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A Message from the Executive Director

Channel Friendly and Channel Ready? A Way to Keep Score …

The integration community is a tightknit group: Everyone knows everyone, including the few bad actors that tend to straddle the fence in their channel strategy.

Being “channel friendly” means they move product through integrators while supporting their sales efforts and using their marketing platforms to create demand and provide lead generation.

NSCA defends the channel, and wants to see manufacturers sell through it — not around it. We encourage lead generation, building brand awareness, sales support through regional sales reps, etc. We’ve seen many instances where manufacturers attempt to manage a direct sales team and a VAR/dealer channel for increased revenue opportunity.

The difficult part: We all think we can outsell each other. Manufacturers tell me that they don’t think integrators have sophisticated enough sales teams — only they know how to effectively sell products to the enterprise-level client.

On the other hand, integrators tell me that manufacturers are so focused on moving products that they often do more harm than good when they call directly on customers.

We all want to grow and sell more … so what’s the resolution?

We haven’t seen a successful, multi-tier channel management model that creates a win-win-win. Trying to manage this without conflict is exhausting for the reps, and it never ends well. We’ve seen this run in cycles, and it always comes back to this: The best strategy is finding top-tier integration firms to represent you in local regions. So the top-tier integration firms won’t lead with your product. Now what?

Many of our members use NSCA’s vendor scorecard as a way to evaluate manufacturers and distributors, and develop a preferred vendor program. If you’d like your own copy, just send me a note at cwilson@nsca.org — and we’ll send you one!

Chuck Wilson
NSCA Executive Director

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- Pivot Post the Definition of Insanity: Immediate RMR Creation
- Smart Buildings and Their Stress on Technical Infrastructure
- Technology Solutions for K-12 and Higher Education
- What’s Moving to the Cloud Next (and How to Make Money When It Does)

What Attendees Say
“Pivot to Profit is different than any event I’ve been to. The focus on monthly revenue and new technology trends will continue to force us outside of our norm.”
- Jim Bazarth, Alliant Integrators
“Pivot to Profit inspired me to come away with a goal of 50% of annual revenue from managed services within five years. With what I learned, our company is making significant progress on this goal.”
- Chuck Farchild, Farchild Communication Systems
“Pivot to Profit opened our eyes to other areas of business, revenue, and ways to manage financially.”
- Patti Bowles, Lone Star Communications
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2. Download Attendify
3. Search “NSCA P2P”
4. Click “Join” and create your profile

Change Isn’t Coming. IT’S ALREADY HERE
A recent NSCA survey revealed that, in the last three years, RMR revenue hasn’t increased for integrators. To keep up with customer demands, however, we know we need to move in this direction. Pivot to Profit 2018 will help you increase revenue from managed services! This event answers the tough questions you’ll have as you re-examine your firm’s technology, services, processes, and structure to prepare for recurring revenue (without disrupting existing revenue models).

COME A DAY EARLY! On Oct. 22, two special events will benefit our entire industry.

Golf Outing
Canongate 1 Golf Club • Sharpsburg, GA
Help increase awareness and raise money for NSCA’s IGNITE program, an initiative to attract, engage, and encourage students and young professionals to our industry. Register at http://info.avisystems.com/nsca-ignite-golf-tour-2018.

Build-A-Bike
Atlanta Airport Marriott
Teams will be provided with parts and tools to build new bikes that will be given to the Joseph H. Whitehead Boys & Girls Club of Metro Atlanta Network. Meet new colleagues, and learn how to use problem-solving and teamwork to get these bikes out on the road. Email kperkins@nsca.org to register!

REGISTER
Pivot to Profit • Oct. 23-24, 2018 • Atlanta Airport Marriott • Atlanta, GA • www.nsca.org/p2p
NSCA Success Story:
THE VALUE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

After a recent organizational restructure, Lone Star Communications decided to add a new layer of superintendent positions to its operations department. The creation of these positions also created the need for training.

“When we talked about some of these deeper subjects, like estimating, it was helpful to have everyone in the room together so we could all hear about the different aspects and considerations that go into estimating,” Hiett explains. “It was great for the employees to discuss estimating labor rates so they could see all the elements involved — not just basic employer costs. It was a conversation that most of them hadn’t had before, and it was eye-opening for them to discover why and how we came to the prices we do.”

On the second day of training, a smaller group of project management employees participated to focus on the functional aspects of their roles, including financials, metrics, negotiations, change orders, and working with subcontractors.

The Impact of Knowledgeable PMs

“Nadim brought stories to everything he taught, and they’re so easy to relate to,” says Hiett. “He has a huge amount of information that he loves to share. He’s absolutely an asset.”

As a result of Enterprise Performance Consulting’s training, Hiett has seen an increase in confidence from the company’s project managers. They now understand their responsibilities, and recognize how they impact others.

“His training was eye-opening for them to discover why and how we come to the prices we do.”

Employees no longer expect (or want) big, fancy, over-the-top videoconferencing systems. They want an easy-to-use option that can be deployed on whichever device they want to use: laptop, tablet, phone, desktop, etc. And younger employees now entering the workforce expect this service to be available. They’re already using Skype, FaceTime, and Google Hangouts to videoconference with friends and family members — so it makes sense that they’d want this service at work, too.

“They also want a service that can be used anywhere — not a videoconferencing solution that must be used inside one specific room and connected to your enterprise network. Videoconferencing is no longer limited to scheduled meetings in large conference rooms. Thanks to the cloud, it has become mobile and now offers flexible, ad hoc calling. Workplace efficiency is at its best when people can participate in video meetings no matter where they are — at home, in an airport, or down the hall in a huddle room.

If cloud video sounds like a good option for your organization, here are a few pointers from NSCA Business Accelerator Videxio, managed by Visitec.

As videoconferencing has morphed over the last few years, becoming mobile and relying on the cloud, it has quickly created a way to maintain strong communications with coworkers (inside and remote), clients, partners, and anyone else you work with.

Don’t Miss This Training!
Enterprise Performance Consulting is leading two more project management training sessions this year.

Oct. 9-12 in Boston
Nov. 6-9 in Dallas
Get details at www.nsca.org/local-training
PREPARING FOR the Workforce of the Future

By Jill Silman Chapman, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, MS-HRM

The uncertainty of what work life will look like in the future raises lots of questions — and anxiety — for employers.

Will we still have blue-collar and white-collar jobs, or will we move toward a no-collar workplace? Will automation create a more mechanical workforce augmented by human creativity and contribution, and result in a culture of human and machine collaboration? Will virtual employees become the norm?

The work world is caught in a dizzying whirl of change due to digitization, the rise of automation, and shifting demographics. No one knows for sure what will motivate workers in 10, 20, or 30 years, but knowing where we are today — and planning for what we think will happen tomorrow — will help us face the future more confidently.

Where We Are Today

There’s more talk than ever before about the Millennial generation — it’s rapidly becoming the largest concentration of workers. The balance of workplace power is shifting. Despite this shift, drivers for talent acquisition and management remain the same among all generations and include the desire to:

• Contribute
• Make a difference
• Be valued

Along with these drivers, all workers expect:

• Trustworthy leaders
• Feedback
• Learning

Along with these drivers, all workers expect:

• Contribute
• Make a difference
• Be valued

One of the most significant contributors to an organization’s success is trust. Employees who perceive their companies as fair, dependable, and competent have a higher level of trust and are more willing to work hard for that company.

3. Highly Collaborative, with Remote and Flexible Workplaces

Collaboration in the workplace has always been important, but it has become increasingly so as more businesses offer telecommuting and remote work options for employees. Benefits of collaboration between teams and employees, whether remote or in office, include better organization and delegation of tasks, improved progress tracking, and increased productivity.

Consider what positions you have that can be handled remotely or with a flexible schedule.

4. Culture of Ongoing Feedback

The need for continual feedback tends to be associated with Millennials, but it’s important to every generation. Employees who don’t receive the feedback they want will likely look for work elsewhere. Effective feedback doesn’t have to be a formal process. Supplement formal meetings with informal conversations, emails, texts, and IMs, and include peer-to-peer conversations.

Employees respond to a positive coach who can make a difference in their success. Millennials, in particular, view their managers as their No. 1 source of personal development — and they want that more than managerial direction. They want managers who will inspire them, surround them with great people, and be authentic in their interactions. Sharing struggles and successes goes a long way toward being approachable and becoming a role model for employees to emulate.

5. Physical Amenities to Fit Needs

Your company will be viewed as innovative and will likely have higher-performing employees when you offer them options for how and where they can work. But this doesn’t mean wiping offices out and starting from scratch. Determine the environment that works best for your workforce. Community tables and open spaces foster creative environments, but employees who need to focus for best productivity need their own desks and private meeting spaces.

6. Personal Development

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7. Sense of Belonging

If an employee doesn’t feel like they’re part of the team, they’ll be looking to leave. You need to embrace and celebrate a diverse workforce that brings different skills and perspectives to the table. Build relationships across differences, and enforce anti-discrimination and harassment policies.

No one has a crystal ball to show us what the workplace of the future will look like, but these practices can be pillars for your business success today and into the future.

Where You Should Be Headed

Look toward the future with your workforce. Attracting, motivating, and retaining top talent requires recognizing your employees’ needs and responding to them to remain competitive and relevant.

Consider these seven areas where you can have an impact today while also positioning your organization well for the future, whatever it brings.

1. Non-Hierarchical Workplace

A shift in traditional career paths of advancement recognizes careers of achievement, where people are happy in the job they’re doing and don’t want to be promoted into a job they don’t really want or may not be suited for. Today’s employees believe they should be able to earn more compensation, credibility, or power for continued contributions to the role they’re already in.

2. Transparent Organizations that Foster Trust

A significant trend in business is toward transparency. A younger workforce that grew up sharing their lives on social media are demanding that employers be open and honest about company information. As a result, more companies are sharing financial information with employees. The more transparent your company is, the more your employees trust you.

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The Financial Analysis of the Industry details the industry’s performance based on data collected from 100+ integration firms that participated in the 2018 Cost of Doing Business survey earlier this year. The report offers a few interesting insights this year when compared to the last report, published in 2016:

• An increase in backlog, indicating that there’s plenty of work available
• Increased profits
• No increase in RMR revenue

These findings indicate that many integrators are still struggling to get their managed services programs off the ground. In those cases, consider attending NSCA’s upcoming Pivot to Profit event in Atlanta in October (see pages 4-5 for details), which explains how to smoothly transition into this new opex world, where everything imaginable is “as a service.”

The information in the Financial Analysis of the Industry provides an in-depth look at integrator operations and dynamics, and helps you better understand the financial health of your own companies (and your firm’s performance compared to others). The report also includes verbatim responses about the biggest challenges integrators anticipate in future years.

“Early on in my position as vice president of Sound Image’s integration division, I needed to conduct a financial analysis of our division as a key component of my business plan,” says Larry Italia, former vice president of Sound Image’s integration division. “I had our numbers, but needed some benchmarks to compare to see where we sat in respect to fellow integrators. The Financial Analysis of the Industry was an invaluable resource for me. It was comprehensive, virtually any metric I wanted to benchmark was there (e.g. headcount, revenue per employee, bid vs. design-build, etc.). In particular, the financial data (SG&A, balance sheets, etc.) was an important tool for me.”

The NSCA Financial Analysis of the Industry is now available, revealing valuable information that you can use to benchmark and compare expenses, profits, sales, and other data against industry peers of similar size and business focus.

Every year, new legislation impacts the way you do business. Sometimes, these impacts are positive — but sometimes they’re not. NSCA works year-round as your advocate, supporting your business through government affairs and legislative tracking and reporting.

To help you keep up with the legislative activity in your area, we unveiled a new online resource at www.nsca.org/cq-roll-call. This page features updates on major public policy and government affairs efforts focusing on:

• Cybersecurity
• Internet of Things
• Jobs, technology, & STEM
• Labor laws and prevailing wages
• Licensing (company and individual)
• Regulations and code compliance
• School security
• Taxation
• Telecommunications and net neutrality

This page also features an interactive U.S. map where you can click on your state to view current legislative activity (the map may take a few seconds to load and populate — it contains a lot of information! Blue states indicate current activity; gray states indicate no recent activity.

At www.nsca.org/cq-roll-call, you can also find the elected officials in your area, and connect with your legislators about the legislation you do or don’t support. By playing an active role and taking a stand when there’s a call to action, you can be a voice for our industry, too!
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