Integrate

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Why Do We Sell Ourselves Short?

Why does our industry jeopardize profitability by underselling its value?

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TOM'S COLUMN

Which 2023 BLC Sessions Resonated with You?

The keynote and breakout sessions created for the 25th annual Business & Leadership Conference impacted integrators in different ways. Attendees share their insights. *By Tom LeBlanc*

The 25th annual Business & Leadership Conference (BLC) may have *just* ended a few weeks ago, but preparation is already well underway for next year's event. NSCA's BLC Planning Committee drives development of the event. They pinpoint evolving trends that impact their companies or customers and major business challenges that keep integration firm leaders up at night and prevent them from growing or achieving their full potential.

Then it's a matter of planning the right content to tap into these focal areas. Sometimes the committee decides to bring in a thought leader from outside the industry to open members' eyes to new perspectives. Other times they choose to plan a curriculum for a more industry-focused breakout session led by colleagues who currently face those challenges.

All this planning is done with an overriding goal: BLC should be an extremely valuable use of your time. If you step away from your business for a few days to lean into content we've developed, it needs to be worth it.

Coming out of BLC 2023, we asked attendees which sessions provided the most value for them. Here are a few examples of what they said:

> "The most valuable session for me was Dave Crenshaw's keynote, 'Find Focus in a World Full of Chaos,' " says Alberto Schilling, CEO and co-founder of WeInstallIT. "Remote work impacted deeply inefficiency. We are all attending more meetings than we should, losing more time than we have for our needed tasks." He adds that he has already applied some of the concepts presented by Crenshaw and is seeing positive results.

The breakout session "An Update on Mergers & Acquisitions" was "by far the clearest and best overview I've heard covering the gap between having an exit plan and being prepared to exit," says Matt Slack, principal of 60KPI Investments and founder of AV Solutions. "While owners should never start a business without an exit plan, there's a huge gap between having a plan and being prepared to exit. Although M&A professionals understand the gap, it's hard as a business owner to get a clear and complete picture of that process because of the many variables. NSCA's panel of M&A professionals did an excellent job describing the process, answering questions, and being available to fill in further details after the event. Easily the most complete M&A process presentation I've ever heard."

Bob Guy, a partner at BranchAV, agrees. "The knowledge share from that panel was second to none. As we are very much now in growth mode, being able to hear from this group about their direct experiences in acquiring companies will most certainly come in handy in the near future."

While the M&A panel was comprised of integration company leaders and NSCA Member Advisory Councilmembers, another breakout, "7 Levers to Improve Profits, Cash, and Enterprise Value," was led by Mark Fenner, a Scaling Up coach who has consulted for multiple NSCA board members. This was the most valuable session at BLC, according to Sandy Dinklage, VP of professional services for Electronic Contracting Company, who cites the focus on gross profit and gross margins over revenue to increase cash flow and allow you to work *on* your business instead of *in* your business.

"Mark engaged well with the participants and provided great insight. For me, he touched on items that our customers are focusing on: labor utilization and how that improves your GP, [as well as] ideas on how we can track internal change orders to see where we are missing," she says. The lesson? "Encourage sales to say NO to low-margin customers and products."

Saying no to low margins was somewhat of a BLC theme this year. NSCA CEO Chuck Wilson led a frank keynote panel discussion (page 4) challenging NSCA members to sell on value and protect their margins. "Don't Sell Yourself Short," featuring Jim Ford of Ford AV and Mike Bradley of ECD Systems as panelists, wasn't a session designed to be universally embraced; however, the bold session hit the mark for Dawna Payne, executive vice president at Texadia Systems. "Chuck's 'tough love' was needed for commercial AV integrators," she says. "As a security, AV (residential and commercial), and lighting integrator, we see the huge difference in commercial AV and the lack of gross margins we should have compared to other departments. People just do not get what we do, nor do they value it."

According to Payne, this is an important message for the entire industry. "My goal is to help work with Texadia leadership to better

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> — **Matt Slack,** Principal of 60KPI Investments and Founder of AV Solutions

supply the tools to our teams to help them show that value better," she says. "It will take all of us to make that change, but we can start now—as tough as it might be. Thanks to NSCA for making us all think harder, longer, and together in creating businesses that thrive." Which BLC sessions resonated with you? Let us know, and help us plan valuable sessions for BLC 2024.

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FIND MORE 2023 BLC ANALYSIS
at **www.nsca.org/category/nsca-blog/**.

Integrate — IN THIS EDITION

Why You Should Feel Good ABOUT SAYING 'NO' to Some Projects

It's time to be selective about the projects your company takes on. Integrators not only need to stop de-valuing the work they do, but also start charging an amount that reflects the talent and expertise they bring to the table.

Many NSCA members pretend—or even believe—that they're "winning" on an AV project when, in reality, they'd be better off leaving that job behind and moving on to something else.

If this sounds strange, it might be time to peek at the financial metrics behind your own jobs—the true labor costs, sales expenses, and hidden costs. They may reveal valuable information you didn't know about project performance, which could be a big motivator to skip past the projects that won't pay the bills (instead of finding out after the job is done that you broke even or lost money).

During NSCA's 25th annual Business & Leadership Conference, Feb. 28 to March 2, attendees heard these words first-hand during a much-anticipated keynote called "Don't Sell Yourself Short."

During the session, NSCA CEO Chuck Wilson, Ford AV President Jim Ford, and ECD Systems President and CEO Mike Bradley gave integrators a hard dose of reality: Chasing projects with low profit margins will *never* pay off. In fact, doing this even puts your company at risk.

The industry's steady decline of margins began in the 1990s, but here's a recent snapshot of the last few years, according to data from NSCA's *Financial Analysis of the Industry* reports.

Integrator Net Profit

Year	Up to $5 Million	$5.1-$10 Million	$10.1-$20 Million	> $20 Million
2015	3.05%	1.26%	2.44%	4.85%
2018	1.24%	4.18%	6.01%	4.31%
2021	2.4%	3.5%	3.7%	2.7%

A few decades ago, these numbers looked very different. NSCA members earned between 8% and 10% net profit every year.

Why is margin erosion happening? Wilson, Ford, and Bradley agree that part of the problem comes down to passion. AV integrators love their work—to a fault.

"We love doing the project work, and we will go the extra mile every time," says Ford. "It's not a job. It's a life. But we have a problem with underestimating labor. If you have $100,000 in revenue and end up with $1,000 in profits at the end of the year, you can't educate and train your teams. You can't invest. You can't grow your business on those margins. You'll be struggling to get to the next level if you don't start thinking beyond that."

It's a situation that far too many integrators have become comfortable with: loss of profit.

"We treat the industry like some contractors do: bidding, low margins, give our work away, and hope we make it up on the other side," says Bradley. "The culture has to change. I don't think we can worry about what the other guy is going to do. You can't control them, so what are *you* going to do? What is *your* culture going to be like? What are *you* going to commit to within your business?"

> "If you have $100,000 in revenue and end up with $1,000 in profits at the end of the year, you can't educate and train your teams. You can't invest. You can't grow your business."
>
> –Jim Ford, Ford AV

7 Ways to Improve Margins Right Now

It's time to be selective about the projects your company takes on. Integrators not only need to stop de-valuing the work they do, but also start charging an amount that reflects the talent and expertise they bring to the table (while factoring in the increasing price of talent, supply chain issues, inflation, etc.).

"When we look at the amount and type of work that we do, and the amount of risk we have on every job, we are worth it," says Wilson. "You can set these kinds of prices because you are offering mission-critical AV. You're worth earning a net profit."

Here are seven ways to improve your margins—starting today.

1. Learn How to Say No

It starts with the sales team, says Ford. While they may have good intentions, they can also be overly excited to make a sale and earn a commission. Or they may end up spending too much time on bidding or creating proposals for customers that ask for constant redos or changes.

"Train your salespeople on what warrants a 'no,' and to get to the 'no' quickly," he explains. It's a "yes" if:

- You trust the customer
- It's a good fit for your company
- It's something you're familiar with and have expertise in
- It's something the team wants to do
- It's something that works in terms of timelines
- You have the right number of staff to take it on
- You can get the equipment you need

Otherwise, think twice.

2. Watch Your Costs

Carry the "saying no" concept over to your business costs.

"Half the equation has to be managing costs," says Ford. "If you can say no to things and better manage your costs as a result, you're probably going to raise profit margins."

He uses a recent instance at Ford AV as an example. When Ford mentioned that he wanted a new computer, the person responsible for overseeing funds (who also happens to be his wife) quickly asked, "What's wrong with those computers in the corner? Can you use one of those?"

This thought process applies to everything: software, lease payments, business travel, cell phones, memberships and subscriptions, taxes, and banking and credit card fees. Look at every expense line and see if there are savings to be gained. It all counts.

> "The culture has to change. I don't think we can worry about what the other guy is going to do. You can't control them, so what are you going to do?" –Mike Bradley, ECD

3. Pursue Recurring Revenue

You need to build your culture around profitable *services*, not profitable *jobs*, says Bradley. "Every industry is conducive to recurring revenue. If you aren't taking advantage of that in your particular niche, then it's your fault. You just haven't committed to it."

But he's also quick to point out that recurring revenue isn't a fix for project margins—it's an absolute. From his perspective, it's a necessary part of doing business. It adds value to the bottom line—and adds value if you ever choose to sell your company. "Recurring revenue is paying the bill every month and every year, and that has serious value to a buyer," he explains.

4. Standardize Procedures and Policies

By formalizing and documenting what you do as much as possible across every part of your business—from shipping and receiving to sales and marketing—you can win back time, stop reinventing the wheel, and make it easier for employees at all levels to make confident decisions quickly.

As part of this process, set minimum project sizes and minimum margins you are willing to accept—and stick to them.

5. Analyze Contract Language

"We've been helping our people ask, 'What are the non-starters?' If parties won't budge, and if we can't negotiate, then it's a non-starter," says Ford.

If there are items you don't want to agree to, speak up. (In other words: "Change the contract, or we won't sign it.") Look closely at the payment terms and conditions.

Included in some contracts are waivers of subrogation. If something happens to your employee on the jobsite, a signature indicates that you agree to waive claims from your own insurance company seeking damages against the client or its insurer. Agreeing to this puts your own workers' compensation insurance company on the hook—without prior knowledge—for an incident that could've been the fault of the client.

Counterpoint: At the Business & Leadership Conference, NSCA CEO Chuck Wilson, Ford AV President Jim Ford, and ECD Systems President and CEO Mike Bradley emphasized the value of transitioning to recurring revenue. Read a **blog from NSCA Community member Brent Berger** of Bridges SI, which presents a counterargument to relying on recurring revenue.

6. Empower Financial Leaders

This is the year to empower financial leadership. And great financial leadership starts with having the right advisors in the right places. From there, they must be empowered to make changes that protect your integration firm from vulnerabilities while also supporting profitability.

Your organization's financial leaders should be able to pinpoint whether a project has profitability potential. They should also watch employee utilization and budget over/under and make sure actual time on projects translates into future quotes.

7. Use NSCA's Project Contribution Simulator Tool

NSCA's Project Contribution Simulator was built by Solutions360 to demonstrate how properly burdening labor, spearheading eroding margins, and understanding your true costs of doing business can affect the bottom line (operating income).

It's free for NSCA members to use at nsca.org/profit/.

"There's a lot of inherent risk in what we do, but it's even riskier to not be profitable," says Wilson. "We want to see this trend reverse back to the days when the industry had enough profitability on projects that we weren't putting our companies at risk." △

25 INTEGRATORS SHARE
Their Best BLC Experiences

BLC has a track record of helping integrators improve resiliency.

What better way to celebrate 25 years of the Business & Leadership Conference (BLC) than to feature 25 short stories about how the event has helped integrators grow, innovate, and become more resilient?

BLC started as a small, industry-specific conference—and recently celebrated a quarter of a century helping industry leaders overcome market turmoil. And this year was no different. In the past, this turmoil has involved terrorist attacks, natural disasters, mortgage crises, and the launch of the internet. Today, they're effects from a waning pandemic, supply chain challenges, labor challenges, and inflation.

What will tomorrow bring? We're not sure, but—whatever it is—BLC will always help you prepare for it.

Over the years, we capture impactful comments about how BLC is making an industry difference. We're sharing a few of those stories here. Although the industry changes (some who have shared their stories are no longer in the same roles or with the same organizations), the impact of BLC remains steadfast.

Read on to discover 25 BLC stories we've gathered over the past few years.

Note: The name of the person, their organization, and the year the story was collected were accurate at the time the story was shared but may not be correct today.

1. Matt Chitwood
PIVIUM Inc. 2022

"Each time I attend, I feel like a veteran and a rookie! In one sense, I have made so many connections, friendships, and relationships over the years. Yet, on the other hand, the industry is changing so much, and I'm challenged every year I attend. Every single year, I leave on fire about the opportunity in our industry and for my firm. In fact, in 2018, I was so encouraged by a conversation during the golf outing rain delay that I went home and told my Board of Advisors that I wanted to rebrand and rename my company! (And I actually did so in 2019.)"

2. Dan Schmidtendorff
Communication Company 2022

"Communication Company joined NSCA in 2005-2006, but I didn't fully utilize all of its resources at the time. When I purchased the company in 2006, I asked Rauland to help me meet some of the country's most successful distributors to help the company become more successful in the education market."

Per his request, Schmidtendorff met with several successful Rauland distributors—including Ray Bailey, president at Lone Star Communications—at the Business & Leadership Conference that year.

"The rest is history," Schmidtendorff says. "We built a great friendship, and Ray has been a great mentor. From Day One of going to that first event, BLC has been life-changing."

3. Ray Bailey
Lone Star Communications 2022

Part of Lone Star's success has to do with the scaling-up principles learned from Verne Harnish, former BLC keynote, founder of Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO), and author of *Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It … and Why the Rest Don't*.

After hearing Harnish speak at BLC, Bailey purchased Harnish's book and began applying what he learned. Those principles helped him turn a $26 million business into $71 million in annual revenue.

4. Dawn Meade
Net-AV 2013

"The business leaders and experts who spoke at the 2012 BLC event and the 2013 BLC event provided incredible insights into where the market was headed. The high-energy, 'act-now' advice of Peter Sheahan in 2013, Cameron Herold's similarly inspiring keynote in 2012, and the entire 2012 theme— Adapt, Evolve, Compete— were motivating factors that drove our team to make the sometimes difficult choices required to lay the groundwork for a major corporate transition toward AV as a service."

5. Marina Gregory
Advanced AV (now New Era Technology) 2016

"There have been many wonderful speakers throughout the years at BLC. Some of the common threads in so many of their presentations are people and communities. Take care of your employees, be a good corporate citizen, and your business will take care of itself. We knew this was important for us in 2016 as we grew our company at unprecedented levels and added over 30 employees.

"We believe not only in sponsoring worthy charities but also in giving back to our community through volunteering and support of various employee-driven causes. The results have been immeasurable. Our employees are proud to work for a company that is so involved in our community and holds their charitable causes in high esteem. As a result, our retention rates are impressive and our culture continues to thrive."

6. Theresa Hahn
Verrex 2016

"Verrex attended the 2015 BLC and took away one of the most transformative lessons related to employee engagement: Mike Abrashoff's session on achieving breakthrough performance (or, as we like to call it, "get your ship together!"). Acknowledging that employee engagement directly impacts performance, turnover, and our employer brand, Verrex took several ideas away from BLC in 2015. We immediately started building a program around employee engagement and officially launched our Employee Satisfaction Initiative in 2016."

7. Barry Goldin
Unified AV Systems 2016

"2016 was a very important year for the employees of Unified AV Systems. This was the year that the company went from being 33% employee owned to 100% employee owned. In addition, the staff and management took on a number of activities directly related to employee engagement and the associated future direction of the company. Past NSCA BLC speakers influenced many of these activities. We took to heart the discussion on KPIs during the Beer & Bull Session at the 2016 BLC and included it as a major initiative that year. Edgar Papke's presentation on true alignment at the 2015 BLC was a great motivator and reference point for the engagement activities that we accomplished in 2016."

8. Josh Kranz

Valley Communications 2021

At the 2021 Business & Leadership Conference, Valley Communications (VCS) arrived at an inflection point during a panel called "Pivot, Don't Panic," led by NSCA CEO Chuck Wilson and former PSA CEO and President Bill Bozeman.

In this Q&A workshop, the discussion uncovered key issues in scaling business properly, finding new revenue sources, uncovering new opportunities amid changes in commercial real estate, coping with uncertainty, considering mergers and acquisitions in unpredictable times, and leadership development and employee engagement. A pointed conversation about expanding into emerging markets made the company sit up and take note. After discussing internally, VCS decided it was time to realign its digital marketing strategy to establish a better presence in these new markets.

At the same event, Michael Canic's "Making Strategy Happen" keynote helped VCS bring about a reignited focus on implementing an ERP to drive organizational improvement and better serve clients. During this session, the team learned how to drive the odds in their favor and turn strategy into reality while making sure change efforts result in actual change.

"NSCA has been an incredible partner and invaluable resource to help VCS continue to evolve, grow, and deliver results that exceed client expectations. Our leadership team frequently immerses themselves in this knowledge to then share across the organization."

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9. John Laughlin

Conference Technologies (CTI) 2017

"In 2015, Edgar Papke's presentation at BLC sent the message about high-performing teams and organizations being focused on aligning individuals committed to creating extraordinary results for themselves and others. It resonated. Through a team of in-house developers, our database platform was built to capture critical customer feedback in a new way. CTI has been able to capture thousands of responses since the program's inception. Working to align our company as Papke recommended served as a resource to spark improved effort."

10. Chris Reese

ASW 2021

The Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) has been discussed at many Business & Leadership Conferences over the past few years. To promote clarity and alignment around its own organizational goals, ASW decided to implement these EOS principles.

Through EOS, ASW's leadership team was able to organize the company's mission, vision, values, and goals into a single document they call the Vision/Traction Organizer (V/TO). Once senior leadership understands and agrees to support the goals and values expressed in the V/TO, it's shared with the entire organization. From there, department heads use it to help their teams focus on meeting near-term and long-term goals.

"This system has allowed us to operate more effectively as an organization by creating clarity and accountability across the entire organization. ASW team members feel connected to the organization's goals, actively participate in their achievement, and have real-time visibility into our progress," says Reese.

11. Steve Greenblatt

Control Concepts 2014

"The conversations and people here are different. There's a huge learning opportunity. You get your money's worth in the first hour. In terms of conversations and networking, you can do more in two days here than you can do in an entire month in your office. This year's BLC taught me to be one inch wide and one mile deep—to not be a generalist, but a specialist. Because adding staff wasn't feasible in the near future, I turned to concepts I learned at the 2014 BLC. They helped me find ways to inspire my team and demonstrate appreciation. This has resulted in a 30% increase in revenue!"

12. Brian Richards

Serban 2022

"The conference has become a place to expand our thinking, increase our industry reach, and build strong vendor relationships. We dive deep into key industry-specific performance indicators that allow us to measure ourselves against industry trends. The education programs encourage leaders to build a strong network, resulting in boosted confidence and credibility.

"This conference has continually challenged me to take a fresh look at my business and at myself. I have had to rethink my approach to people, business structure, and execution. We recently shed the concept of the traditional business model to focus on individual performance. Given the volatile state of our current business climate, supply chain issues, inflationary pressures, lack of resources, and skilled workforce challenges, it has become apparent to us that leadership and personal growth are more crucial than ever.

"We feel it is paramount for us to adapt to the operating conditions of today while maintaining steadfast in our commitment to the customer. What does this blueprint look like to us? We are laser focused on refining our processes, being agile, and innovating from within. How are we going to do this? For one, we plan on attending the 25th annual Business & Leadership Conference alongside other industry leaders so we can reinvest in ourselves and acquire the support and knowledge necessary to navigate the business landscape of today."

13. Dean Jakubowicz

Midwest Americom 2022

"Over the years, NSCA CEO Chuck Wilson has always said that the BLC is the time to work on the business, not in the business. I have gotten a lot of ideas, and I learned what business items I should be working on over the next year. BLC is not the silver bullet … it is another business tool that, if you use it, your organization will benefit and grow from it. The most common theme/thread year after year is: 'It's about the people.'"

14. Matt Slack

AV Solutions 2022

"Since beginning to attend BLC, our best 3-year average profit became the floor, roughly doubling annual profits, which were initially above industry average. The skills we have learned through the process help us better see and act on issues before it's too late. Without BLC, we wouldn't have the industry-specific experts and peers who have helped us improve every aspect of our business.

"A few key things I learned in 2014:

- Two ways leading companies stay profitable and growing
- How to estimate the market our MSA size could support
- Insurance liability risks I had overlooked regarding our inventory
- How to use throughput analysis to increase profits without additional expense

"A few key things I learned in 2015:

- Industry financial practices and the common lack thereof
- The things we needed to get right with every client—every time
- Cost structure won't support being a low-cost-provider and a trusted advisor—but being a trusted advisor is the fastest way to renew service contracts
- The difference between pressure and stress, which helped me make key personnel decisions years later that amplified our profitability and are key to team satisfaction

"A few key things I learned in 2022:

- A leader's missed goal is a promise broken to the team— a problem I was repeating"

15. Max Curry

Infinity Sound 2015

"It allows us as a management team to see how others in the industry run their businesses, providing validation as well as identifying things we should work on. The fact that we have new insight on processes that can be put in place immediately to improve our bottom line is incredible."

16. Dave Ferlino

IVCi 2022

"The best way I can summarize the experience and impact of BLC is that it builds better leaders by helping them understand the value and discipline of working on the business instead of in the business. It provides the venue for incredible relevant professional business presenters and networking with industry peers, enabling us to have conversations about strategic initiatives, opportunities, and challenges. It is by far the best industry event—an inspirational and aspirational experience. I have been fortunate to attend 22 out of 24 BLC events. They provide relevant continuous learning, year after year.

"The best example of resilient practices/processes I can share is the presentation by Verne Harnish on scaling up. We applied this process to grow our sales and operations revenue by 647% over a five-year period and improved profitability by 6%. We also implemented an employee reward and recognition program, promotion from within, and career path training to reduce employee attrition from 22% to 8%. This had a profound positive impact on the employee and customer experience.

"The overarching takeaway from attending the BLC is to continuously evaluate and implement strategies, practices, and processes that enable you to evolve and adapt your business to the marketplace."

17. Jeff Davis

Avidex 2022

"This has really become a must-attend event for our leadership team. The information that we garner from not only the speakers, but also the industry panels that are assembled, are second to none and have really helped us drive our organization. Two areas of focus that are important to us are the ability to drive recurring revenue and our best practices around managed services. The panels and information we've garnered through the conference and various speakers have really helped us drive this component of our organization."

18. Pat DeZess

Augmentering 2019

Familiar with NSCA for more than 12 years, Pat DeZess, owner of Augmentering, didn't get a chance to really experience the benefits of membership until he attended the Business & Leadership Conference in 2015. "It blew me away," he says. "It was one of the most spectacular conferences I'd ever attended."

19. Kourtney Govro

Sphere3 2015

"Engaging with others in our industry is critical to learn best practices. One of the most valuable pieces of any conference is the ability to cross-mingle ideas and collaborate with others who have tried different methodologies and pathways. BLC also presents new concepts and ideas on where the industry is going. This helps us be aware of key issues and influencers when setting our strategies for the coming years. Finally, it's energizing to be there and be surrounded by people who are eager to learn and share. I just love hearing from others."

20. Scott Wright

Lifeline Audio Video Technologies 2019

When his company is in control of a project (during a design-build situation, for example), Scott Wright, president at Lifeline Audio Video Technologies, says the estimated labor and associated costs are right on.

Bid projects, however, were another story. "Historically, we haven't done very well in terms of hitting overall hours. That's because we hadn't done a good job of understanding how to estimate and manage a new-construction project. It became frustrating to miss those numbers due to so many different variables we didn't consider. We simply did not have enough experience and expertise on our team to manage larger bid projects in terms of project management hours."

With no full-time project manager on staff, and no plans to hire one in the immediate future, he knew his team needed education on the topic.

After attending NSCA's Business & Leadership Conference, Wright met Nadim Sawaya of Enterprise Performance Consulting. "I spent half an hour going over what Nadim offers and said, 'Sign me up.' We knew we needed to get better at this."

After the training his team received, Wright says the result was an immediate change in procedures and responsibilities in the flow of job duties. "It literally happened that day," says Wright. "When we showed up for work the next day, there were procedures in place that outlined who was now responsible for each task. It made us more efficient literally on Day One."

Note: The name of the person, their organization, and the year the story was collected were accurate at the time the story was shared but may not be correct today.

21. Jeff Irvin

Spinitar 2020

"The Business & Leadership Conference is one of the premier educational events in our industry. The content and speaker talent are exceptional; I'm always walking away with takeaways to improve personally and professionally."

22. Ingolf de Jong

GENCOMM 2020

"NSCA's objective to provide excellent training at the Business & Leadership Conference has played a major role in our ongoing efforts to forge new ways of managing our business."

23. Doug Hanson

CaTECH Systems Ltd 2014

"CaTECH attended on the recommendation of our ERP business solutions partner, Solutions360, which had indicated that NSCA and the BLC may be advantageous to our business. I was very impressed with a number of items at the conference. The level and content of the speakers was excellent. CaTECH contracted one of the speakers to provide business consulting services as a result of the BLC. Additionally, I was impressed with the business candor of the participants. We have already confirmed our participation in next year's BLC and look forward to continuing membership within the NSCA. We whole-heartedly recommend the session to business leaders in the low-voltage industry."

24. Brad Gallagher

VIBE Design Group 2018

"Thank you for creating and hosting an event that has quite literally changed my life. This conference has given me relationships that I suspect will last the next two decades, as well as tools to run our business. This conference really pointed us in the right direction. Based on conversations with other members, we're about to embark on a campaign targeting universities with enrollment under 4,500, and it occurred to me that this could be a good opportunity to also set up some speaking dates to increase awareness in our region about opportunities in AV."

25. Kristian Castro

Avant Systems Integration 2015

"The workshops are great, the speakers are incredible, and the other owner/operators that attend the conference really welcomed us. As a business that's a little over three years old, it is humbling to get the support and advice from guys who have been in the game for decades. Thanks to the conference, we gained an overwhelming amount of information that will allow us to continue our growth. With that information, we are now able to focus in on a few key initiatives we can put in place as we move forward to help support and drive that growth."

NSCA

NSCA
2023 Agenda:
An Open Letter to Members

The NSCA 2023 agenda was shared and discussed at the Annual Member Meeting during the 25th annual Business & Leadership Conference, Feb. 28-March 2, 2023, in Irving, TX.

I t's a remarkable yet paradoxical time to be an integrator. There is much optimism among NSCA member integrators—and for good reason: Many companies entered 2023 with impressive backlogs.

What integrators bring to their customers is more valuable than ever, with every vertical market leaning on our industry to get people back to work and school, improve communication, and optimize safe and healthy environments.

However, while the tremendous demand for integrated solutions brings opportunity, it also represents risk. Market uncertainty related to escalating labor costs, inflation, and lingering supply chain issues makes profitability difficult. Those backlogged projects can be double-edged swords if they're not de-risked and managed properly.

The stakes are high for integrators—and NSCA—in 2023. As your trade association, we're committed to helping member companies rise to the demand and remain profitable while protecting the industry from internal and external risks. Our resources, events, consultation, and strategic planning are all designed to help integration companies thrive.

We expect 2023 to have great opportunities and obstacles for integrators. Our industry is up to the challenge. NSCA—its staff, board members, volunteers, and trusted partners—stands ready to address the most pressing issues you face. We want to make you aware of the valuable work going on at NSCA and, more importantly, how it will impact you.

First, however, we want to thank the valued members who regularly leverage NSCA for business resources, advice, data, news, analytics, and workflow tools. We're honored to help you manage issues that affect your organization and are proud to be your voice in matters that impact our industry.

NSCA is privileged to be the association you rely on for direction and guidance. We are your voice, your business resource, and your trusted advisor. In 2023, we're committed to enhancing and developing the best business climate possible for your company.

For this reason, NSCA's 2023 agenda focuses on these key areas:

Prioritizing Business Agility and Improvement
Each day, NSCA members win on the front lines with their innovative solutions. To truly be successful, they also need to win in the back office. They need to target and weed out profit killers and improve processes.

NSCA has always emphasized how vital back-office operations are to the success of an integration company, but they're even more important in 2023 as market challenges chip away at margins and profitability.

Through breakout sessions at the Business & Leadership Conference (BLC) and Pivot to Profit (P2P), webinars, roundtables, workshops, and exclusive research, NSCA wants to help members prioritize back-of-house operations just as much as end-user solutions.

Finding Leadership Focus Amid Chaos & Turmoil
Let's face it. Running an integration company over the past couple of years has been immensely challenging. NSCA members are contending with pandemic recovery, escalating labor costs, inflation, supply chain, and so much more. Each day brings chaos and turmoil, making it difficult to find clarity as a leader.

NSCA aims to elevate its support for integration company leaders, which started with leadership-focused sessions at BLC and extending throughout 2023. After all, leadership focus is required to seize the great opportunities that this market presents for integrators.

Empowering Financial Leadership
In order for profitability to be achieved, integration companies' financial leaders have never been more important. They need to take hard stances and set standards to make sure projects have a chance to be profitable. They need to de-risk proposals.

Many integrators entered 2023 with strong backlogs. That opportunity elevates the need for an integration company's financial leadership to be empowered to make sure these opportunities are indeed opportunities and not double-edged, profit-killing swords. NSCA will continually provide guidance on this topic through BLC, skills training, roundtable discussions, and P2P.

Nurturing Next-Gen Talent & Leadership
Year in and year out, integrators recognize the need for new talent—both technical and back office—as well as the development of future company leaders.

NSCA is extremely focused on talent development, talent retention, and nurturing of existing A-level performers. Our Ignite career awareness and internship programs will be highly prioritized in 2023. Meanwhile, employee retention and talent development are targeted through career lattice (vs. a vertical career ladder) education and the evolution of our Next-Gen Academy for developing future integration leaders.

Vigilance About Codes, Regulations, and Compliance
The snowball effect of proposed laws and regulations that limit an integrator's right to provide low-voltage (Power over Ethernet) solutions for customers shows no signs of slowing down in 2023.

NSCA won't let up in leading members through these challenges and working with the Connected Technologies Industry Consortium to advocate on behalf of the industry. In addition to low-voltage regulations, NSCA tracks bills related to cybersecurity, school safety (in conjunction with the Partner Alliance for Safer Schools, or PASS K-12), sustainability to help integrators play a bigger role in creating healthy buildings, and more. Use NSCA's portal to track legislation that may impact your business.

Continuing to Evolve with Customers' Needs
The value that integrators offer their customers has never been greater, but this also requires them to evolve as customers' needs rapidly change.

NSCA—through training at BLC; monthly webinars and roundtables; our quarterly trade journal, *Integrate*; articles by our Emerging Technologies Committee; and sessions at P2P—continues to challenge its members to position themselves to solve their customers' evolving business needs.

None of the items in our NSCA 2023 agenda can happen without you. We sincerely thank each one of you for placing your confidence in NSCA. We look forward to helping you with your continued success.

Best,

Charlie R. Wilson
Chuck Wilson
NSCA CEO

Thomas LeBlanc
Tom LeBlanc
NSCA Executive Director

Raymond J Bailey
Ray Bailey
NSCA President

How to

Retain Employees and Thrive During the Great Resignation

Given the tight labor market and record-high numbers of job openings, workers are well positioned to demand more—and receive it.

What began in late 2020 as a spate of post-pandemic has quickly accelerated into a much larger and more widespread phenomenon: what everyone now commonly refers to as the *Great Resignation*.

These conditions have persisted for a few years now, and they affect all industries and job categories.

Why Employees Are Leaving

What's going on with workers? What's driving these unprecedented resignation levels?

The COVID-19 pandemic started as a collective trauma that all workers experienced simultaneously, spurring a variety of emotions:

- Anxiety
- Burnout
- Depression
- Frustration
- Grief
- Isolation
- Panic
- Stress

As a result, it morphed into a mass moment of reflection for workers to re-evaluate their goals, priorities, interests, and preferences.

Certainly, some tenured employees decided it was a good time to retire—even a bit early. And the SHEcession forced significant numbers of women out of the workforce (many of whom have yet to return).

But what about the employees who are still actively working? Some employees may have decided to pursue another career or go back to school.

Other employees realized that they enjoy working remotely and balancing professional and personal obligations, such as:

- Childcare
- Care for other family members
- Their own wellness and wellbeing (for example, exercise or focus on mental health)
- Volunteerism
- Hobbies

According to SHRM data, the top five reasons that employees are leaving their jobs right now include:

1. Higher compensation (32%)
2. Improved work-life balance (29%)
3. More competitive benefits (25%)
4. Desire to find more empathetic leadership (21%)
5. Better workplace culture (21%)

Given the tight labor market and record-high numbers of job openings, workers are well positioned to demand more—and receive it. Employees have options, and companies have to adapt their recruiting and hiring methods to become more competitive.

How Businesses Can Respond to the Great Resignation

Remember: It's almost always more expensive to recruit new employees than to retain your current workforce. The questions at hand are:

- How can you prevent your business from becoming a victim of the Great Resignation and mitigate its impacts?
- What can you do to engage and hang on to your valued employees?
- What changes will your business need to make, potentially for the long term?
- Have your employees' desires and priorities changed?

With the ever-changing landscape of employment and productivity in a post-pandemic environment, here are some strategies to help you avoid impacts from the Great Resignation.

Invest in Retention

Having a strong people strategy is one of the best starting points for making sure your existing workforce feels respected, valued, and appreciated.

Transforming your retention efforts is one of the first places to begin when discussing how to combat the Great resignation. Although most of the categories below can be included in a retention strategy, the big three to think about are:

1. **Competitive salaries and benefits.** Review your salary structure, bonus programs, employee benefits, and other employee recognition programs to see where you have room to make improvements.
2. **Good company culture.** A strong company culture with clearly defined values carried out by leaders is essential. Make sure the qualities of your organizational culture align with what your employees want to see.
3. **Employee engagement.** Low engagement is a bad sign when it comes to retention. If you're in this spot, there's still time to improve employee engagement.

Prioritize Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

Lots of employees enjoy remote work, but that's just part of the equation. You know what employees want even more? The autonomy to decide where and how to work.

They want to be responsible for choosing the optimal work environment for their needs and the type of work they produce. They no longer want their schedule dictated to them.

Employees also crave more work-life balance, where "work" and "personal stuff" aren't sectioned off into separate buckets to be dealt with at prescribed times. People want to tend to their most pressing priority at the moment, as long as they're meeting requirements and satisfying deadlines. For example, employees can be involved in their children's school activities, visit the doctor's office, take their dog for a walk, or go to the gym during the workday without begging for permission.
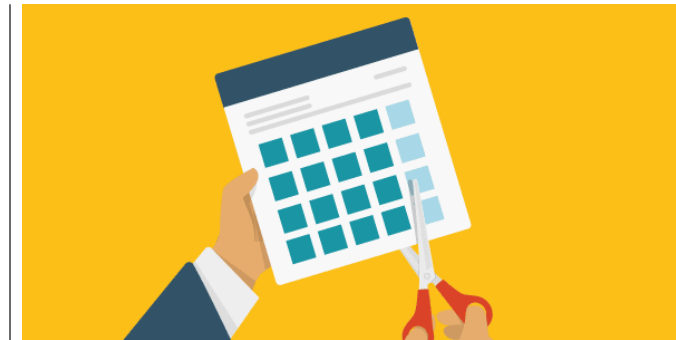
There's a growing recognition that work isn't "one size fits all." Not everyone is productive under the same conditions or at the same general time. This is why many companies are becoming flexible workplaces, offering such work arrangements as:

- Options for 100% remote work
- Hybrid work (employees demonstrate a willingness to come to the office when it's justified and the reasoning is communicated well)
- Flexible schedules
- Shortened work weeks
- Flexible or unlimited paid time off (PTO)

From employees' and job candidates' perspectives, workplace flexibility, and the option to work remotely—at least part of the time—are no longer seen as special benefits, but they are quickly becoming expectations for their next job.

Companies that resist this trend risk falling behind in recruiting and retaining top talent.

Re-Evaluate Expectations and Policies

With the shift toward flexibility and autonomy, employers must adjust to the evolving landscape and keep up with the times. This means reassessing workplace expectations and policies to benefit businesses and employees.

To encourage wellness and work-life balance, consider adjusting:

- **PTO policies.** Many companies are increasing PTO or removing PTO limits.
- **Dress code.** Given the fact that many employees worked from home for more than a year, perhaps attire standards have become less formal.
- **Remote work.** What are the firm rules for remote or hybrid work? Do they allow for a flexible workplace culture?

It may not even be major, sweeping changes that companies have to make, but "spot changes" that are relevant to the moment.

Whichever changes you implement, be mindful about which employees the changes apply to and the precedents you're setting. During the Great Resignation, many companies have become more generous with new hires in a bid to attract top talent. But don't overlook tenured employees—they want the same treatment. Best practice is to treat all employees equally. Document all policy changes and notify employees in writing.

Conduct Employee Surveys

You may not know how to make your workplace more desirable if you don't understand what's most important or meaningful to your employees—or what problems exist.

Employee surveys are a great way to obtain feedback. But, if you distribute surveys, you must also be willing to communicate the major findings and share which actions you'll take next and why.

It's also smart and proactive to conduct stay interviews with tenured employees to uncover what has kept them at your workplace and if they have any recommendations to share.

By the time an employee resigns, it's obviously too late to retain them—but you can still glean valuable insight from them via a thoughtful exit interview. Ask them what went wrong or what they felt was missing at the company. In what way do they consider their new role or company to be superior? Also, monitor employee reviews online.

Through these activities, a realistic and consistent picture of your company should emerge, helping you to identify areas for prioritization and improvement.

Want to employ the best retention strategy possible? Read the full blog with all 10 strategies here. △

Jill Chapman is a senior performance consultant for Insperity Recruiting Services.

NOTE: This article is an excerpt from a blog post on Insperity.com. Read the complete post here.

Focus On Servant Leadership and Communication

Everything surrounding the Great Resignation, at its core, relates back to the connection and communication between employers and employees—the strength of the relationship between these parties.

The absence of connection and communication leaves room for misunderstanding, worries, and resentments to fester. Wherever there's a gap of information, people tend to fill it with their own assumptions—and those assumptions are often negative.

If you don't know your employees, they're a complete mystery. You don't know what they're thinking and feeling. You may misunderstand their behavior. You can't anticipate their needs or deliver what they want.

Likewise, if your employees never hear from you, they won't understand the reasoning behind company decisions and may misinterpret the actions of leadership. They might not feel like they have a resource for communicating concerns or asking for help. They could feel encouraged to leave.

Companies that prize transparency and honesty in their culture seem to perform best and have the most engaged employees.

To many employees, their frontline manager is their most important relationship at work. To them, this person represents the company. It's essential that leaders frequently engage with their direct reports to:

- Regularly check in on them, professionally and personally, and find out what they need
- Evaluate workload
- Answer questions
- Make accommodations as needed
- Provide coaching
- Offer resources and support
- Help guide their career forward
- Communicate expectations

The old saying that "people leave managers, not jobs" remains true. A fractured manager-employee relationship is extremely harmful to retention. The strategies above are especially important when leading a remote team.
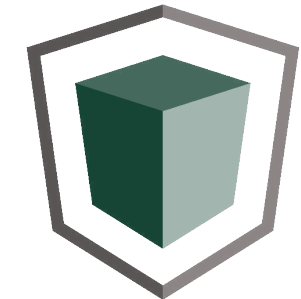
Companies that emphasize connection and communication will be far ahead of the game in proactively addressing employees' concerns before they decide that the best course of action is to leave.

InsureShield™ Shipping Insurance

by UPS Capital

SHIPPING MISHAPS

are a Rising Risk to Business Reputation

As an NSCA member, you have access to insured shipping services that can positively impact profitability.

Shipping has become a critical factor in keeping businesses running. With supply chains still strained across the globe from the pandemic, businesses must now contend with not only inventory challenges, but also the rising rates of theft and damage. In this new landscape, the shipping experience has become more important to manufacturers, integrators, and even end-users—not to mention the industry's bottom line and reputation.

When everything arrives on time and without problems, this can help boost customer loyalty—you can better ensure that their technology projects stay on track. If shipping issues arise, however, this can erode customer confidence and trust by delaying agreed-upon timelines. According to a recent **study** by UPS Capital, 72% of small and medium-sized businesses report that shipping incidents, such as loss or damage, have negatively impacted client reviews in the past year.

Protecting Your Profitability

Businesses cannot afford to let shipping mishaps impact customer relationships or profitability. That's where the UPS Capital® InsureShield™ shipping insurance program can help. As an NSCA member, you have access to insured shipping services that can positively impact profitability by offering the following benefits:

- Experience lower costs compared to standard liability coverage without all the fine-print restrictions
- Pay as you ship and keep money in your pocket
- Protect packages and profits across all parcel or freight carriers
- Choose to reship or refund with confidence
- Easy online claims filing process, accessible 24/7
- Fast claims paid in days, not weeks, to give you more control over how to respond to clients

As shipping mishaps continue to pose threats to businesses reputations, it's essential to prioritize reliable and secure shipping options. Choose to safeguard against shipping risks and know that shipments are in good hands. All you have to do is enter the value of the goods in the declared value field of your UPS®-approved shipping system. ⬠

Learn more about the UPS program available to NSCA members or call 800-MEMBERS (636-2377) for more information.

See How Sony
Is Creating Connected Experiences

SONY

Professional Display Solutions

A Personable and Innovative Partner

No business would be sustainable if it weren't for their products, solutions, and services—what they offer to the industry.

At Sony, our portfolio of professional display solutions is among the most advanced and highest-quality and continues to grow to meet the evolving needs of our end-users while addressing their largest technology challenges.

We provide projectors, displays, cameras, microphones, and AI-enabled technologies to the pro AV market and pride ourselves on their purpose-built development, often sourced directly from customer input.

But it's not only the products and technology that have made Sony a market leader synonymous with excellence and innovation—it's the support, partnership, and customer focus that a brand like Sony offers its users that makes us truly stand out.

Partnerships are an integral part of our business, and you'll see Sony expanding even more in this space in 2023. We recently designated 10 charter members of our Professional AV Alliance Partner Network, which enables us not only to better serve our customers but to create more inclusive, user-friendly, and compatible solutions for Sony.

We also joined forces with signageOS, a leader in cloud digital signage infrastructure, which will provide streamlined integration to support our professional BRAVIA displays and create a more connected digital signage and CMS framework for Sony and our partners across the globe. The alliance will nearly double the compatibility of our professional displays to offer support for close to 60 integrated CMS options. We're thrilled that we've been able to showcase these strategic hardware and software partners and have their support during recent and upcoming shows and events.

We will be doing even more to highlight our collective strengths this year, as we plan to expand Sony's presence in key vertical markets. In 2023, Sony will be jointly elevating our business, as well as those of our partners, by creating even more integrated solutions for our customers.

Get More From Your Display

Our slim, energy-efficient BRAVIA Professional Displays can be mounted in landscape, portrait, or tilt mode, blending beautifully into any environment. The displays' System on a Chip (SoC) platform Android OS enables digital signage applications to run more efficiently. There's also seamless support for today's leading automation and control platforms and open APIs to simplify integration with other vendor solutions.

Spectacular Video Walls

Our large-scale Crystal LED Displays create immersive environments with incredible detail, wide color gamut, high brightness, and superb contrast in corporate lobbies, show rooms, entertainment venues, and more. An extra-wide viewing angle ensures that everyone in the room can view your message.

Project Your Best Image

Our unique Reality Creation technology in our Laser Projectors achieves the maximum picture quality, no matter what your original content resolution. Our proprietary Z-Phosphor® laser light engine provides high brightness and delivers 20,000 hours of virtually maintenance-free operation for a low total cost of ownership.

Hybrid Teaching and Learning Solutions

Captivate and engage students with our Remote Cameras, Edge AI Video Analytics & Beam-Forming Ceiling Microphone. Powerful PTZ cameras, auto-tracking software, and hands-free ceiling mic with speech reinforcement combine to bring lectures to life and keep students engaged.

Alliance Partners

We work closely with top companies to add even more value to our industry-leading AV products and solutions. Whether it's configuring a digital signage network, connecting participants using video collaboration, or outfitting a room for device management and automation, we are committed to helping you.

Architects, Consultants, and Design Engineers

Our comprehensive portal was designed to ensure architects, consultants, and design engineers acquire the technical information necessary to provide the best solution for your opportunities. If your needs are for product specs, Building Information Modeling (BIM) content, case studies, white papers, or more—our goal is to position you to win your projects.

Value-Added Programs

Our commitment to our customers spans every business touchpoint—from pre-sale through installation and post-sale. Our goal is to keep you up and running efficiently and productively. △

*Learn more about Sony at **pro.sony/ProDisplaySolutions**.*

Creating connected experiences

Today's tech-savvy audiences demand high-quality media experiences. There's no better way to connect with colleagues, students, and visitors than with crisp, detailed images and crystal-clear sound.

Our high-quality image capture, audio, video, and display technologies can transform your AV ecosystem with simple integration, flexible compatibility, and low operating costs.

We bring award-winning expertise from the broadcast, music, gaming, and cinematography industries to pro AV. We also work collaboratively with our channel partners, integrators, architects, designers, and of course, our end-user customers, to deliver purpose-driven solutions.

Contact your Sony Representative or visit **pro.sony/ProDisplaySolutions** to learn more.

CLEERLINE
TECHNOLOGY GROUP

PRESENTS FIBER OPTICS REDEFINED

Our core purpose is to create exceptional experiences for our customers by providing a simplified fiber optic eco-system that allows customers new to and experienced with fiber to easily adopt fiber as the core infrastructure for data communications within their projects.

Cleerline's flagship product, SSF™ fiber, has established itself as an industry-leading fiber optic solution with enhanced benefits that allow for easy adoption of fiber. SSF is Stronger, Safer, and Faster than the competition. With an incredible Mechanical Dynamic Fatigue rating of Nd≥30 (TIA/IEC Spec Nd≥18), SSF is up to 10,000 times more durable under stress compared to the leading fibers on the market. With its enhanced bendability it doesn't puncture soft tissue, making it safer to handle, and without the need to expose the raw glass, SSF is faster to terminate and faster to train new technicians on in field terminations.

SSF fiber is a unique Glass, Glass, Polymer design that incorporates a hard polymer coating as part of the glass cladding to provide unparalleled durability attributes. This allows the product to be configured into smaller cable configurations while maintaining industry-leading durability and flexibility. SSF is the solution that is built for fiber to the client/device as the product has shown to be more durable than copper, easy to terminate, and provides the reliability required for end point connections.

TSB® or Traditional, Stronger, BendSafe® fiber, is Cleerline's newest fiber offering that incorporates enhanced cladding design to achieve an exponentially stronger fiber than the competition. This product was designed and built for experienced fiber technicians, with a standard installation profile. TSB is well suited for all applications but must be treated similar to traditional glass, with safety considerations and more diligence during the installation process.

Building upon the SSF fiber products, Cleerline has built out robust end-to-end solutions for AV and IT integrators to utilize the benefits of fiber optics. These include a selection of tools and test equipment that are simplified and easy to use, connectors that are reusable, cost effective, and exceed industry standards when using our SSF™ fiber, and a full assortment of accessories including cleaning supplies.

Cleerline is continually improving our products based upon customer feedback; we have developed a comprehensive selection of indoor rack- and wall-mount enclosures as well as a selection of outdoor solutions. Our latest product is an incredibly versatile fiber cassette that works seamlessly with our enclosures and offers new and creative ways of enhancing cable management while simplifying the process of specifying the right part for the job.

On the electronics end of the equation, we offer industry-leading 8K 48Gig HDMI™ AOC cables from 5m to 40m, simple media extension and conversion devices with rugged options available, as well as unmanaged fiber switches, making it simple to extend the network simply and reliably with fiber.

At Cleerline, we thrive on curiosity and continuous improvement. It is baked into everything we do. With a background in both integration and manufacturing, we seek to listen to our customers and develop solutions that exceed their expectations. Cleerline's products are used in a variety of industries, including hospitality, gaming, medical devices, medical integration, corporate AV/IT, and residential AV/IT.

Cleerline believes Fiber is Now. Fiber is no longer a futureproofing solution or a nice-to-have solution, fiber is now the best and right solution. We've made fiber easier to understand, easier to install, and easier to manage. A fiber optic infrastructure installed today will last decades. A copper infrastructure installed today is already out of date. △

The Latest from NSCA's Solution Provider Members

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

Legrand | AV

Connecting People, Spaces and Experiences through Digital Signage

Digital signage was a key part of the response to the pandemic, which led to a greater exposure to the benefits of this messaging technology. Digital signage opportunities continue to gain traction, which means it's prime time to start up conversations with your customers about creating reliable digital signage systems that unfailingly communicate consistent messaging.

"The power of digital signage to address a wide range of challenges is what keeps things interesting," said Michelle Montazeri, Manager of Digital Signage at Legrand | AV. "Exciting trends like personalization, interactivity, big data, and improved experiences are great conversation starters on the value of digital signage with decision makers. If we can get across what's possible to make lives easier and enhance consumer experiences with a brand, we can overcome a lot of the initial hesitation."

The brands of Legrand | AV work behind the sign to fulfill the promise of exceptional audience experiences. We do this with AV solutions that connect and protect the integral parts of a complete digital signage system. Since Legrand | AV works closely with leading display manufacturers, content creators, and software providers, we get the advantage of a larger view toward trends in the industry.

Legrand | AV offers digital signage kiosks for indoor and outdoor digital signage, as well as commercial mounts that are designed for speedy installation and easy maintenance.

To find more about the latest trends, grab some free diagrams, or connect with one of our dedicated support teams for end-to-end assistance, visit **www.legrandav.com/digitalsignage**.

AtlasIED

New Additions to Atmosphere Platform

AtlasIED, a leading global electronics manufacturer of audio, mass communications, and sound masking solutions, today announced that its newest additions to its already-award-winning **Atmosphere** audio processing and control platform recently received two prominent industry awards during Integrated Systems Europe (ISE) 2023 in Barcelona. *AV Technology*, part of Future publications, selected the Atmosphere platform as a 2023 Best of Show Award winner while *Commercial Integrator* and *CE Pro*, part of Emerald publications, selected the new Atmosphere AZMP4, AZMP8, and Atmosphere 3.0 software update for its 8th annual Top New Technologies (TNT) Awards.

AtlasIED introduced several new products for the Atmosphere platform at ISE 2023, including two combined signal processor and amplification products, the Atmosphere AZMP4 (4-zone) and AZMP8 (8-zone), and the Atmosphere X-ZPS, an advanced multi-zone paging station accessory. Additionally, AtlasIED launched Atmosphere 3.0, a major software update for the platform that introduced sound masking and a new Self-Test feature to measure system performance.

BZBGEAR

8K Video Distribution and Active Cable Product Line

BZBGEAR is taking major steps in 2023 by offering an all-new 8K video distribution and active cable product line. This includes matrix switchers, HDMI 2.1 signal splitters, amplifiers, and specialty cables. The 8K specialty cables include HDMI 2.1 active cables and 8K fiber cables. The entire 8K solution lineup supports a max resolution of 8K@60Hz as well as 4K@120Hz, ensuring gamers experience the highest level of detail and fluidity.

Visit **https://bzbgear.com/products/8k-compatible-devices/** to learn more.

Jabra

PanaCast 50

Our award-winning PanaCast 50 is coming soon as an all-in-one video bar room system with intelligent AI experiences and an onboard compute for an easy-to-use & engaging meeting room solution.

Imagine meetings that started smoothly and kept everyone engaged from the word go. Now stop imagining it and start believing it, because that's exactly what PanaCast 50 Video Bar System (P50 VBS) is designed to do.

View the announcement at **https://youtu.be/2DrEWKl3vVw**.

HP Poly

Leadership in Collaboration, Communications, *and* IT Technology

"And." It's a very powerful word in today's world. For us it carries a lot of meaning. Firstly, we are HP *and* Poly—a combination that provides over a century of leadership in collaboration, communications, *and* IT technology. Our portfolio isn't just one product but an entire suite of solutions for videoconferencing, audio conferencing, telephony, headsets, compute, *and* much more. Our video bars are the industry's finest *and* with our new API marketplace are also room sensors. Our solutions are built for today's hybrid working world of remote *and* in-office work. *And*—you should be working with us.

Learn more at **www.poly.com** or **www.hp.com**.

Dynacord

New Go-To Multi-Channel Power Amplifier for Commercial Installations

Dynacord presents V600:4, the new go-to multi-channel power amplifier for commercial installations

- Versatile four-channel power amplifier at an attractive price point, recommended for BGM and announcements in small to mid-sized commercial installations
- State-of-the-art amplifier technology for reduced cost of ownership, with low energy consumption and flexible power usage
- Easy handling and trouble-free amplifier operation—even under demanding power conditions—in a compact 1RU form factor

The V600:4 offers the user high flexibility for many applications. This is enabled by multiple power drive options utilizing Dynacord's patented VLD (Variable Load Drive) technology. It allows the amplifier channels to be driven in 4 ohms, 8 ohms, 70 V, or 100 V without compromising the available output power.

The newly developed Dynacord powerTANK technology adds even more installation flexibility, working like a power reservoir for the amplifier. With direct access to the total power of 600 W, the V600:4 can deliver asymmetric power across all channels (up to 300 W per single channel) as needed.

Dynacord amplifiers have a proven track record when it comes to supporting energy savings without sacrificing any performance. Overall power consumption can be significantly reduced thanks to ecoRAIL. This technology delivers almost a standby level of power consumption, whilst simultaneously delivering high-quality background music ensuring performance and power saving.

APD (Auto Power Down) contributes to further optimize efficiency, reducing energy consumption by automatically powering down the amplifier when no audio signal is present. As soon as a signal is detected, auto wake-up will immediately enable the amplifier to be fully operational.

The V600:4 incorporates Dynacord's new dualCOOL technology. Designed as a convection-cooled power amplifier, the device operates silently, making the V600:4 also suitable for installations in quiet environments.

Visit **https://dynacord.com** to learn more.
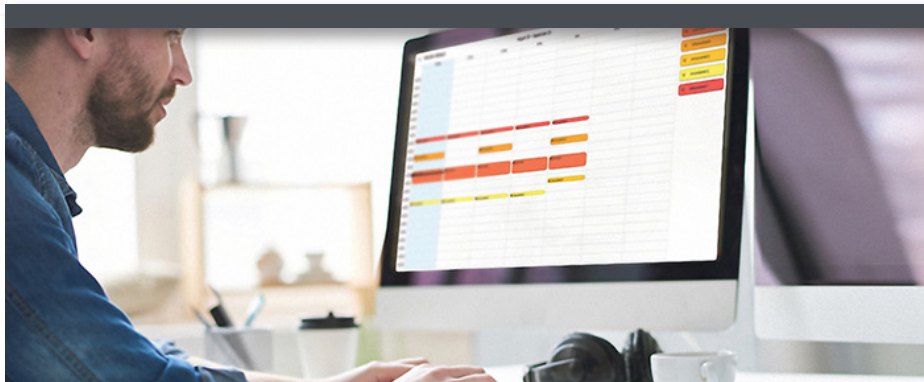
Axis Communications

AXIS Audio Manager Edge—Built-In Configuration Software

Every Axis network audio device comes with AXIS Audio Manager Edge configuration software allowing you to remotely program zones, priority levels, and much more for your project with up to 200 speakers and 20 zones.

What else can Audio Manager Edge do for you?

- Manage live content
  - Emergency announcements and paging
  - Triggered alerts and announcements
- Easily schedule and prioritize weekly content
  - Live or pre-recorded voice messages
  - Background music
  - Bell schedules
  - Opening/closing announcements
  - Marketing messages
- Drag-and-drop to easily configure speakers and audio zones
- Save time with remote system health monitoring
- Ensures excellent sound quality via built-in DSP
- Easily manage an intuitive dashboard showing the status of your entire system
- Reconfigure speakers in real-time—with no downtime

With our intuitive software, you can save both time and money by completing your audio management tasks without on-site visits, modify the system, and be aware and in control of your system using one centralized platform.

Learn more at **www.axis.com/products/axis-audio-manager-edge**.

Jabra

Speak2 Speakerphones: Speak2 75, Speak2 55, and Speak2 40

The next generation of professional speakerphones, engineered for hybrid working.

- Jabra Speak2 range features advanced full duplex audio, creating natural 2-way conversation, as if everyone speaking was there in person
- The new range comes equipped with four beamforming microphones with innovative background noise reduction technology
- Voice Level Normalisation technology in each Speak2 speakerphone ensures there's no need for raised voices
- Engineered with super-wideband audio and a full range 65mm speaker, the Speak2 75 guarantees an outstanding audio experience

Visit **www.jabra.com/business/speakerphones/jabra-speak-series** to learn more.

Shure

MXA920 Ceiling Array Microphone

As businesses move towards hybrid and remote work, video conferencing has become essential to day-to-day operations. However, remote meetings come with unique audio challenges that can hinder communication. Poor sound quality and low intelligibility can lead to misunderstandings and ineffective collaboration. The solution to this challenge is sound reinforcement and voice lift technology, which ensure that every voice is heard clearly, even in complex meeting spaces.

The Shure MXA920 Ceiling Array Microphone is the ultimate solution to these audio challenges. With its cutting-edge technology, the MXA920 provides unparalleled coverage and eliminates unwanted background noise, making it the ideal choice for large conference rooms and meeting spaces. Its advanced features enable it to capture audio from all corners of a room, ensuring that every voice is picked up with stunning clarity.

By using the MXA920, businesses can rest assured that every participant's voice is heard and understood, allowing for efficient and productive collaboration. Not only is the MXA920 the perfect solution for clear and effective communication, but it's also in stock and shipping on demand!

Learn more at **www.shure.com/en-US/products/microphones/mxa920?variant=MXA920AL-R**.

Jeron

UL2525 Listed Pro-Alert™ Area of Rescue Assistance System

Jeron proudly announces that the Pro-Alert 480 system has passed all Underwriters Laboratories tests and is the first Area of Rescue system listed under the UL2525 Standard for Two-Way Emergency Communications Systems for Rescue Assistance. UL2525 is quickly being adopted as the required standard for Area of Rescue systems in the U.S.

The UL2525 listing assures that the system will always be available for alerting and communications during a building fire or evacuation. The Pro-Alert 480 is made in the USA and is ready to ship now.

For more information, visit **www.jeron.com/product/pro-alert-480/**.

Liberty

CX Detect Software for Remote Management

Liberty has always designed products for systems integrators, providing hardware, software, and services that make it easier to design, deploy, and support systems for your customers. Committed to the channel and invested in helping you grow. Liberty's CX Detect software enables contractors to remotely manage, remediate, and control conference room systems. This software is designed to manage and monitor soft codecs, hard codecs, USB peripherals, and other IoT devices in a single tool. CX Detect also supports desktop clients for Zoom and Microsoft Teams, so your customer is covered whether they're in the office or working from home.

Learn more at **www.cxunify.com/cxdetect**.

Sound Control Technologies

CX Detect Software for Remote Management

Looking for reliable USB extension? Well, look no further than the SCT RemoteCamUSB2STM!

The RCU2STM is our next-generation product portfolio for USB PTZ cameras requiring USB and UVC/RS232 Visca control. This solution requires no programming and will extend power to the camera, control, audio and video up to 100 meters over a CAT6 cable. SCT supports all the major manufacturers of PTZ cameras. Pair your camera with our custom on-wall, in-wall recessed, ceiling, and VESA-compatible camera mounts. A simple and clean mounting solution that hides the SCT Camera-End module and provides cable management.

Visit **www.soundcontrol.net** to learn more.
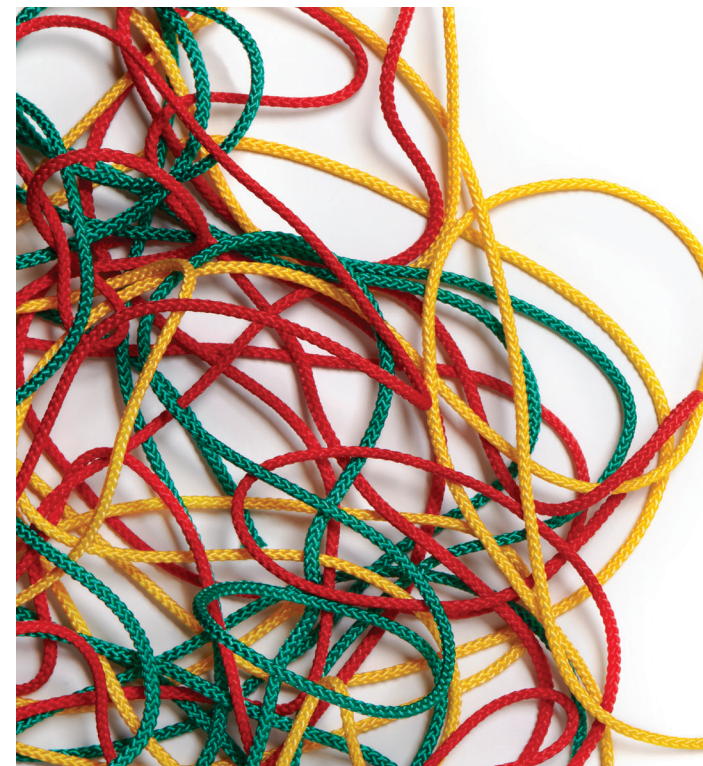
A **unified**, **workflow-based system** takes the chaos out of the business world you live in. It **brings order** to the way your staff manage their work, allowing you to **reach your profitability potential.**
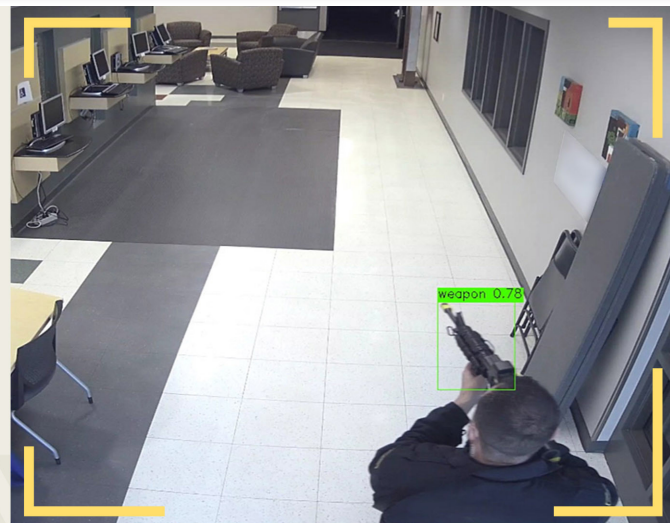
VISIT US AT ISC WEST, BOOTH #31070

IntelliSee

IntelliSee

Experience the Power of IntelliSee's Artificial Intelligence at ISC West

The IntelliSee team will be exhibiting at the upcoming International Security Conference (ISC) West at the Venetian Expo in Las Vegas from March 28-31. Attendees will experience the power of IntelliSee's artificial intelligence (AI) through live demos in booth #31070—located in the emerging tech section featuring new and innovative technologies transforming the safety and security industry.

Cameras alone don't prevent tragedies—they record them. Demonstrations will show how existing cameras connected to IntelliSee become proactive risk mitigation tools by autonomously detecting risks ranging from drawn guns to costly everyday concerns like slipping hazards, fallen persons, loitering, trespassing, vehicles, and more in real-time.

IntelliSee's deep-learning AI and customizable parameters tailor the platform to users' unique needs and environments. See how K-12 schools, healthcare facilities, higher-education campuses, retailers, and others are dramatically improving safety using existing cameras and existing safety protocols through the power of AI.

IntelliSee maximizes customers' existing camera investments and is also a value-add for systems integrators/resellers. IntelliSee attracts new customers and provides an easy upsell to existing customers while generating recurring revenue at attractive margins…all without supply chain headaches, complex installs, or expensive maintenance.

Don't miss out—if you are one of the thousands of safety and security professionals attending ISC West, stop by booth #31070 to see the power of IntelliSee at work and to help make the world a safer place.

IntelliSee

TD SYNNEX

Barco ClickShare Present Now Available

Demand for more collaborative communication experiences is driving the need for cohesive and intelligent solutions. TD SYNNEX unites the industry's top AV, UC, and CE technologies to build the cross-functional solutions our partners need. From voice, cloud, and video to network security, our experience advisors provide the support required to make a complex project seamless.

We're excited to share that Barco ClickShare Present is now open channel and available through TD SYNNEX! Their wireless presentation devices (C-5 & C-10) offers an agnostic wireless room system that equips you to run better hybrid meetings from your laptop. With our extensive portfolio of alliance partners, we're your go-to distributor to provide you with a complete smart meeting solution. Contact our team today to learn more at **collabsolv@tdsynnex.com**.

Niveo Professional

A Specialized Brand for the Professional AV Installer

These are exciting times for us at Niveo Professional. Growth is robust in our **1Gb, AV over IP switch solutions**. Our new **AVB/Dante** 9-port switch solution was a big hit at ISE. All these solutions are in stock here in the US. Our customer support team is in the US. Most solutions have 10-year warranties, and all are TAA compliant.

Coming soon, we have announced a 10Gb copper switch with PoE+ supporting SDVoE solutions.

If you need any assistance, please contact David Stephens (**david@niveopro.com** or 954-261-6582) or visit us at **www.niveoprofessional.com**.

NSCA BizSkills at InfoComm 2023

Many integrators will converge on Orlando, FL, to learn about the latest AV integration technologies and products at InfoComm on June 10-16, 2023. While you're there, you can also get business training from NSCA—your trusted advisor. We're leading a half-day BizSkills program on June 13.

Member registration for BizSkills on June 13 is $199. Check out the sessions:

Technology Lifecycle Management Using the Client Journey

Recurring revenue and managed services are the most important trend in our industry today. The shift from capex to opex is moving quickly, and as-a-service models continue to grow. Meanwhile, revenue and success for many integration companies' service businesses hinge on the little things. What's your process for communicating updates? How do you handle service tickets? How do you deliver a seamless customer experience? Learn how to become a trusted advisor rather than just another vendor through lifecycle management practices in this integrators-only session.

Finance: Managing Cash and Targeting Profitable Projects

Cash is the lifeblood of a company. For integrators navigating uncertain market conditions in 2023, it's essential not only to effectively manage cash flow but also to identify key metrics for selecting profitable projects. This integrators-only interactive training session will benefit any integration professional who has financial responsibility within their company. Learn best practices for creating financial, income, and cash-flow statements. Attendees will learn how to facilitate cash flow and important steps for de-risking projects. The financial lessons from this session are evergreen, but they're also specific to the challenges of battling supply chain and inflation in the current market.

Project Management: 10 Steps to Preserving Profitability

It's no secret that profits are gained and lost based on effective and ineffective project management. This integrators-only session walks through 10 project lifecycle steps and how to manage them effectively to enable profitability. This begins with a project preparation plan and runs from sales initiation through project management closeout. Learn how integration project workflows connect to one another. Understand the efficiencies and constraints and how to weed out factors that prevent profitability. Above all, attendees will walk away with a better handle on project management—and a better chance to achieve profits in a challenging market.

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Join NSCA at InfoComm 2023. Register **here.**

› FORWARD
THINKING

The Future of Leadership at Exertis Almo

Exertis Almo looks to the future with incoming Executive Vice President and COO Dan Smith, most recently US Vice President of Sales, IT and Commercial Large Format Displays at LG.

Smith replaces Sam Taylor, who in 2009 formed Almo Pro AV with Warren Chaiken, President and CEO of Almo Corporation, quickly becoming a powerhouse distributor by evolving with the demands of integrators and resellers in the channel and cultivating a stable of trusted manufacturers and products that delivered the latest technological advances in Pro AV. Taylor recognized the ever-changing landscape of the market and was instrumental in introducing value-added service offerings to enhance his customers' businesses. After the 2021 acquisition of Almo Corporation by Exertis, Taylor led the successful integration of two major Pro AV businesses to become Exertis Almo.

"Sam and I are working together to ensure a smooth transition leading up to his official retirement in June," said Smith. "The continuous maturation of technology distribution is exciting to take on with the incredible team at Exertis Almo: the best of the best in the industry. 2023 and beyond will be thrilling as our company continues to find creative ways to adapt to evolving business and give our customers the tools they need to thrive."

Don't miss your first chance to hear directly from Dan on March 28 during the virtual Roundtable, **Empower Financial Leadership: Path to Profitability in 2023**, sponsored by Exertis Almo and Sharp/NEC.

REGISTER HERE

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