my calendar when opening instead of email. This makes me think about where I am going to be spending my time this week, next week, and moving forward to drive revenue. Think outside of the (in)box to drive more revenue.

2. Identifying the right contacts and decision-makers within new accounts is still a difficult task. The best advice anyone can give is to remain persistent. There are some tools that I have found helpful in identifying positions and names of employees such as LinkedIn; however, phone contact initially is key in my opinion.

As you developed in your career, what were some training tools that you found beneficial to your professional growth?

Certified Professional Sales Consultant (CPSC or formerly CSP) training by MRERF was a very beneficial training tool for me. Early on, I struggled with asking the right questions. The introduction to the consultative sales approach was a game-changer for me. I also found that visiting the manufacturers’ facilities that I represent to see the production process and tour their facilities is very helpful in the sales process when interacting with potential customers.

What are some industry networking events that you have attended that would be beneficial to other young professionals in the industry?

I have attended the CPSC and Certified Professional Manufacturers’ Representative (CPMR) programs (completed year one), as well as EDS, the ERA Conference, and the Carolinas ERA Chapter Golf Tournament. Our local ERA chapter has been very welcoming and helpful over the past few years. It seems

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Hunter Starr, CSP
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FROM THE TOP: Survival, searching and stability

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to the industry — local knowledge and flavor, synergy of non-competitive offerings, developed trusted advisor relationships — has inherent value to customers, manufacturers and channel partners, and transcends the capability of video conferencing to replicate it (no matter how many “Hollywood Squares” you have).

The specific combination of goods and services that each manufacturer offers to the market base makes your company distinct. Focus on your core competencies and amplify your distinctives. Does anyone really believe that it is in an automaker’s long-term strategic interest to produce ventilators?

Providing a channel for distributing products to the marketplace and the myriad of services and complexities associated with that function are best served by those well equipped to do so.

Fundamentally, being true to yourself is about maintaining the essence of an entity.

Flexibility is the key to stability. Flexibility is about adapting to changing conditions and circumstances. In the realm of coaching basketball, it is about adjusting the game plan as needs dictate. It doesn’t change the characteristics of the team and its members, but rather applies those members in different ways. I am truly in awe of the creative adaptation that I have seen (usually on a video conference) in the industry during this time.

Be at your best when your best is needed. This is the top of Coach Wooden’s pyramid and it serves as a daily call to action. Getting through the pandemic will take our brains, no doubt, some courage, and a lot of heart. The collective best in all of us is needed and will make us stronger as we travel through this time together!

As always, I welcome your comments and feedback and can be reached at ctanzola@fusionsourcing.com.

p.s., Don’t forget to mark down Feb. 28 – March 2, 2021, on your calendar for next year’s ERA Conference. I hope to see you in Austin! ■

RISING STARS: Hunter Starr

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like at almost every networking event I attend, I am learning more about the customers in the area and the needs they may have, as well as establishing targets to pursue with our distribution partners to drive future revenue growth.

Do you think that there is enough new talent entering the electronics industry and what could make this field more attractive to future young professionals?

As I attend the major networking and industry events year over year, I am seeing more and more young professionals. This is encouraging, but I do think that it’s important for the long-term health of ERA and our industry for manufacturers’ reps to actively recruit younger and more diverse candidates into the industry. Flexibility in schedule, uncapped earnings potential and a technology-driven industry are all attractive to young professionals in my opinion.

How do you see your profession and the industry evolve 10 to 20 years from now?

In the next 10 to 20 years, I am sure there will be changes; increases in the use of Webex & GoToMeeting services in lieu of face-to-face meetings; as technology advances, I could also see customers using 3D printing more and more in the design and production of their products.

However, I feel that there always will be a need by manufacturers to further understand the individual markets around the country for their products which is conducive to the rep model.

Professionally, what keeps you up at night?

I always strive to meet my commitments. As a rep, if I commit to a customer that a final answer on a delivery date when they are line down, or if I commit to having a proposal to them by a set date and it doesn’t get completed, it does bother me. I try to under commit and over-deliver to ensure this doesn’t happen. ■

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